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Correction: On page 14 in the April/May 2009 issue of the Journal, the photos of Patricia Jones and Marilyn Herrmann were inadvertently switched. We apologize for this error.

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English Language Learners in Seventh-day Adventist Schools

As I settled myself into a semi-comfortable chair in the 4th-grade classroom, I couldn’t help but notice Ana. In preparation for the language-arts period, students were organizing materials and transitioning to the next class. Ana, however, was struggling to complete an assignment from an earlier period. Tears begin to trickle down her cheeks as she gave up on an assignment for which she lacked the necessary background knowledge and vocabulary. Clearly, Ana, as a second language learner, comprehended little of her teacher’s oral or written instructions. I learned later that she could read and write fluently in Spanish, her primary language.

I have witnessed this scene played out time and time again in classrooms. I am in and out of a variety of different classrooms on a daily basis, visiting student teachers in both Seventh-day Adventist and public school settings. One recurring observation that I have made in the past decade or so is the increasing number of non-English-speaking students who make up our school populations. Unfortunately, many teachers are unprepared to address their specific learning needs. They struggle to create meaningful classroom experiences that ensure academic success for students such as Ana.

In recent years, immigration patterns have changed in the United States, resulting in a rich diversity of cultures. Schools, in particular, have been impacted by these changes. The number of students new to English has steadily increased, doubling between 1994 and 2004, the most recent statistics available. This trend is reflected in the enrollment of students in American Seventh-day Adventist schools as well, at the elementary, secondary, and higher education levels.

These students are typically referred to as English language learners (ELLs), non-native English speakers, Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students, or second-language learners. English as a Second Language (ESL) or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) are terms that refer to the programs schools offer for ELLs. In general, these students are in the process of learning English in school, but speak a primary language other than English at home. However, there is also great diversity among these students, for they vary in their proficiency in their primary language as well as in English.

Due to the increasing numbers of ELLs and the diversity they bring to the classroom, teachers at all levels need to be well prepared to meet their needs. The purpose of this issue of THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION is to help Adventist educators better understand and integrate ELLs into their classrooms. Some of the questions the authors will address are: What are current policy trends and programs that affect the education of ELLs? What are the processes of second language acquisition? What are the recommended classroom practices for elementary ELLs? For secondary and post-secondary ELLs? What assessment practices are recommended for evaluating ELLs? How can Scripture be integrated into language instruction for ELLs? What issues are associated with the non-native English-speaking ESL teacher? How do student missionaries teach English language learners?

As you read the responses of the authors to these questions, note the recommendations they make that apply to your educational setting. Explore the additional

Continued on page 47
English Language Learners (ELLs): Who are they? What language(s) do they speak? What challenges do they face? How do they affect classroom instruction? These questions demand an adequate response from education providers at all levels, K-16.

Were the ELL population homogenous, the challenge to meet their learning needs would be big enough; however, given their great diversity, the challenge is enormous. ELLs in American schools come in almost endless variety, with shades of differences within primary categories—age, primary language, culture, years in the country, socio-economic status, parental support, and level of English proficiency—plus a small percentage who have identified learning disabilities. To find ways to meet ELLs’ learning needs, to create ELL-friendly classrooms, and to successfully incorporate ELLs into mainstream classrooms are the ever-present challenges to teachers and school administrators. Since the trend points toward increasingly multicultural classrooms, it is imperative that educators find effective strategies to teach these students.

Some Statistics
According to a 2000-2001 survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Education on ELLs (also known as Limited English Proficient [LEP] students), more than 4.5 million LEP students were enrolled in public schools across the nation. The survey identified more than 425 languages spoken by this group—the largest number (3.5 million) of whom spoke Spanish as their first language. The next top six language groups were Vietnamese (88,906); Hmong (70,768); Chinese, Cantonese (46,466); Korean (43,969); Haitian Creole (42,236); and Arabic (41,279) students.1 Within these larger groups is considerable diversity. For example, Spanish-speaking students come from countries in Latin America, Inter-America, and Europe, each with its distinct culture, history, and language nuances. Likewise, Arabic-speaking students come from many diverse Middle Eastern countries.

It has been predicted that “By the year 2010, over thirty percent of all [U.S.] school-age children will come from homes in which the primary language is not English.”2 The National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) states that between 1993 and 2003, the number of ELLs rose by 72 percent, of whom nine percent were ELLs with disabilities.3 It has become increasingly apparent that past strategies, “designed for typically developing students who had fluency in English,” will not work in today’s multilingual classrooms.4 Teachers throughout the U.S. share in the struggle to integrate this rapidly growing LEP group in the classroom dynamics.

The Mandate
In the wake of this ELL influx, in 2001 came America’s “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) mandate. Included in the NCLB’s seven performance-based titles is Title III: “Moving limited English proficient students to English fluency.”5 Title III’s mandate was based on research showing “English language learners tend to
receive lower grades than their English-fluent peers, and also tend to perform below the average on standardized math and reading assessments. Title III sets as the goal that “all children, regardless of background,” have equal opportunity to succeed in the classroom.7

When after five years, the initiative did not produce optimum results, new NCLB regulations were issued. Recently arrived LEP students are exempt from “one administration of the State’s reading/language arts assessment” and the law “permits the State to not count in Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) denominations the scores of recently arrived LEP students on State mathematics and/or reading/language arts (if taken) assessments.”8 A recently arrived LEP student is defined as someone “who has attended schools in the United States for 12 months or less.”9

The NEA (National Education Association) is poised to recommend to Congress yet another amendment to NCLB, to use “more than test scores to measure student learning and school performance.”10 If this recommendation is adopted, it will benefit LEP students by using multiple measures of student learning and recognizing special needs, including the special needs of English Language Learners.

That the U.S. takes this issue seriously can be seen in the size of the NCLB built-in budget of the Bush Administration and the priority listing on the Obama-Biden education agenda. Among their initiatives for K-12, the plan to reform No Child Left Behind is listed first—“to improve student learning in a timely, individualized manner.”11 Another initiative promises to support English Language Learners “by holding schools accountable for making sure these students complete school.”12

NCLB and Private Schools

In 2005, the Catholic school system produced a guide to obtaining benefits for their students under the No Child Left Behind Act. A concise version of this guide was posted online on September 3 of that year, under the title “NCLB: Leaving No Catholic-School Child Behind.” The guidelines made it clear that schools desiring to access the NCLB built-in budget ought to be well informed about the obligations that accompanied the benefits and should acquaint themselves with the consultation process.11

Seventh-day Adventist schools, though they did not enter into the discussion about sharing the NCLB budget pie, perhaps because of convictions regarding the separation of church and state, have endorsed the ideal of accountability to every child enrolled in the system.

The ELL statistics affecting public schools have had similar effects on the dynamics of many Seventh-day Adventist K-12 classrooms in the U.S.A. These schools, too, are obligated to provide an adequate education for every child they enroll. But for Seventh-day Adventist schools, this goal is part of a broader commitment to service and to the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of God’s children.

The good news is that ELLs do learn English, and many learn it very well, if the conditions are in place to create an optimum learning environment within the multicultural context that appeals to ELLs. More good news: The Seventh-day Adventist school system, as part of a global church, encompasses cultures throughout the world. It’s impossible to measure the positive global impact on an educational system that includes mission stories, mission spotlights, General Conference sessions, mission pageants, and contacts with Adventist immigrants to the U.S. Within this atmosphere of acceptance of global differences in Seventh-day Adventist schools, many non-English speaking students have acquired fluency in English, moved on to institutions of higher learning, and climbed the ladder of success in the workplace.

Multicultural Dynamics in the Classroom

Teaching LEP students is not without its blessings. Many LEP students come from cultures that put teachers on a pedestal. The teacher’s word is strictly obeyed. These students have been taught how to behave in the classroom and to show respect to teachers. In addition, as inculcated by their culture, most foreign students are taught to study hard as a duty.

Many LEP students thus have a mindset to cooperate and comply with the teacher’s demands. Being quiet in the class-
room is first a sign of their willingness to cooperate. Like clay in the teacher's hand, these students are pliable and teachable. Nevertheless, in any classroom dynamic, in the mix with a few hyperactive native speakers of English, it is not uncommon for quiet LEP students to be neglected, just as the weaker fledgling in a nest gets fed last. Thus, teachers need to be vigilant to the needs of every child in the classroom, including LEP students, who may not clamor for attention.

Although the above generalizations are true of children from many countries, particularly those who come to the U.S. specifically to learn English, there is great diversity among LEP students. Some are fluent and can read well in their native language; others, particularly those coming from chaotic or war-torn countries, may have had little schooling. Therefore, the teacher needs to treat each one as an individual and investigate his or her background and academic abilities in order to craft the best academic activities for these diverse students.

The teacher can use his or her creativity to draw out LEP students and place them in the center of the learning experience. For example, LEP students can enrich show-and-tell sessions by telling about the unique aspects of their culture, such as dress, foods, national flag and other symbols, festivals, the history and geography of their country, staple crops, and more. Furthermore, their special talents can be incorporated into classroom planning. For example, there may be a talented musician among LEP students, a math wiz, or one who can weave. It's up to the teacher to dig below the surface and discover these talents. From older students, a teacher may learn of taboos, legends, and superstitions. For example, I learned from an Asian student that some Asians do not trim their nails at night. For, according to a legend, night prowling animals might gobble up the nail bits and take on human forms.

Tips Online for ELL Classrooms

Today, online sources are packed with current educational tips for instructors of ELLs. One source, *Tips for Teaching ELLs*, offers 12 strategies for promoting success for second-language learners—strategies ranging from creating a welcoming, language-rich environment to the basic instruction, such as teaching essential vocabulary, plus the use of hands-on activities and a variety of visual aids to appeal to all learning styles. The purpose of these strategies is to create optimal conditions for English acquisition.

The Magic Seven for an interactive ELL classroom that provides many opportunities for ELLs to use spoken English are: low-anxiety environment, comprehensible input, communication focus, contextual language, error acceptance, respect for language acquisition stages, and teacher as facilitator. Simple suggestions like labeling everything in the classroom, assigning duties to ELLs from the very beginning, and providing a list of essential vocabulary a day before new lessons will go a long way in lowering anxiety and increasing comprehensible input as well as communication focus.

Program Models to Choose From

To adequately respond to the challenge of today's multicultural classroom, school administrators and teachers must work together in choosing instructional models. Choices range from early-exit transitional to total immersion models, bilingual immersion, or English-only immersion. Factors that affect the choice include the goal of the program, required book lists, school demographics, student characteristics, school budget, and available resources. For a quick overview of different models, check Robert Linquanti’s online listing of instructional program models. His document, developed in rubric form, lists the instructional models, gives a definition and characteristics of each model, tells when each is appropriate to use, and
describes the elements of successful implementation.17

Here are a few models from his listings:

1. Bilingual Immersion, used when a sizable number of ELLs come from one language group and are at the same grade level. Its goal is to mainstream students in two to four years;

2. Integrated TBE (Transitional Bilingual Education): Targeted for minority students within majority classrooms, it allows the use of native language in the classroom. Used when a number of ELLs have the same first language but an insufficient number to form a whole class;

3. ELD (English Language Development)/ESL (English as a Second Language) Pull-Out: Used when students are mainstreamed for all content subjects with no special assistance, but are pulled out for augmented instruction in English skills and academic content subjects, including teaching of vocabulary and concepts.

Every teacher and school administrator needs in-depth information on the different types of instructional program models in order to choose an ELL program that ensures success for ELLs and fits the school budget.

Finally, though it may seem an oversimplification, yet it is safe to say LEP students first need to feel safe and accepted in the classroom before they can free their minds to learn and become fluent in English. During my teacher training, one student-teaching supervisor counseled me, “At the beginning of each day, remind yourself that students learn best from those they love.” These words still ring true, and I have witnessed the power of love in successful classrooms. So, let us keep in mind that if we love LEP students, it will not be difficult to open the door of learning to them.

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4. Ibid.


6. Ibid., p. 10.


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15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.


During the past two centuries, increasing numbers of adults around the world have studied English as a Second Language (ESL). Some have needed to learn English because their countries required it for government service; others wanted to enroll in an institution of higher learning where instruction was offered in English. Historically, Adventist colleges and universities in English-speaking countries have faced the same challenges as secular institutions, especially in enrolling non-native English speakers: (1) setting proficiency requirements and (2) offering courses to improve their language skills. Today, most American Adventist colleges and several of the church’s international schools have ESL instruction for individuals needing to improve their proficiency for academic purposes.

Why Adults Want to Learn English

Many adults have a strong academic motivation for learning ESL, but there are other reasons as well. Many adults have an instrumental motivation (i.e., to use English as a means toward a goal). As a lingua franca of the world, English is required for many professions and jobs. For example, all commercial airline pilots and ground controllers must communicate in English. (Yes, even if they both speak the same native language, they are required to use English!) The global economy depends on communication in English. International professional, scholarly, and diplomatic conferences/meetings are usually conducted in English. Our own international General Conference meetings are conducted in English, although translations are available through headsets. Finally, the publications distributed by these groups are usually in English.

However, adults also have integrative motivational reasons (i.e., to become part of a group) for wanting or needing to learn English. Take an immigrant family wishing to integrate into American life; they’ll need to learn English. Or, as happens at some schools like Newbold College and Saleve Adventist University, a dating couple speak different native languages, in which case they may need to use English to communicate. To continue their relationship, both need to improve their English skills. Sometimes, an international student dates and eventually marries a monolingual English speaker.

The level of proficiency adults need to achieve will depend on their reasons for acquiring English skills. Do they desire survival English—the ability to do basic things like shopping for food and clothes, answering the phone, talking to a doctor, etc.? Do they want to go into a profession, such as medicine, journalism, or teaching? Or do they want only to be able to read a foreign language? The answers to these questions should inform what kind of ESL classes they take as well as how long it is likely to take for them to achieve their goals.

Descriptors of the Adult Learner: Some Positive, Others Inhibitive

It is important for ESL teachers to recognize the similari-
ties and differences between the processes adults and young children go through in learning ESL. On their way to becoming English speakers, both groups go through inter-language stages.1 Some of these stages are influenced by their native language, others by the learning process. However, many of the differences are based on the students’ relative ages. Children have an advantage in acquiring native-like English pronunciation. In general, the later one begins acquiring a second language (especially after the onset of puberty), the harder it is to sound like a native speaker. On the other hand, adults are able to think more abstractly, and thus can discuss and understand the structural differences between their L1 (native language) and L2 (the language being studied), which a young child cannot.

In acquiring a second language, certain adult characteristics can inhibit progress. One of these is anxiety, which is connected to self-image and language ego.2 Language ego refers to the view we have of ourselves (part of our self-image) based on our fluency and expertise with language, usually in connection with our native tongue. As adults begin to learn a new language, they are often under stress, which causes anxiety. Some anxiety is healthy and facilitates learning. Too much anxiety, however, inhibits progress. Some adults worry that they sound too child-like in their language production. They get frustrated when they can’t think of a word or its pronunciation, or a sentence structure; and they feel foolish. This is damaging to their language ego and self-image.

As a result, some adults may drop the ESL class or seek out a tutor instead. They believe they must speak or write “correctly.” While accuracy is a laudable goal, it slows the learning and production progress. Some adults are hesitant to speak for fear of making a mistake. Other adult learners have an outgoing personality and focus more on communication than on form. These latter learners are risk-takers and are not so concerned with protecting their language egos. The danger for this kind of learner is fossilization3 (reaching a particular level of proficiency and getting stuck there). Usually, fossilization occurs when learners no longer feel the necessity to improve proficiency. They feel they can accomplish what they wish at their current skill level, and feel little pressure to improve. Anyone with immigrant friends from a non-English-speaking country probably knows several whose English has fossilized. Teachers and friends need to motivate such individuals to keep studying, especially if the learner’s career goals or other language-dependent aspirations have not been met.

Another important difference between child and adult learners is the amount of time they have to commit to learning a second language. Just as when acquiring their first language, children learning a second language have several years to devote to the task. Adults, on the other hand, feel they need to proceed quickly, especially if they have instrumental motivation: They want to get into a college program, apply for a particular job, or get certified in an English-speaking country to practice their profession. They often feel they don’t have the money or the time to spend studying English. Teachers of adult ESL students need to be aware of these and other adult concerns and attempt to alleviate them.

Methodology

Language is dynamic, so learning a second language involves interaction between learners and teachers. Parker Palmer’s advice, “Teach the person, not the subject,” is relevant to language teachers when choosing an approach, method, or technique. Based on the assumption that teachers teach individuals, not groups of people, selecting a method or a set of procedures to facilitate the learning of a second language requires that the
teacher know the language being taught and the context in which it is used, as well as that he or she become acquainted with individual students and the background and culture of their language.

The goals of the adult second language learner should influence the teacher’s choice of method(s), particularly with English for professionals, and English for specific purposes (ESP), where language and cultural immersion are designed for the specific occupations, business, ministry/church leadership, and for people working in hospitals, hotels, restaurants, shops, etc.

In her book on methodology, Dianne Larsen-Freeman stresses the importance of instructors choosing to teach in ways that lead to learning. She counsels that “teaching is more than following a recipe.” In other words, teachers need to be deliberate about the methods they use, consciously taking into account the reasons for their choices and adapting them as necessary. They need to become familiar with the various approaches and models currently in vogue, as well as identifying techniques, devices, actions, and activities that work for both the teacher and the learner.

There was a time when “being educated” meant learning Latin and being able to translate the written language. The goal of learning a second/foreign language was not for oral communication but rather to understand written language. The teaching approach for this goal used to be referred to as the Classical Method and more recently, the Grammar-Translation Method. Grammar rules are taught deductively, with examples—moving from general to specific. The main activity involves translating well-known passages.

The shift away from analytical grammar translation (where teaching is in the first language and little attention is given to content or pronunciation), to a more interactive approach led to the introduction of the Direct Method. In this method, language is taught in the target language, and learners are not allowed to use their first language. Grammar is taught inductively—specific observation to general—with examples—moving from general to specific. The main activity involves translating well-known passages.

The Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) developed from the Direct Method with its emphasis on pronunciation, but ALM drills were built on the theories of the 1940s and 1950s. At that time, principles from behavioral psychology (Skinner) were being introduced into the teaching and learning practices of language teachers. This approach is still popular today.

In this method, lessons begin with a dialogue; memorization is important, pronunciation and vocabulary are important. The goal of lesson activities is to form new linguistic habits through repetition and substitution drills. Everyday language use is stressed. Alphabet games, storytelling, and imitation form a base for activities. One concern regarding this method is the lack of creative language use.

Each of the methods mentioned thus far places the teacher

Korean ESL teachers at the Samyook Language Institute practice their skills.

Left to right, front row: Program instructors Chonglim Yoon, Diane Staples, Stella Greig, and Jeanette Bryson with a group of Korean ESL teachers (back rows) who were studying at the Samyook Language Institute.
in the role of director of the learning process and the learner in the role of follower or imitator. Within the discipline, practitioners began to react against teacher-centered methods, and by the 1990s, teaching began to be more student-centered. Rubin and Thompson, in the book *How to Be a More Successful Language Learner*, suggest that it is best for the learner to take charge, participating to discover what works best for him or her.6 The learner thus discovers or creates rather than merely memorizes or repeats. The use of manipulatives—sound-color charts, stars, cars, and rods—and problem-solving approaches form the basis for activities. Simulations such as *BafaBafa* are excellent techniques to use with adults. In their own way, each of the following methods is student-centered.

The *Silent Way* is regarded as one of the first methods to develop from the view that students should rely on one another and themselves rather than on the teacher. In this method, it is the teacher who is mostly silent, while the students do most of the talking. Having some knowledge of the learners’ first language is helpful for the teacher using this method, since it allows him or her to plan situations that allow the learner to

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**Productive Language Activities Outside the Classroom**

In their desire to save tuition money and speed up the learning process, ESL students often ask, What can I do outside of class to help improve my English? Here are several things teachers can suggest that really work:

1. **Read the Bible in the language you are trying to learn.** Choose a version such as the Revised Standard (RSV), New King James (NKJV), or a paraphrase. English professor Frank Knittel once told a group of Master’s students the story of his phenomenal acquisition of Gothic—an extinct Germanic language—when he was a doctoral student. It was a small class, but Frank was the only one who really “got it.” Pausing, he smiled and said, “Of course, [given] the fact that the only extant manuscripts in Gothic are parts of the Gospels, all I needed to do was discover which story of or by Jesus the text was about, and I could translate it quite handily.” When I [Greig] took German in college, I sometimes read the Sabbath school lesson using my German Bible. Knowing something about the text message helps to underpin one’s study efforts.

2. **Expand into other English reading.** Read articles or books on subjects you’re knowledgeable about or are interested in—e.g., airplanes, biology, literary works, etc.

3. **Make friends with an English-speaking person, especially one who doesn’t know your native language.** Find someone who can spend an hour or two with you several times a week, just talking about common interests. Perhaps you can be walking (or other exercise) partners. When I [Greig] was directing the Andrews University English Language Institute, one year the staff and I noticed that two of our Arabic speakers had made phenomenal progress in their English proficiency in just one quarter of study. When conducting our new-quarter interviews, I casually asked whether they had been helping outside of class with their English. “Oh, yes,” they replied. “We both have English-speaking girlfriends.” I laughingly said to the college dean, “Perhaps we should require that all ESL students have a monolingual English-speaking boyfriend or girlfriend!”

4. **Watch TV programs in English.** If you live outside an English-speaking country, listen to English-language radio programs, such as the BBC. From newscasts to family sitcoms, television and radio offer a useful variety of dialects and levels of formality/informality. You can hear models of English for informative, social, and relational purposes.

5. **Listen to English songs.** For some learners, music is helpful in learning (musical intelligence). In addition, repetition plays an important role in songs, whether religious or secular, so this makes it easy to learn them.

6. **Work on intonation.** Intonation refers to the up-and-down pitch of the voice as it produces an utterance/sentence. Aside from teaching the intonation differences between questions and statements, teachers rarely deal with this topic in the ESL classroom. Yet it is very important for intelligibility. Some English-only speakers cannot understand other dialects or certain varieties of spoken English because the intonation or rhythm of that dialect is too different from their own. If second-language learners speak the new language using the intonation of their first language, native English speakers may have difficulty understanding them, not because they are mispronouncing the individual words, but because the rhythm and flow of the sentences are so different. Listen to a native English speaker using your native language [say, Italian] and notice the intonation pattern. The person may be speaking Italian words, but probably will be using English intonation. The Pickering article, listed in the “References & Suggested Reading” section at the end of this article, shows how mimicking an English speaker using your native language can help you acquire English intonation. Second-language learners often ignore working on intonation, yet it is the one aspect of production that most affects intelligibility.

7. **In oral production, both the pronunciation of individual words (perhaps putting the stress on the wrong syllable) and the intonation contour of utterances may produce accented speech.** For an adult learner, the goal of native-like speech is difficult to achieve. A more realistic goal is to speak so that one can be understood; in other words, so what one says is intelligible to the native English listener. If you speak English like a native, your native English hearer will expect you to have all the socio-cultural knowledge, as well as the linguistic knowledge of a native speaker. However, if you speak English intelligibly but with an accent, this signals to the hearer, “English is not my native language; if I say something foolish or offensive, please understand.”
build upon existing knowledge. The underlying principle of the theory is that learners can discover and use a language, sometimes with manipulatives or copies of the material to be learned, but without repetitive drilling.

The focus on the learner brought about a more in-depth search for non-defensive learning. Community language learning and the need to create a learning environment where adults who fear that learning a second language will be nearly impossible, can develop confidence in their ability to learn have generated a discussion about the ways adults acquire a new language. Even the terms Suggestopedia and Desuggestopedia imply that psychological barriers to learning can be overcome. Teachers take deliberate steps to create a calming atmosphere for the learners. The use of fine arts (music, drama, etc.) is encouraged. The idea that learning a second language is an “adventure” is changing the approaches. Trust and respect are thought to break through the language ego. Singing songs, playing instruments, and even the use of puppets (fantasy is thought to reduce barriers to learning) are incorporated into the lessons. Communicative learning activities include role playing and interpreting picture strip stories.

For beginning levels of language learning, Total Physical Response (TPR) has been successful in assisting adult learners. It simulates a more natural approach based on Krashen’s theory of pre-production, early production, and extended production. Activities involve following directions without translation, and the use of pictures, realia, and classroom objects. Proponents of TPR believe that a kinetic, physically active response experience lacking the pressure of producing oral language is the best way to begin the language learning process.

Cooperative Learning Techniques are very successful in creating an atmosphere where information is shared between and among learners rather than collaboration, where the learner works only with the experts [teachers]. Richard-Amato’ quotes Kagan in separating the cooperative learning types: (1) peer tutoring, (2) jigsaw, (3) projects, (4) individualized, (5) interaction. Education buzz words such as pair-share, four-square, jigsaw, and carousel, metaphor, analogy, paradox, inquiry, and concept attainment become a part of the vocabulary of the language teacher using this approach.

Each method is being used somewhere in the world. As the identification of various intelligences is acknowledged and the understanding of emotional intelligence is clarified, the approaches to the above methods have been modified. Larsen-Freeman stresses that activities should fit the learning style needs of the learners, including their intelligences. The following list attempts to correlate activities with the multiple intelligences.

1. Logical/Mathematical—puzzles and games; logical, sequential presentations, classifications and categorizations.
3. Body/Kinesthetic—hands-on activities, field trips, pantomime.

Thirty-two 2007 recipients of the TESL Certificate celebrate their accomplishments with administrators and instructors at the Samyook Language Institute (front row).

Anders University ESL students enjoy their introduction to Michigan’s winter.
5. Interpersonal—pair-work, project work, group problem-solving.
6. Intrapersonal—self-evaluation, journal keeping, options for homework.

Finally, careful thought must be given to the method(s), approach(es), and technique(s) used, whether the teacher is a behaviorist, who believes the learner’s mind is just waiting to be taught; a cognitivist, who sees language as an innate skill the learner is born with and instruction needs only to present specific skills, or a constructionist, who views learning as interactive but believes in a biological timetable. Regardless of their philosophical orientation, language teachers need to “teach the person,” and not just the system of arbitrary signals and combining rules used to communicate in a given language.

An effective way for ESL teachers to really understand how to “teach the person” is for them to take a course or two in a language they don’t know. This will give them a better understanding of the challenges adults face learning English and help make them better and more empathetic teachers. In addition, by studying a second language, they will learn more about English; or rather, what they subconsciously know about English will be brought up to the conscious level. Even more important, they will become citizens of the world!

**Professor Diane Staples demonstrates English pronunciation at the Samyook Language Institute during the TESL Certificate program in the summer of 2007.**

Stella Ramirez Greig (Ph.D. in Linguistics, Georgetown University) in 1977 helped establish the English Language Institute at Andrews University (AU-ELI) in Berrien Springs, Michigan, and directed it for its first 10 years. Jeanette Wright Bryson (Ph.D. in Education/Leadership, Andrews University) is the current director of the Center for Intensive English Programs (CIIEP) at the university.

In addition to classes for students wanting to acquire or improve English proficiency, Andrews University offers a teaching minor in TESL, as well as an M.A. in TESL. Its graduates currently teach in the U.S. and overseas. In addition to those trained professionally, there are volunteer ESL teachers with varying levels of preparation. To help fill their needs, Andrews offers a four-week summer intensive called “The TESL Certificate Program,” with 100-120 hours of instruction. This introductory overview of TESL lays a basic foundation for the beginning ESL teacher. At the international level, Cambridge University’s widely recognized Certificate of English Language Teaching to Adults (CELT A) program is another educational option.

**Other Suggested Reading**


**NOTES AND REFERENCES**


  3. Ibid., pp. 268ff.


  7. BaFa BaFa is a simulation game that provides an interactive experience for learners. It is designed to teach cultural awareness and influence attitudes. Information is available at Simulation Training Systems.com.


An Action Plan for Teaching Young English Language Learners

Your principal has just informed you that a 3rd-grade student who speaks no English will be joining your K-3 multigrade classroom next week. You have little time to prepare for a smooth entry for this child. You have no prior experience teaching English as a second language (ESL). What strategies and resources can you call upon for help?

In this article, a teacher called “Norma” and a Korean student called “Sol” will be used to illustrate some best practices and tips from expert teachers of English as a second language. The ideas described here illustrate a limited number of strategies and resources because the literature on teaching English language learners (ELLs) is vast, varied, and nearly inexhaustible. Let us follow Norma over several months as she implements some of these ideas.

After praying for divine guidance, Norma took the following steps to ease her new student into her 15-student classroom. She brainstormed ways to make Sol feel welcomed and accepted by her peers and teacher. Norma tried to view each task from Sol’s perspective. She planned ways to use Sol’s own cultural background and first language to launch her into the English language world.

Using an interpreter, Norma met with Sol’s parents. From this initial meeting, she was able to observe some of Sol’s needs, interests, and family customs. Sol was a Korean girl whose parents planned to place her with an English-speaking host family. After they returned to Korea, they would visit their daughter in Canada every three months throughout the year. They told the interpreter that they were eager for their daughter to become proficient in English and were willing to make this sacrifice in order to achieve this academic goal. Norma gently cautioned the parents that it would take much longer than a year for Sol to achieve fluency in English.

Preparing for the ELL’s Arrival

Norma began her preparations to welcome Sol into her classroom. She went to the school’s professional development library to search for materials using best ESL instructional practices. These included: scaffolding, validation of student learning, student-centered experiential learning, ESL academic assessment, as well as second-language acquisition learning theories. She also used the Internet to find relevant resources such as http://www.everythings esl.net and Websites for professional ESL organizations such as TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) at http://www.tesol.org.

The same day Norma learned about her new ESL student, she called her colleague and ESL expert, Maria, who loaned her a copy of Supporting ESL Learners Resource Book K-12, Elizabeth Claire’s and Judie Haynes’ books, Newcomer Program K-2 Activity Copymasters—Teacher’s Guide, and Classroom Teacher’s ESL Survival Kit No. 1. Norma was able to order more of Judie Haynes’ ESL books through Amazon.com at a reasonable price.

BY CATHERINE LAMBERT
cost. These resources offered flexible hands-on activities and practical strategies for inclusive and differentiated instruction of ELLs in the classroom, in addition to a level-appropriate year-long assessment plan.

Assigning a Peer Mentor

When Sol arrived at school the following week, Norma introduced her to Madge, a native English speaker near her age who was willing to act as a peer mentor. Madge quickly learned to communicate with Sol via sign language, pictures, and body gestures, which she used to help Sol learn the classroom routines and explore her school and playground.

Norma used picture symbols to help Sol develop the vocabulary needed for the daily schedule, classroom rules, and basic instruction. The picture symbols empowered Sol to make choices and find information.

As the year progressed, Norma asked Sol to give each of her classmates Korean names and show them how to write them with Korean symbols. She challenged her students to learn a few words in Sol’s language. Norma arranged for Sol to help her peers cook some Korean foods, and the students introduced Sol to some of their favorite foods such as pizza and pierogi.

Although Sol quickly acquired a number of isolated English words, Norma wanted her to use English patterns of speech. This meant that Sol’s speech patterns had to be retrained for the second language. However, Norma made it clear that Sol could still use and value her first language and Korean heritage. To accomplish this goal, Norma used dialogues and realistic drills.

Resources

To motivate Sol to immerse herself in English, Norma continued to implement the strategies she would normally use to teach speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills to her multigrade students. Norma provided a language-rich environment. She displayed interesting books with wonderful illustrations on topics that grabbed Sol’s attention, from gorillas to whales, from how to draw horses to how to create origami. Norma selected concept books for Sol to read, since “For the child just beginning the move into a new language, one of the first priorities is the acquisition of new labels for old experiences, and for many new experiences of life in a second culture.” Concept books provided strong support at this point because they described the varied dimensions of a single object, a class of objects, or an abstract idea. For additional vocabulary support, Norma had her students help Sol label everything in the room, such as clock, door, cupboard, computer, wall, ceiling, sliding glass door, floor, desk, telephone, etc.

Norma also implemented Virginia G. Allen’s advice that books for young ESL students should have the following features: (1) a strong emphasis on the development of concepts (i.e., Anne and Harlow Rockwell’s The Toolbox and Tana Hoban’s Push, Pull, Empty, Full: A Book of Opposites); (2) predictable patterns of events and repetitive sentence patterns (i.e., Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? by Bill Martin, Jr.); (3) illustrations that support and extend the meaning (i.e., Mirra Ginsburg’s The Chick and the Duckling); (4) a format that invites talk (such as A Taste of Blackberries by Doris Buchanan Smith); (5) a framework that supports writing or other areas of the curriculum; and (6) content that is linked to the English language learner’s culture.

In terms of lending support to the curriculum, Allen comments: “For ESL children in the United States, stories of pioneer life on the prairie are not a part of their heritage. Pam
Conrad’s book *Prairie Visions: The Life and Times of Solomon Butcher*\(^{15}\) can make those days come alive. The text of this book, though fascinating, would be difficult for the second-language learner, but the photographs are magnificent . . . the reader sees actual sod homes, children playing in the yards . . . the opportunity to see real faces makes history come alive in a dramatic way. . . .”\(^{16}\) Allen adds: “It is important to have books in the classroom library that relate to ESL children’s own culture. Not only does it help the self-esteem of the ESL children, it also supports the growth of other children’s awareness of and respect for the cultural groups that make up their society.”\(^{17}\) For example, Harriet Rohmer has edited a series of bilingual texts such as Tran-Khan-Tuyet’s version of *The Little Weaver of Thai- Yen Village*\(^{18}\) in English and Vietnamese, Min Paek’s *Aekeyung’s Dream* in English and Korean, and Rohmer’s adaptation of *Uncle Nacho’s Hat* in English and Spanish.\(^{19}\)

As Norma used the Internet to find ways to teach ESL, she initially felt overwhelmed by the thousands of Websites available. One site Norma found useful was by Shelley A. Vernon, which offers an e-book called *101 English Language Games for Children*. There are also elementary lesson plans on a variety of topics. Norma could e-mail questions to Shelley Vernon at info@teachingenglishgames.com to get helpful teaching tips.

Norma began to use games, songs, and chants to teach the rhythm and pronunciation of English phrases and sentences,\(^{20}\) after reading an ESL expert’s statement that: “Songs and chants are regular ways of fixing words in the memory. The rhythms of English are quite different from the rhythms of other languages so this kind of practice is really important.”\(^{21}\)

Norma also decided to use the British Columbia Ministry of Education Special Programs publication, *English as a Second Language Learners: A Guide for Classroom Teachers*.\(^{22}\) This publication offers guidelines and resources for teachers on such topics as adjustment challenges facing ESL students, assessment and placement of students, plus tips and strategies for teaching English to immigrant students. For example, “In the course of learning a new language, comprehension often precedes production. Beginner ESL students may initially be silent for a period, as they listen and internalize.”\(^{23}\) Norma found that many of the suggestions were just as useful for native English speakers as for ELLs, so she began to use these guidelines as a framework for her daily lesson plans.

Norma also obtained videos from her local community college that demonstrated teaching techniques for engaging ELLs. Through them, she learned that routines such as taking attendance and calendar activities provide important listening skill practice. To build on what students already know, the teacher can say: “Look at Sol’s pretty dress! What color is it?” To further extend Sol’s understanding and use of color vocabulary, Norma assigned a cooperative learning group activity. They put a large rainbow puzzle together. The students asked Sol, “What do you call a rainbow in your language? Where do you see a rainbow? When do you see a rainbow?” The ensuing discussion not only extended Sol’s language learning but also reassured her that her own language and heritage were valued by her peers.

**Categorizing ESL Strategies**

As she guided this process of language interaction between Sol and her peers, Norma found that ESL strategies can be “grouped into two broad categories: those pertaining to how the teacher uses language to present information or interact with the students” (giving wait time, teaching the language of the subject, simplifying sentences, and rephrasing idioms or teaching their meaning) and “those pertaining to classroom procedures or instructional planning” (presenting important ideas with key words, using visual and non-verbal cues, using the student’s native language to check comprehension, using tactful and discreet ways to respond to the student’s language errors, and using directed reading activities and audio-tape texts to combine aural and visual cues).\(^{24}\)

Norma sought further help to manage Sol’s English-speaking skills and social integration into her peer group. One suggestion was to use humor in the form of riddles such as: “How many books can you put into an empty school bag? None. If you put a book in it, the bag is no longer empty.”\(^{25}\) Norma found that the book *101 American English Riddles* included “many types of language-based humor,” and stimulated thought about language while being an enjoyable learning tool for non-native speakers of English.\(^{26}\)

**Introducing the ELL to the Community**

In addition to these classroom-based practices, Norma realized that Sol would need to be introduced to her new community and culture. To provide Sol and her peers with more opportunities for authentic language practice, Norma planned for all the students to participate in field trips. For example, they would go shopping for items to fill a Christmas Shoe Box to send to children in Colombia, South America. Sol would use a digital camera to record the events of the trip, and with her classmates, produce a book that would be read over and over in the classroom reading corner.

After each field trip, Norma encouraged Sol and her classmates to create PowerPoint presentations, scrapbooks, charts, journals, and bulletin boards to represent their activities and validate their learning. As these projects were revisited later, the concepts could be consolidated, reviewed, and internalized in a pleasurable manner. Sol and her peers would engage in conversational English, listening, and speaking as they collaborated and cooperated in group learning. This would lead to opportunities for reading and writing in various subject areas of the curriculum.

Norma also decided to use the school telephone to enhance Sol’s real-life communication skills. She obtained a Telephone kit. (With this kit, one child takes a phone out of the room, while a peer carries on a conversation with him or her

**Norma used picture symbols to help Sol develop the vocabulary needed for the daily schedule, classroom rules, and basic instruction.**
Norma arranged for Sol to help her peers cook some Korean foods, and the students introduced Sol to some of their favorite foods such as pizza and pierogi.

Putting the Focus on Communication

As Norma implemented these new instructional strategies to help Sol become comfortable in the mainstream classroom, she kept in mind this admonition: “When we are giving our students experiential language practice, the focus is on communicating, not on accuracy of pronunciation or grammar . . . the teacher can make a note . . . of language items which are obviously giving problems and, at a suitable time, review them.”28 She also found Bell, Burnaby, and Love’s summary of their module on teaching speaking skills to ESL students: “The purpose of all our speech instruction in the classroom is to help our students communicate on their own without us being there to feed them the words. To do this effectively, they need to know how to say what they mean and how to say it appropriately, and they need to have the opportunity of getting out there and communicating. We should aim at giving them practice in all three tasks.”29

To encourage Sol to communicate independently, Norma facilitated her attempts to speak English by using the principles of scaffolding based on Pauline Gibbons’ book, which also contains a glossary of specific teaching strategies for ELLs.30 One strategy to teach listening skills is “Describe and Draw,” a barrier game where neither child can see the other and each child takes turns describing something he or she is drawing. His or her partner then has to draw the same thing.31 Another helpful teaching activity Norma found was Dialogue Journal. This, as “the name suggests . . . is a conversation that is written down. It may be between the student and teacher, or between an ESL student and an English-speaking buddy.”32

Norma found chapters two and six of Gibbons’ book, which focus on how to use questions to scaffold classroom talk and listening as an active thinking process, to be the most helpful. These emphasize a balance from inside the classroom. When the children have built up enough confidence and knowledge, the real telephone conversations can begin.) Norma planned to save up her telephone errands and give Sol, Madge, and other students the real-life learning experience of calling a repairman or ordering pizza delivery for a class party.27
between asking questions and demanding specific answers, allowing “learners to negotiate what they want to say.”

Norma also used Gibbons’ suggested questions when quizzing Sol about her classwork:

“Tell us what you learned. Tell us about what you did. What did you find out?”

Norma made sure to allow “wait” or “lag” time, to allow Sol to think about her answers and to revise her responses. This “makes a big difference to how much students say, how clearly they say it, and how much they are able to demonstrate what they understand.”

She found that Gibbons’ simple strategy worked well: “to ask the student to clarify meaning rather than take responsibility for doing this herself. Her responses to the student do not simply evaluate what the student has said; instead, they prompt the student to have another go: ‘Can you explain that a bit more?’”

Norma found this important advice in the ESL literature: “One of the most important things that ESL learners need to be able to do is ask for clarification when they don’t understand something.” So, she had Sol model and practice phrases like these:

“Excuse me, I’d like to ask something.”

“I’m sorry, I don’t understand. Can you repeat that?”

“I’m sorry, I didn’t hear that. Can you say it again, please?”

Gibbons advises teachers to use their own judgment in relation to individual learners, deciding how much responsibility for clarification they require, but warns that “almost certainly most ESL students will be able to say more if they are given more time during the process of an interaction. . . . It is not an exaggeration to suggest that classroom talk determines whether or not children learn, and their ultimate feelings of self-worth as students. Talk is how education happens.”

After accessing these resources, identifying best practices for ELLs, and implementing the ideas described in this article, Norma experienced success in teaching both Sol and her other students!

**To provide Sol and her peers with more opportunities for authentic language practice, Norma planned for all the students to participate in field trips.**

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**Catherine Lambert** is completing her fifth year as a coordinator for the British Columbia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Hazelton, British Columbia, Canada. Before retiring from teaching public school in 1998, she taught kindergarten and multi-grade classrooms for many years. She has served as an ESL teacher of aboriginal students and an ESL tutor, is licensed as an Early Childhood Educator, and has completed a 120-hour course in Teaching English as a Foreign Language that included a five-week practicum with multi-level, multi-ethnic adult students.

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**NOTES AND REFERENCES**

1. All names used in this article are pseudonyms.
2. School District 41—Burnaby, Supporting ESL Learners Resource Book

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8. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
23. Ibid., p. 13.
26. Ibid., p. viii.
28. Ibid., p. 16.
29. Ibid., pp. 18, 19.
31. Ibid., p. 142.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid., p. 37.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid., p. 107.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid., p. 38.
This article is designed to offer ideas that will aid teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) in crafting the strategies that will ensure success in a variety of situations. Its recommendations are based on personal experiences and the observations of many individuals in more than 30 programs throughout the U.S.A. and abroad.

While using a single lesson plan to teach a homogeneous class might work, there is no “one size fits all” book or a lesson plan that fits the multicultural and multi-level ability of students in 21st-century classrooms. Therefore, the teacher must craft a strategy that is inclusive, yet flexible and fluid so that over time it will continue to meet the students’ needs, since their knowledge will grow at different rates in the areas of language learning (taught language) and language acquisition (language obtained from life experiences).

For an individual to successfully teach English as a second language (ESL), he or she needs to carefully consider four areas: (1) the teacher, (2) the student, (3) the material, and (4) the activities. These components are involved in teaching any class. Successful ESL teachers must create an efficient educational mix of these components to address the vastly differing needs within the same class, to ensure that their students progress toward second-language proficiency.

Time and Educational Community Engagement

Time constraints make strategizing for success extremely important in teaching ESL. Since the educational and societal community expects results on a time line, which they informally “assess” on an almost daily basis, the ESL teacher and the ELL (English Language Learner) are often under a great deal of pressure to produce timely results. Example: No one, when passing the math teacher in the hall, says “Paolo still doesn’t know how to solve equations.” However, administrators and staff feel free to say to the ESL teacher, “Pablo still doesn’t understand the posted signs,” or “I can’t understand what Paulina says.” Statements like these suggest an ongoing evaluation of the teacher, the student, the material taught, and the rate of language learning and acquisition.

To achieve positive results, everyone involved in educating ELL students should be on the same page as to the topics, timeline, and sequence of instruction. Example: After determining the content, sequence, and timeline of ELL instruction, post each week the subject and vocabulary on a bulletin board so that others can use the information when speaking to, or writing messages for, the students. This helps ensure greater interaction between the staff, English-speaking students, and the ELL students.

A Four-Part Plan for Action

Start by creating four Fact Sheets labeled: (1) Teacher, (2) Students, (3) Materials, and (4) Activities. The fourth component, Activities, should be chosen after you assess the content of the first three. As the teacher, students, and materials interact through carefully chosen activities, this creates the environment in which learning takes place.
These four Fact Sheets can be used for one term or until you feel the need to reassess. The student page is the one that changes the most frequently. It is helpful to reassess the other three at set intervals during the term. The following events commonly alter the teacher’s ESL plans:

1. Changes in the teacher’s personal life, attitudes, knowledge base, or life experiences. Example: Taking a class in Socio-cultural Linguistics will have a different effect on the teacher than a class in ELL Materials.

2. Changes in the students’ lives and achievement (i.e., frustration over a bad grade could cause the student to progress at a different rate).

3. Changes in the material resources available to the students and teacher.

4. Changes in school leadership, administrative goals, student population, structures, or supply channels.

When things change, you will need to re-evaluate and update the single Fact Sheet with your conclusions. This may necessitate a change in class activities or dynamics, such as class groupings, materials, language level re-structuring, or other aspects of classroom instruction.

The Teacher

Students “read” the teacher long before they read the first words in their assignments. When they don’t know the language being spoken in the classroom, they read the teacher even more carefully. Since they don’t know, or are not sure, about what the teacher is saying, the non-verbal cues are what the student will understand. Therefore, before a teacher steps into a classroom to teach ELL students, he or she must do some mind- and soul-searching about attitudes and biases that might come through in his or her non-verbal communication. As King Solomon said, “As he thinks within himself, so he is” (Proverbs 23:7, NASB).

Fact Sheet—The Teacher’s Page

In the play Twelfth Night, Shakespeare said: “Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and others have greatness thrust upon them.” ESL teachers also fall into those three categories: (1) some were born to teach ESL, (2) some acquire the skills to teach ESL, and (3) others have ESL teaching thrust upon them. Knowing to which group you belong, and your attitudes toward the three categories, will help you identify feelings about ELLs in general, and more specifically, how to create a personal strategy that will ensure success in your situation. Example: How you teach ELLs in Chicago may differ greatly from how you teach them in China.

The information that you gather for your personal Fact Sheet will help you identify points of connection with administrators, fellow teachers, and students. It will also identify areas for
personal growth, and reveal the natural assets that will aid you in planning and delivery of instruction.

**Getting Started**

Here are some questions that can serve as starting points as you journal about your personal learning, teaching experiences, and attitudes:

1. Have you ever been in a situation where you didn’t understand what was happening? How did you feel? What made the situation more manageable for you? Would you like to go back to that situation again? What factors would make you want to be where you didn’t know what was going on?

2. Do you enjoy teaching? Do you like your present teaching situation? What would make it better? Can you do something about it?

3. Do you like international students? Do you look forward to interacting with them? What can you do to better understand them? What proportion of your time do you spend preparing to teach ELL students? How many times a day do you spend one-on-one time with an international student?

Note: The teacher is the one who connects the student and the new language, so it is important to establish this connection carefully. Know yourself, and if you feel you need to make changes, use David’s approach—pray that God would create a clean heart and a right spirit within you (Psalm 51:10).

**The Student**

One of the exciting aspects of being an ESL teacher is the variety of students each new term. Regardless of the groupings, getting the information about each student on the first day makes it possible to quickly create tasks and scenarios in which each one is engaged, comfortable, and achieving his or her potential. Here are some examples of this diversity, and how it affects teaching strategies:

1. *A homogeneous group of 42 Asian English education majors.* They are meticulous about homework but reticent to speak; they do not submit original written material or properly quoted sources. Approach: Have them work in groups of three for speaking, or paired with a friend for writing.

2. *A class of 12 students from as many countries and cultures.* All seem sure that their perspective is the correct one. Approach: Plan for a quiet exercise to use as a breather when the discussion becomes too heated.

3. *An intermediate ESL class with people from different countries...*
and careers: a Hispanic admiral, a professional skateboarder from Germany, two Nordic bankers, two Asian musicians, three Middle Eastern men, plus three students from various locations whose goal is to find a spouse. Finding common ground is difficult. They don’t like the textbook and are vocal about their opinions. Approach: Use journals and magazines relating to their interests as textbooks. These will generate vocabulary, presentations, discussion, note taking, outline development, and writing.

**Fact Sheet—The Student Pages**

Keep your Student Fact Sheet pages in a three-ring binder that contains class plans, your grade book, and other materials. This makes it easy to personalize the materials for both preparation and presentation. These Fact Sheets are easily kept up to date if you insert daily notes with helpful information, which will generate ideas and lesson plans for future assignments.

Divide the Fact Sheet into two sections:

**Part A** – Top half or front: information given to you by the student.

- Have the students fill out questionnaires about themselves that include what they like to read, what they need to learn and why, and what they hope to achieve in the class. Use the questionnaire, or an in-class activity, to discover more about their background, work, hobbies, and other interests. Add this information to the student info sheet, and use it to create connections between each student’s interests and the assigned lessons.

**Part B** – Bottom half of the page (or the back): Information from assessments and personal observations. Include test scores, educational background, previous ESL courses, and other factual information that can be used to better tailor the assignments to each student’s needs.

**The Materials**

Most educational programs provide the teacher with the curriculum materials, or a list of the texts and materials that may be used. Along with this, there is usually a list of alternate materials. However, you will sometimes need to go a step further to locate missing books and resources, or additional materials. Or worse, the teaching material may not arrive until partway through the term. Buy a few resource books to draw upon, and determine the location of other materials that can be used in an emergency.

**Fact Sheet—The Materials Page**

Inventory everything that is available. Begin with a general list such as this: books or notes from the previous teacher, materials available at the local library, the content of on-site bookcases, availability of computers or audio equipment and materials, etc. As your list grows and becomes more specific, it will become easier to tap into a variety of resources to keep students engaged in learning. Referring to the list, along with

*Time constraints make strategizing for success extremely important in teaching ESL.*

*Making Valentine cards helps ESL students increase their vocabulary as they research and use words relating to friendship and love.*

*Organizing a class party enhances ESL students’ social skills in an English-speaking environment and expands their food-related vocabulary.*
Before a teacher steps into a classroom to teach ELL students, he or she must do some mind- and soul-searching about attitudes and biases that might come through in his or her non-verbal communication.

The Activities
Include in the list of activities all of the things that you and the students do in the classroom for the purpose of learning and assessment. Choose the activities on the basis of educational approaches, methods, techniques, learning styles, interests, temperaments, tradition, materials available, and on what the local educational system considers “best practices.” Optimal outcomes will result when the activities suit the students in their individual situations and help them achieve their individual goals.

This is why keeping the student page current is so important. These pages suggest which activities are needed and those that will work best.

Fact Sheet—The Activities Pages
(Planning Book)
Planning
1. Start with what has been given to you. Ask your supervisor or department head exactly what is expected of you. Watch the teachers who have had long-standing success at the school, or visit other ESL classrooms.
2. Write out a detailed calendar of the activities that will occur at the school and in the community during the current term. These events, whether major sports events, city parades, or church programs, will relate to your students’ interests, as will the seasonal and national holidays.
3. Insert the events into the plan before choosing activities for the class. This will simplify your work of choosing appropriate activities to teach, while helping the students learn English using upcoming events. (Continued on page 25)

RESOURCES
Websites
http://www.britishcouncil.org/parents-help-how-children-learn-languages.htm. Basic information about language learning to download and distribute as needed for students, parents, and coworkers. It is available in several languages.

http://www.tesol.org. The official Website for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages includes information about materials, events, and conventions. The events offer lots of helpful ideas, as well as the opportunity to examine new materials and meet fellow ESL teachers. TESOL’s quarterly, Essential Teacher, is practical and a good read. The organization has recently begun to offer free Internet seminars for TESOL Global and student members. Website: http://www.tesol.org/virtualseminars.

http://www.eslcafe.com/ “Dave’s ESL Café,” the oldest and most-visited English as a Second Language (ESL) site—a great place to chat with other ESL teachers and students. Includes links to other sites, as well as great ideas for lessons and books.

http://jc-schools.net/tutorials/interact-read.htm. A good source for fun, interactive games for English Language Learners (ELLs). The games range in ability levels so that students K-8 can play and develop skills.

http://owtenglish.purdue.edu/handouts/esl/eslstudent.html. A great place to find quick handouts and advice from the experts. It includes opportunities for students to exchange e-mails with a pen pal.

http://www.tolearnenglish.com/. This site offers a placement test that students can complete under non-stressful conditions, as well as games, crossword puzzles, plays, and books appropriate for ELLs.


http://www.nelliemuller.com/. A remarkably rich Website, created by a veteran ESL teacher, that offers a host of links to support teaching and learning. The site is especially useful for implementing collaborative projects. It includes Web-Quests for ages 5-8; 9-12; 13-15; and adults as well as ones specifically intended for ELLs.

http://iteslj.org/Techniques/. Lists of instructional techniques on topics such as how to become a better teacher, autonomy, classroom management, ESL teaching ideas, motivating students, and using music and songs to enhance learning.

http://members.EnchantedLearning.com/books/spanish/animalsynumeros/. Lots of bilingual stories about subjects like animals and numbers; some of which will help students learn to count in Spanish and English.

http://members.EnchantedLearning.com/books/spanish/picturedictionaryspeng/SpanishEnglishABCSBook_EnchantedLearning.pdf. Offers a variety of activities for teachers such as bilingual dictionaries, stories, and many good handouts.
http://www.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown/bestbooks.html. Suggestions about helpful books to use with ELLs and English-speaking students.

http://literacyconnections.com/SecondLanguage.php. Bilingual, Spanish, and ESL literacy resources such as online bilingual dictionaries, bilingual books, ELL activities, professional resources for teaching ESL, and links to organizations supporting bilingual literacy.

http://www.mes-english.com/worksheets/images/talking_1.gif. Many resources for teaching Spanish or helping students learn English, including materials to print and hand out to students or to use as overheads. Subjects include likes and dislikes, comparisons, body parts, the alphabet, holiday color sheets, and much more.

http://lessonplanet.com/. Contains many lesson plans correlated to state standards and themes, a lesson maker, and 57 lesson plans for ESL learners. K-8 lesson plans on a variety of topics, from narratives to the Vietnam War.

http://www.eslreadingsmart.com/default.aspx. An online ESL/ELL program that supports classroom instruction, and state-adopted objectives. It provides instructional materials for beginner, intermediate, and advanced English learners in grades 4-12, as well as college-level students and adults. Its 135 content-based lessons, placement tests, printable lesson plans, reading program, and class management materials allow for individualized instruction and tracking of student progress.


BOOKS

K-12


Practical


Good Class Activities


ESL in the Multilevel Classroom


Teaching Abroad


Case Studies of Schools With Mainstreamed ELL Students


Higher Education

Start building your list of activities for teaching. The plans will, over time, become second nature to you. Just a word on the planner page will elicit the entire procedure. This treasure box of routines and activities will help you develop and enhance your personal teaching style.

Teaching Is Learning

If you are alert to opportunities for growth, you will gain insights into how to be more effective. These personal “Aha” experiences will suggest ideas for future assignments. Although these concepts may have been researched and published somewhere, they need to be experienced. Let me share with you my top 10 “Aha” discoveries. (You may have already experienced some of them!)

Eve’s Top Ten “Aha” Discoveries Teaching ESL

1. The more students read, talk, and listen, the better they read, talk, and listen. People get better at what they repeat, and they do again what they enjoy. Find out what that is. Incorporate it into their educational experience.
2. Pictures, moving or still, are helpful for everyone. Pictures say a lot in a little time, set the mood, and focus thought. Use students’ pictures, or yours, creatively in every subject.
3. The teacher’s job is to teach the student, not language or a book. Get to know each student. Plan ways of connecting and instructing that make them shine. Then they will learn the language, understand the assignments, and participate in class activities.
4. Reading aloud is good practice for everyone. Clear, well-paced oral delivery is important.
5. Time management is easier with a daily routine. Use five to eight activities as a core cycle. Each activity should be about 10 to 15 minutes in length. Pace the work to meet the students’ needs.
6. After a few weeks, break the routine with new activities and subjects to retain student interest. TV writers know how to elicit interest—copy their techniques. Give previews of upcoming classes to build expectancy.
7. Pace the material to the ability of the student. Pushing and trying to speed up a process can cause a crash. It is harder to recover from a crash than to prevent one.
8. From childhood, everyone wants to know “Why?” So tell your students the “Why” of each activity, or at the end, ask them to tell you the reason for it. If you can’t explain how the assignment helps their learning, don’t waste time on it.
9. For each lesson, present an overview and help students make personal connections to it.
10. Activities that teach specific skills and can be easily retold to a friend or parent are memorable for ESL students.

Conclusion

Finally, if in the midst of the term you feel a little overwhelmed, remember you control the lights and the sounds, you hold the motivational and academic safety net, you set the mood and the pace, you set the bar, you are the director, they are the show. Keep it happy, smile, and enjoy! ☺
ads that read, “If you can speak it, you can teach it,” attracted thousands of young people to travel the world to teach ESL (English as a Second Language). English-language schools of the 1960s and 1970s flourished with the influx of native speakers who were given a scripted textbook with all the “right” things to say.

However, by the end of the 1970s, in a world that was rapidly becoming globalized, the need to communicate across language barriers had become critical. This would lead to the development of a completely new field of research that, in time, would change the way second-language classrooms operated, and to a large degree, the way students learned a new language.

Knowing a Language

Knowing a language means someone has developed the innate ability to understand the pragmatics and nuances of language, and then to unconsciously create original language patterns that are unique and specific to the exact time and situation in which they are spoken.

In this article, we will examine some of the more salient aspects of research that have influenced our understanding of what language is and how a learner acquires a second language.

Knowing a Language

The Psalmist declares, “I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14, NKJV). Perhaps one of the most distinguishing attributes with which God has endowed human beings is the innate ability to acquire language, and then to communicate their thoughts and feelings with others.

For centuries, researchers have been fascinated with how children, without any formal instruction, acquire language from their environment. According to researchers, this process of language acquisition, or language absorption, begins in the first few weeks of life, and continues until the age of 5 or 6. As young children attend to their environment, they begin to make associations between the sounds they hear and the actions and movements they see. In time, the cooing and babbling give way to attempts at forming sounds into words. Miraculously, young children are able to converse fluently in their native language and to form more complex structures that reflect adult speech.

Thus, learning one’s native language in the early years of childhood is primarily accomplished unconsciously and intuitively from the child’s environment.

Even young speakers of English are able to distinguish between sound units of words, such as dog and car, and to unconsciously and coherently construct and reconstruct correct phrases and sentences, even though they cannot fully explain the rules for doing so. For example, most speakers of English, when using more than one adjective to describe something, have little difficulty saying the big, blue car. They know innately that one does not say the blue, big car, even though they may not be able to give a plausible reason for the preferred word order. Japanese speakers as well, without hesitation, know that one can give a compliment by saying oishi-soo (looks delicious), or o-genki-soo (looks healthy), but are careful when using kawaii-soo (not looks cute, but what a pity).

Knowing a language means
one has developed the innate ability to understand the pragmatics and nuances of language, and then to unconsciously create original language patterns that are unique and specific to the exact time and situation in which they are spoken. It also means being able to understand the uniqueness of the language that one hears. We know instinctively what belongs to our language and what does not belong.5

Principles of Language Teaching
As second-language research has provided extensive evidence in support of more implicit communication-based instruction, grammar-based methodologies, such as the Grammar-Translation Method, the Audiolingual Method, and the Direct Method, for the most part, have been abandoned. Although research is still providing new theories, several significant theories have emerged over the years that are worth discussing.

Accuracy vs. Fluency
Communication-based classrooms tend to focus on developing actual communication, emphasizing the need for linguistic fluidity and spontaneity in using the language, rather than trying to develop native-speaker accuracy. In the past, speaking like the natives was the goal for most language learners as they entered their course of study. However, research is indicating that learners, at any given stage of development, may be accurate according to their level of achievement, while not necessarily accurate when being evaluated in terms of native-speaker fluency. According to Richard-Amato, “it is unrealistic to expect second language learners to be ‘native.’”6 This is especially true if we try to decide which variety of English is, in fact, native. The British as well as the Americans, the Australians, and even the Canadians would all argue that their variety of English is “native.”

In recent years, the Educational Testing Services (ETS)7 has recognized the need to develop a new format for their Test Of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) that reflects how a learner communicates in a second language. The new format, referred to as the Internet-based Test (iBT), focuses on testing a student’s ability to communicate in the areas of listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Although grammar and vocabulary are not tested directly, it is assumed that a student at a particular level will have the ability to use the appropriate grammar and vocabulary to satisfy the standards.

This is not to say, however, that in language classrooms some analysis of the language, especially in academic-based teaching, is not beneficial. However, when ESL instruction focuses primarily on the communicative aspects of the language (listening, reading, writing, and speaking), and the grammar remains in the periphery, students are more likely to acquire the rules of the language.8 This type of teaching is not unstructured; on the contrary, it is based on principles that can be adapted and adjusted to the varying situations and needs that second-language teachers face daily in the classroom.

Language in Before Language out
Perhaps one of the most logical and yet most overlooked principles is the need for language in before language out. A learner must be able to comprehend a language before he or she can acquire the ability to produce that language. Students who are exposed to language that is rendered comprehensible by its context and hints about meaning can more readily “absorb” how that language is constructed. Some researchers9 have even strongly suggested that second-language learners who read for pleasure and focus on understanding the meaning are able to “absorb” unconsciously how the target language flows and develops grammatically. When such learners attempt to speak or...
write, they have already processed the language on an input level.

In balance, language that is first “absorbed” tends to be more readily processed, as learners have had opportunity to gain an intrinsic feel for how the words flow. Later, when learners begin to explore and create the target language on their own, more explicit grammatical instruction can be beneficial, reinforcing the assumptions that were made in the earlier stages of acquisition.

Possibly one of the most important contributions to the field of English-language learning was a program developed by Ashley Hastings, a now-retired professor of TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) from Shenandoah University in Winchester, Virginia. Based on the concept of language in before language out, the program provides opportunities for learners to develop listening skills before reading, reading skills before writing, and writing skills before speaking. With no expectations of producing language before comprehending it, students are able to progress more rapidly than if required to speak or write while they develop listening and reading skills.

Authentic Material

Another crucial principle for language acquisition is the authenticity of classroom materials. Scripted language, frequently found in older ESL textbooks, to a large degree tends to rely on unnatural, and somewhat manipulated, language structures in the form of dialogues, exercises, and even drills. Authentic material, on the other hand, tends to preserve the reality and plausibility of native language in its natural context. Although passages may be simplified to render them comprehensible, the authenticity is preserved by focusing on meaning rather than structure.

In a communication-based classroom, where authentic materials are used, learners are able to connect the materials and activities with their real-world counterparts. H. D. Brown notes, “Authentic language and real-world tasks enable students to see the relevance of classroom activity to their long term communicative goals. By introducing natural texts . . . rather than concocted, artificial material, students will more readily dive in to the activity.” In other words, what happens in the classroom must be applicable to the real-world interactions outside of the classroom in order to be effective.

Task-Based Teaching

One of the best methods for developing continuity and relevancy in ESL classrooms is to incorporate tasks that focus on accomplishing learner goals and are based on student needs and interests. When students are assigned a task with easy-to-follow guidelines, the focus of the class tends to shift from the structure of the language to the communication of ideas, thoughts, and opinions. Tasks can be easily developed by considering learner goals and interests, and finding materials suited for the appropriate level of listening, reading, writing, or speaking. The Internet provides an excellent source for each of these areas. Do a Google search and select appropriate and relevant materials from reliable sites. Look for educational sites that can provide online learning videos, or clips that can be downloaded and burned onto a DVD. One such Internet site is the Discovery Educational Channel, which contains hundreds of videos suitable for K-12 in all the main subject areas.

Challenges of Learning a Language

Even if all the right principles are followed, the anxiety levels of English language learners can interfere with potential progress. It’s important to decrease their stress in order to build confidence and create a safe place for learning. Learners must develop an “I can do it” attitude to overcome their feelings of vulnerability as they attempt to acquire a new language and—to a large degree—a new identity.

Real Issues

English language learners face a number of issues in attending North American schools. When entering an English-speaking school for the first time, ELLs are often excited about being in the new environment with its exotic sights and sounds. However, this excitement often gives way to feelings of despair or even anger as they face the awkwardness of functioning in a...
foreign environment with a limited understanding of their surroundings.

In their home country, these students could interact effortlessly with family and friends, but in the new environment with new standards of conduct and communication, feelings of loneliness or isolation may hinder their attempts to participate in normal school functions. English language learners may even find simple school interactions, such as dropping or adding a class, or correcting an absence or tardiness so intimidating that they may hesitate to tackle the task.

Potential for Misunderstanding

Educators with limited exposure to different cultures and ways of thinking may believe that students from other cultures suffer from a short attention span or from some learning disability—and in some cases, this may be true. However, more often than not, their inability to stay on task or understand simple classroom instructions is not a cognitive dysfunction, but rather a normal reaction to a strange environment. When second-language learners are placed in ESL classrooms with other ELLs, their behavior is often notably different. No longer are they shy or withdrawn. With their anxiety levels lowered, they are, more often than not, able to function quite normally and become achievers.13

Stereotyping

Throughout the world, members of different cultures have preconceived notions about the parameters for appropriate behavior. When behaviors fall outside these parameters and cannot be interpreted as fitting the expected norm, the result is often subtle jabs that attempt to force people back toward accepted norms. For example, stereotyping by native speakers tends to inhibit the language acquisition process for ELLs. Subtle remarks, even slight glances and “little” nuances can send the message that foreign students are weird or offensive, and suggest to ELLs that “your culture is not accepted here.”

As educators, we often see students treated in hurtful ways by their peers. This is especially true with language learners who, when under pressure, tend to retreat to their own language groups. We can help international students adjust to new cultural mores and even integrate into the “in-group” by simply taking time to express our understanding and acceptance of their ways and making polite suggestions about how to adapt to the customs of their new country. Then, in turn, they will tend to be more accepting of our notions of how society should be run.

Conclusion

Language instruction can no longer be thought of in terms of, “If you can speak it, you can teach it,” a concept that earlier fueled young people to travel the world. The field has earned, in the 21st century, a rightful place of its own as a profession. As a mission-driven people, it is our privilege to take advantage of the knowledge with which God has blessed our world regarding the ways language is acquired. Placed in the context of the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, to take the gospel “to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people,” this knowledge, rightly used, can enable members to reach across language and cultural barriers with the “gift of tongues.”

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1. All Bible texts in this article are quoted from the New King James Version. Texts credited to NKJV are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc. Publishers. All rights reserved.
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The increasing number of English Language Learners (ELLs) in public and private school systems in the United States and other English-speaking nations is a reflection of their culturally rich and diverse societies. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2006) approximately 19 percent of the U.S. population speaks a language other than English. The enrollment of ELLs can present assessment challenges that are difficult to resolve, especially for small, multigrade Adventist schools. The solution is to use appropriate assessment instruments that incorporate linguistic and cultural elements into the evaluation.

Getting to Know English Language Learners

A 7th-grade student on her first day in math class sat hopeful, yet uneasy. The classroom, the teacher, the students, the language—everything was new to her. The numbers on the chalk board were the only recognizable feature. The formulas seemed familiar, but the word problems in the textbook looked like gibberish. Because she could not understand a word, the girl remained quiet during class for many months. During that time, nobody asked her name, where she was from, what was her native language, whether or not she knew math, or if she needed help with anything. She did not give up, although that first term she failed all her classes except for math. I was that student.

My experience is not unlike those of some English language learners today. ELLs come from varied cultures and literacy backgrounds. Learning as much as possible about them is the key to effective design and development of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Freeman and Freeman, in “Struggling English Language Learners: Keys for Academic Success,” classify ELLs into three categories:

Newly arrived learners with adequate formal schooling usually have been in the U.S. less than five years. They had adequate education in their native country, are at grade level in reading and writing, and are able to catch up academically relatively quickly, although they may still score low on English standardized tests.

Newly arrived learners with limited formal schooling have been in the U.S. less than five years and have had interrupted or inadequate schooling in their native country. They have limited heritage language literacy, perform below grade level in mathematics, and do not achieve well academically.

Long-term English language learners have been in the U.S. more than seven years but are below grade level in reading and writing. There is a mismatch between student perception of achievement and actual grades. Some of these students get good grades but score low on standardized tests. They may have been enrolled in an ESL or bilingual program intermittently.

Students in each of these categories must navigate the tumultuous waters of cultural assimilation, English proficiency, and academic achievement. The task can be daunting for students and teachers alike. Even with differentiated instruction and commendable goals for inclusion, teachers sometimes can miss the mark if they evaluate ELLs using unilateral academic assessments rather than multidimensional approaches that include the child’s cultural, linguistic, academic, and background knowledge. It is important to take into account ELLs’ cultural and linguistic characteristics when collecting and evaluating in order to craft effective instructional and assessment methods.

Linguistic Impact

Experts agree that reading comprehension is a prerequisite for academic achievement. Freeman and Freeman, in Essential Linguistics: What You Need to Know to Teach, say that there are two schools of thought on how people learn to read in any language: the word recognition view and the sociopsycholinguistic view.

The word recognition view emphasizes word identification as the key to reading success. This is a learned process. Over time, students make connections between printed words and oral vocabulary. In order for them to do so, teach-

BY PATRICIA C. SALAZAR
ers must introduce and drill the students on the skills necessary to make those connections. Decoding skills come first. Sounding out letters and blending the sounds leads to correct pronunciation, which helps with the identification of words, thereby making the printed symbols meaningful.7

The sociopsycholinguistic view focuses on the process of reading as the construction of meaning, with background knowledge and oral cues being central concerns. This means that readers acquire literacy just as they acquire oral language, through meaning. Readers make connections between the printed symbols, previous knowledge, and graphophonics (the sound relationship between the orthography [symbols] and phonology [sounds] of a language) in order to learn and expand their vocabulary.8

Languages have very distinct linguistic features. It would be unreasonable to expect ELLs to learn English without accessing their previous knowledge and their heritage language. Yet, for years, we have been doing just that. Palmer, El-Ashry, Leclere, and Chang, in “Learning From Abdallah,” recommend that teachers become informed and knowledgeable about their ELLs’ heritage languages as well as their culture. These authors state that three questions must be answered before teachers begin to work with ELLs:9

- What is my ELL’s current status as a reader in his or her heritage language and in English?
- What characteristics of my ELL’s heritage language are affecting his or her transition to English?
- Considering my ELL’s current placement as a reader and writer (based on questions 1 and 2), what instructional and assessment strategies will be most effective for him or her?

How much do you know about your ELLs’ heritage languages? How did they learn to read in Arabic, Korean, Russian, or Spanish? Did they use graphophonics or decoding? Is there a natural order to oral vocabulary and printed symbols? What similarities or dissimilarities are present between their native language and English? Linguistic characteristics such as the ones mentioned above should not go unnoticed by the teacher. However, small-school teachers are faced with the daunting task of providing instruction for ELLs without the resources available to larger institutions. What is such a teacher to do?
Defining which characteristics of the heritage language affect the transition to English is one of the key elements in developing effective instruction and assessment. The teacher can start by answering questions such as these: Is the heritage language read from left to right, or right to left? Are phonetic sounds similar to those used in English? Does the language use an alphabet? Do words represent one meaning? Does the language use verbs in its sentences? (If so, where do they appear—in the middle? At the end?) Are letters always used the same way, with the same sound and emphasis? Do symbols represent words, ideas, or concepts? Does vocal pitch affect meaning? Can the student write in his or her heritage language? Answers to these and related questions will provide the foundation for designing tools that assess English proficiency by using an equitable and wholistic approach.

**Cultural Impact**

The student’s cultural, familial, and socioeconomic background cannot be separated from his or her learning experience. Even with differentiated instruction and commendable goals for inclusion, teachers sometimes can miss the mark if they evaluate ELLs using unilateral academic assessment approaches rather than multidimensional assessments that include the child’s cultural, linguistic, academic, and background knowledge.

Even native English-speaking students differ in their vocabulary, grammatical use, and linguistic expression based on these factors. We recognize differences in accents, terminology, and even attitudes from different regions of the United States, and accept them as valid. In the same way, the teacher needs to become acquainted with his or her ELLs’ cultural backgrounds in order to understand what aspects of their culture they are likely to bring to the learning process. A student who comes from an educated middle-class family will have a different approach to learning than one who comes from a war-torn region of the world where food is scarce, and tragedy and trauma are daily occurrences.

Developing a base of cultural knowledge, paired with effective pedagogical techniques and content knowledge, is imperative for effective ESL teaching. Geneva Gay, in “Preparing for Culturally Responsive Teaching,” lists some cultural issues the teacher needs to consider:

- Does the ethnic group give priority to communal living
and cooperative problem solving or stress individual achievement? How will this affect the educational motivation, aspiration, and task performance?

- What are the ethnic group’s rules about the appropriate way for children to interact with adults? How might this influence the child’s behavior in an instructional setting?
- How does gender-role socialization in the child’s ethnic group affect the implementation of equity initiatives in classroom instruction?\(^{11}\)

Misunderstandings and negative value judgments may occur when the ELL student consciously or unconsciously transfers expectations about language and culture into the ESL environment. This is especially a problem if his or her behaviors are considered strange or inappropriate in the new environment. The teacher, ELL, and his or her classmates must all work toward understanding one another and avoid jumping to conclusions based on their unfamiliarity with the cultural mores of the other person’s culture.

Some cultures encourage their young people to interact informally with adults and to look them in the eye as they speak, while others require youngsters to maintain their distance and look down as they speak as a sign of respect. A number of countries consider speaking loudly the norm, while others regard it as disrespectful. Misinterpretation of unfamiliar or “inappropriate” behaviors can cause distress for ELLs and teachers if they do not understand the cultural connotation. The classroom code of behavior and the teacher’s learning expectations can also affect the instructional process for the ELL student.

Abdallah, a 9-year-old Palestinian student, was not progressing as expected after being placed in an ESL program. In an effort to help him, the ESL coordinator, a female teacher, enlisted the help of a male tutor who spoke Arabic to test Abdallah’s literacy levels in his native language. Instantly the child opened up, becoming more talkative and responsive. When the tutor visited with the family to explain the ESL program, they conveyed concern about the child being surrounded by female teachers.\(^ {12}\) This illustrates the importance of being familiar with cultural traditions that affect ELL students.

**Standardized Testing**

ELLs are at a great disadvantage if no allowances are made for linguistic and cultural differences when they are evaluated for English proficiency and academic achievement. However, most academic assessment tools are developed with native English speakers in mind. Traditional standardized tests are used widely in the public system for measuring student aptitude, progress, and skills. Cathleen Spinelli asserts that standardized tests cannot provide a true picture of ELLs’ background knowledge, linguistic differentiation, academic support (or lack of), limited English proficiency, and cultural differences.\(^ {13}\) Therefore, to meet ELLs’ learning needs, standardized tests should be combined with more informal and contextual evaluation tools.

**The Standards**

ESL standards address four proficiency domains: speaking, listening, reading, and writing.\(^ {14}\) These, in turn, are divided into grade clusters: K–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12. ESL standards focus on three major goals: development of (1) social language, (2) academic language, and (3) sociocultural knowledge. The standards aim to develop the language skills necessary for social and academic purposes. When students meet requirements in the proficiency domain, grade cluster, and goal standards, then they can be promoted to the next level. Once all levels have been mastered, ELLs are considered proficient in English as a second language.

**Alternative ESL Assessment**

Alternative or informal ESL assessments are procedures and instructional evaluation techniques that provide important information about ELLs’ academic and linguistic progress. These can also be used just as effectively for other foreign languages being taught, not only English. Several Internet Web sites list ESL assessment resources available to classroom teachers, such as CIRCLE, at http://circle.adventist.org and Dave’s ESL Café, at http: www.eslcafe.com.

Screening and identification of ELL students must come first. Gottlieb suggests administering a simple home language survey that includes (1) the number of languages the student speaks at home; (2) with whom he or she speaks the language(s) and how often; as well as how many years of school he or she has had in those languages (if any) before coming to your school.\(^ {15}\) “This will help you determine whether the student will need English proficiency testing.”

Jo-Ellen Tannenbaum, in “Practical Ideas on Alternative Assessment for ESL Students,” encourages teachers to develop evaluation tools that focus on what the student produces, rather than what he or she remembers.\(^ {16}\) These include nonverbal strategies, oral presentations, and portfolios.

Nonverbal assessment strategies provide a way to evaluate students’ levels of understanding during and after instruction. While respecting the students’ cultural background, these can...
Defining which characteristics of the heritage language affect the transition to English is one of the key elements in developing effective instruction and assessment.

include physical demonstrations, such as pointing and gesturing. Students can act out events or even vocabulary. Pictures, drawings, maps, and charts (such as K-W-L [Know-Want to Know-Learned] or Venn diagrams) can all be used to illustrate and evaluate vocabulary, historical dates, story characters, etc. Labeling can be used for each content area. It is important to keep a record of the ELL’s progress as these strategies are used.

Oral presentations can be used for performance-based assessments. These can include interviews, skits, retelling of a story, and summarizing. This will help the teacher to evaluate ELL students’ comprehension and thinking skills, as well as pronunciation. Visual aids (pictures, photos, maps, etc.) can be used by the ELL student to conduct an interview. Skits are another effective way to bring a story to life in a non-threatening way, allowing the teacher to evaluate student progress and encouraging the ELL to participate even if in a limited manner.

Assessment of knowledge can be done using portfolios. These focused reflections of learning goals combine student work, self-assessment, and teacher evaluation. Be sure to provide a rubric anchored on assessment criteria that match the student’s needs and ESL standards.

Working folders, or collection portfolios, hold the student’s completed work, showing daily assignments, work-in-progress, and final products. They will contain evidence of language development process and actual work.

Showcase portfolios can be used to display selected student work or best work to share with parents and administrators. All materials are selected to illustrate the student’s achievement in the classroom.

Conclusion

Three of the most important components in the process of learning to speak English, or any second language, are background knowledge, linguistics, and culture. Their influence spills over into every academic aspect of learning as well as other important areas such as attitudes, values, and behavior. Unfortunately, teachers have not always been responsive to the needs of ethnically diverse students. Through the process of assimilation and acculturation, we have expected ELLs to separate their learning experiences from their heritage language and culture. Educators have not been intentional in their effort to understand their values and culture; the standard formal assessment instruments to measure their progress reflect this.

Success in teaching is not only demonstrated but also guided by effective assessment. Because ELLs are not a homogeneous group, their linguistic and cultural differences will play a role in the learning process. The time has come to move from unilateral to multidimensional ESL assessment instruments. The key to effectively helping ELL students is getting to know them, their heritage language and culture, and incorporating these key elements into instructional delivery as well as assessment. Imagine the possibilities for ELLs to become students of books and life, as we cooperate “with the divine purpose in imparting to the youth knowledge of God, and molding the character into harmony with His.” The challenge is great, but the potential rewards are even greater.

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Seventh-day Adventists strongly believe in service to others. Thus, service learning has become an integral component of the curriculum at all educational levels in the Adventist school system. At the university level, “the opportunity to serve as a student missionary is one of the distinguishing marks of Christian education.”

For example, Southwestern Adventist University (SWAU) in Keene, Texas, sends out 10 to 20 student missionaries each year. Like the volunteers from other Adventist colleges, SWAU students have served in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Pacific Islands, and South and Central America, and generally apply for a one-year assignment. After a brief introduction to the culture and customs of their host country, students assume a variety of responsibilities. A number of student missionaries are teachers of English language learners (ELLs). As they fill this role, they must attempt to meet the instructional needs of ELLs at different proficiency levels.

Let’s listen in as three former student missionaries (Lindsay Hong, Michelle Otis, and Priscilla Valencia) are interviewed concerning their life-changing stories of teaching English language learners.

**How did you become interested in serving as a student missionary?**

**Priscilla:** I heard about it at a vespers held by student missions at Union College (Lincoln, Nebraska). My cousin had decided she was going to go and serve. I talked to my parents about her decision, and they got so excited. They thought it would be perfect for me to go as well. I prayed for guidance on what to do. At our next school chapel, I saw an ad to go to Palau as a kindergarten teacher, and after a bit of coaxing, I knew that was my call.

**Michelle:** I got interested in student missionary work because someone planted the seed in my mind by telling me about their experience as a student missionary. As I thought about the idea that I could serve as well, things began to fall into place for me to go as a student missionary from Andrews University (Berrien Springs, Michigan).

**Lindsay:** I always wanted to go overseas and do mission work. During Missions Week at Southwestern Adventist Uni-

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**Student Missionaries and English Language Learners**

BY CAROL CAMPBELL WITH LINDSAY HONG, MICHELLE OTIS, AND PRISCILLA VALENcia

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http://jae.adventist.org

THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION • SUMMER 2009

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versity, I was excited by the student missionary presentations and displays and decided to apply.

What assignment did you accept?

Priscilla: My three choices were for Palau, just different grades. Eventually, I received word that I had been accepted as the 2nd-grade teacher at Koror Seventh-day Adventist Elementary School in Palau.

Michelle: I accepted the call to go to Cambodia Adventist School.

Lindsay: I also went to Cambodia Adventist School.

What type of orientation or training were you given after accepting your assignment?

Priscilla: On July 30, I flew to Hawaii for a three-day orientation. It was basically a crash course made up of three or four seminars in classroom management, first-day impressions, how to build a relationship with God, and how to deal with homesickness. The only glitch was that most of us hadn’t slept much prior to arriving in a different time zone, so it was hard to stay awake and retain anything that was being presented.

Michelle: I was part of a community college at the time, so I went online and downloaded a pamphlet that dealt with culture shock, being a missionary, what the Bible said about it, and some other things. I was required to read the chapters, answer the questions at the end of each chapter, and e-mail them to an individual at Andrews University.

Lindsay: There was a one-week orientation, which included an introduction to the culture and classroom learning strategies, when I arrived in Cambodia.

What were your responsibilities while serving as a student missionary?

Priscilla: I was the 2nd-grade teacher of 21 students. I assumed the responsibilities of teaching, grading, counseling, and tutoring. I also helped out with the Sabbath schools and preaching. Most importantly, though, I was a friend and role model for my students.

Michelle: My responsibilities were to teach English to kindergarteners, English grammar to 11th and 12th graders, and science to 8th graders. I was also the yearbook editor.

Lindsay: I taught language arts and math to 7th graders and English to 9th and 10th graders.

Describe the students in your classroom.

Priscilla: They were so small! I had 21 students in all, and they varied from being very quiet and shy, to comedians, to squirmy. I had some students who were so far ahead they could...
have easily been in 3rd grade, and others who surprised me they were in 2nd. But the thing I remember most was that all of them wanted to be with “teacher.” They were so loving and caring, and would do anything to help you.

One little girl started the year not even knowing her letters. By January, she could read me a story by sounding out all the words by herself! I was so ecstatic I could barely sit still! At the end of tutoring one day, before she ran to catch her ride, she stopped, gave me a hug, and said, “Thanks!” I was a bit confused and asked, “For what?” All she said was, “For teaching me to read!” And you can imagine all the tears I had to hold back at that moment.

That was the turning point for me. I realized then, that even though it seemed that sometimes the students weren’t paying attention and I thought they weren’t learning anything, with God’s help I was actually making a difference, even if it was only in the life of one little girl.

Michelle: I would like to tell you about each one of my students, but that would take too long. They each had their individual strengths and weaknesses. Overall, they were very respectful of me. Even though student missionaries come and go each year, they were still very loving and kind to me. They went out of their way to help me carry things. Some students invited Lindsay and me to go on camping trips with them or to go to their house and visit with them. They made my heart swell with joy. I miss them all very much!

Lindsay: Every student was different and had different needs; they could not all be met the same way. Despite the fact that there was a variety of developmental levels in every class, the students all wanted to succeed.

How did you initially communicate with the students?

Priscilla: They all spoke English, so communicating wasn’t really a problem. But since English was their second language, reading and writing were a challenge for them.

Michelle: Most of my students understood basic English, so communication wasn’t a problem.

Lindsay: Some students were very proficient in English and could communicate well; others struggled to understand and express themselves in English.

How did you address the needs of the English language learners in your classroom?

Priscilla: I started from a logical beginning, the alphabet. We went over the alphabet every day, then we switched to the sounds each letter makes, followed by naming things that went
with each sound. I had after-school tutoring to help with spelling, reading, and homework. I gave any time I had to help them succeed. And as an answer to prayer, I was able to get a college student to come in two days a week to assist students who needed extra help.

Michelle: For the kindergarteners, I had their homeroom teacher with me to help explain some English words. To increase understanding, I would point to the object or act out the word. For the 8th, 11th, and 12th graders, I would ask some of the students who understood the lesson to explain it to those who didn’t understand English as well.

Lindsay: I required the students to use English to express themselves during class discussions. We did many extracurricular activities, including the students practicing their English.

Were there specific activities that you found promoted their reading and writing development?

Priscilla: At the beginning, I had a lot of read-alouds with big books. As the year progressed, I continued the read-alouds with other books, while adding as many books as I could to the classroom library. We also had small groups that would read together from our textbooks, a form of guided reading. The students lacked confidence in writing, so I incorporated the use of journals across the curriculum. I encouraged them to sound out words, so they could be more independent. We would also write letters to my home, telling my parents what we were doing. Another thing we would do was to play games to practice the phonics or spelling lesson of the day. I also developed a word bank, writing words on the side of the board that the students used frequently or words that were tough to spell.

Michelle: I tried to use different activities to make the lessons more fun. In kindergarten, we sang lots of songs with actions. The 8th graders read aloud, pausing at the end of paragraphs for someone to explain what they had read. We had competitions in the 11th and 12th grades. For example, I would write nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc., on small slips of paper, mix the words in a hat, and pass them out. The students had to decide what their word was and go to the corner that had its description (noun, verb, etc.). Then we would go over it together and say “agree” or “disagree” and why.

Lindsay: I divided our reading time into three parts: before-reading, during-reading, and after-reading activities. The main goal before reading a story was to find a way to relate the story to the students so they would be interested. For example, sometimes I would ask them if they had ever had a similar experience. If there were new vocabulary words, I would show them pictures that went with the words. I had the students read the text in a variety of ways. At the beginning of the year, I usually read to them, pausing to let them read words that were familiar. As the year progressed, the students began to read more independently or in pairs. Sometimes, we would adapt a story for a reader’s theatre, which the students really enjoyed. We also spent time discussing stories after reading them.

What was the most important thing you learned while working with the ELLs in your classroom?

Priscilla: You can’t rush them. Before school started, I had completed two weeks of lesson plans. I found out on the first day of school, however, that most of my class couldn’t read or spell. So I basically had to throw out all my lessons and start from scratch, focusing on the areas they needed help with the most. As their skills developed, I brought in more challenging material and began using the textbooks.

Michelle: I learned three very important things: God is the foundation that can always be there for us; there are many ways that God can use people to witness for Him; and I love teaching.

Before I went as a student missionary, I would turn to God as my last resort whenever I had a problem. I would first try to do things on my own power and would find out that I couldn’t
do it all. For example, when I was teaching in Cambodia, I struggled sometimes with how to teach a topic. I would stress about it the night before. Then, the day that I needed to teach the subject, I would pray about it in total despair, knowing that I couldn’t do it by myself. About an hour before class, God would give me a great idea about how to teach the concept and a game to apply it with.

Sometimes, I would also be homesick and sad. When I read my Bible, one of the verses would strengthen and encourage me to focus on each day and the goodness of my students and the people around me.

Lindsay: Students learn differently and at different rates. I also realized that teaching is a full-time commitment.

What recommendations would you make to others who are considering a similar assignment?

Priscilla: Do it! You won’t regret it! But most importantly, don’t give up. Someone once told me that being a student missionary is the hardest, yet most rewarding thing you will ever do. And I totally agree!

Michelle: Go! There are so many good memories that I have gained from my experience in Cambodia. It is an experience that everyone should have, whether it is in the United States, Europe, Asia, Africa, or elsewhere. This is a time to step out and trust God to take you where you need to go. You will learn so much and be blessed by your experience and the people you meet.

Lindsay: You need to have an open mind as a student missionary and be ready to adapt and change to meet the needs of the individuals you are called to serve.

These three accounts of student missionaries’ experiences teaching English-language learners demonstrate the commitment of our young people to serve others. Placements and responsibilities vary as young people are sent out as student missionaries, but often they find themselves in positions in which they must provide instruction or support for individuals for whom English is not their first language. Therefore, planners should empower the student missionary with the necessary strategies to be successful in serving the needs of these learners.

Liz Regan\textsuperscript{2} provides an annotated list of 20 ELL teaching tips that could be easily adaptable to the student-missionary experience. The list includes the following topics:

1. Pairwork/Groupwork
2. Reading Aloud
3. Checking Understanding
4. Pronunciation
5. Speaking to Other Students in English
6. Guessing Answers
7. Stopping an Activity
8. Feedback
9. Dealing With Vocabulary Queries
10. Monitoring
11. Error Correction
12. Eliciting
13. Checking Together
14. Reading Before Writing
15. Brainstorming
16. Personalizing
17. Translating
18. Pacing
19. Concept Checking
20. Using Dictionaries

As our institutions continue to train and send out student missionaries, we must give careful consideration to their training and orientation. In particular, a handbook of teaching strategies could be developed to assist those working with English language learners. Our young people are excited about fulfilling the commission to serve others; let’s make sure they have access to resources that will make this challenge a life-changing experience.

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The acronym “NNEST” is a relatively new one in the field of second-language teaching. It stands for “Non-Native English-Speaking Teacher.” As more and more NNESTs are entering the field of TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), questions are being raised about their effectiveness as ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers, students’ perceptions, and the validity of hiring them. More than 1,500 papers have been written about non-native English-speaking teachers.1

Hiring non-native English speakers has been a common practice in higher education in the United States. Although students frequently react negatively to their non-native instructors’ foreign accents and hard-to-comprehend speech, the validity of hiring or renewing the contracts of these instructors is seldom seriously challenged. The instructor’s scholarship and subject-matter knowledge are seen as taking precedence over their being native born.

However, when it comes to teaching English as a Second Language, administrators seem to have some reservations about hiring non-native speakers as teachers. Despite the TESOL organization’s deliberate attempt to curb the current hiring practices that discriminate against non-native speakers, most NNESTs still feel that it is hard for them to find jobs. In fact, non-native candidates often come across English Language Teaching (ELT) job announcements that openly state that only native speakers are qualified candidates. Although many cases of successful NNESTs have been documented,2 the debate still goes on.

Definition
The category “non-native speakers” includes many variables, such as the length of the person’s stay in the target country where English is spoken, the extent of his or her schooling in that country, and his or her expertise in and experience with the English language. Although substantial variations exist in these elements, most non-native speakers report that they struggle with feelings of inadequacy and lack of confidence. Nonetheless, more and more non-native speakers are entering the field of TESOL. Recently, NNEST has been added to the TESOL interest section, as its growing body of members recognizes the need for mentoring among themselves and for advocating their rights to fair employment opportunities. In fact, many people see NNEST not just as a group of people with similar interests, but as a movement.3

The administrators of Adventist institutions also face the challenging question of whether or not to hire NNESTs. Currently, at least three Adventist higher education institutions in the United...
States have NNESTs in their ESL programs. Although the ESL programs in most Adventist institutions in North America are still relatively small, our administrators will continue to face this issue as long as the number of non-native-speaking applicants continues to rise.

Recognizing that hiring a foreign ESL director is unprecedented, I consider my current workplace a nontraditional institution and myself a nontraditional director. I was born and grew up in Korea and came to the United States to further my studies in English at the age of 21. Although I had a passion for teaching and several years of successful teaching experience, I had no intention of assuming a leadership position as an ESL director at a higher education institution in the United States. But I did actually end up obtaining a position I never thought I would, or should, hold. However, my experience and cumulative observations as a non-native speaking English teacher and director have reassured me that a NNEST can bring unique benefits to an ESL program.

A Role Model

First of all, a NNEST can be a successful learner model for his or her second-language students and can provide students with effective language-learning strategies. Plus, students seem to perceive their NNEST teacher as a role model. To illustrate, whenever I state in my classes that I did not come to the United States until the age of 21, which is about the age of most of my students, I never fail to catch the glimmer of hope in their eyes. In fact, a few have said, “Then I have hope, too!” Interacting with a NNEST can be an inspiration to these students.

The NNEST’s own experience as an English-language learner also enables him or her to explain subject matter, such as grammar and pronunciation, more effectively. In general, NNESTs have better knowledge of the grammar and phonology of the English language than other ESL teachers. As an ESL director, I have an opportunity to hire about a dozen undergraduate tutors for my ESL students each semester. In many cases, I find that the non-native-speaking tutors explain grammar features better than most native speakers, who can frequently be heard giving a one-answer-fits-all response, such as: “That’s just the way it is!”

In addition, a NNEST can alert the students to common linguistic mistakes that they might make. To use a medical analogy, a non-native teacher can “prevent” rather than “treat.” The teacher’s own linguistic bloopers can be valuable resources, too. When I taught at a middle school in Atlanta, Georgia, I once made an indelible non-native speaker mistake in an inclusion language arts classroom that cracked up my entire class of 8th graders when I failed to hold the second syllable of “worksh-e-e-e-t” long enough. For many second-language learners whose native languages do not distinguish long and short vowel sounds as the English language does, this kind of naïve pronunciation error is common, as in “sheep and ship” or “cheap and chip.” These kinds of blunders can easily turn into an embarrassing and ludicrous gaffe, which can undermine sensitive students’ self-esteem. This embarrassing incident was not only an unforgettable pronunciation lesson for me but also taught me that the language teacher’s own mistakes can be memorable teaching resources for second-language learners. Yes, my anecdotal lessons really work for my ESL students!

Social and Cultural Guide

Furthermore, a NNEST can be an effective guide for ESL learners in relation to the social and cultural aspects of language learning. Being an ESL student involves far more than just acquiring language skills such as grammar, speaking, reading, and writing. For most ESL students, it also requires learning about a new country, overcoming culture shock, and struggling to fit in with their new peers. NNESTs’ background enables them to address ESL issues wholistically and empathetically because they know that being an ESL student also means being mostly alone in a cavernous dorm
during breaks, being considered socially inept by one’s native-speaking peers, and reluctantly accepting a somewhat marginalized status, where one’s campus job choices are limited to custodian or cafeteria worker.

In April 2007, America suffered a terrible tragedy at Virginia Tech, caused by a former ESL student who, to quote his sister, constantly “struggled to fit in.” As a former ESL student myself, I wonder if we as a society could have saved Seung Hui Cho. Might Cho have turned out differently if his initial experience in the U.S. had been more positive? Although I do not know the answer or the detailed history of his mental illness, most ESL learners can easily relate to the kind of frustration, loneliness, strangeness, and anger that Cho struggled with for many years as an outsider in his new culture. That’s why the teacher who has had firsthand experience with similar struggles often goes beyond the 50-minute lesson plan. His or her curriculum is not limited to formal classroom teaching but also includes lessons in other aspects of the ESL experience, as well as moral support. ESL students often feel that they are marginalized due to their limited English. The NNEST sees his or her students’ emotional and social issues as just as important as the language issues.

**Fluency in Students’ Languages Beneficial**

NNESTs can also form positive relations with their students due to their unique background. I’ve observed that students tend to relate better when their teacher can speak their first language. Although I wholeheartedly believe that “English only” is the best form of language teaching, many benefits accrue when the teacher can speak the students’ mother tongue. Currently, in Southwestern Adventist University’s program, the majority of students are Spanish speakers, and it has been beneficial to hire some teachers and tutors who can speak Spanish, especially for beginning learners. I have found that for adult ESL learners whose English proficiency is quite low, their first language allows them to freely ask questions, which is essential for a meaningful learning experience.

It is sad that some language program administrators, especially in countries like Korea and Japan, prefer to hire unqualified native speakers instead of qualified NNESTs. In these countries, North American whites are preferred, regardless of their credentials, and many qualified non-native speaking teachers are not even considered. For instance, Sunder reports that most of the English teachers hired in Korea are “untrained to teach and know little or nothing about teaching.”

**Advantages and Disadvantages**

Nobody would challenge the value of an effective native-speaking English teacher, and there’s no doubt that a non-native speaker possesses some disadvantages such as having an accent and being less familiar with semantics, idioms, and slang expressions. However, the teacher’s enthusiasm, caring attitude, professional training, and subject-matter knowledge are important elements of good language teaching. While native speakers may be perfect language models for their students to copy, non-native-speaking teachers can be a better guide. They can more effectively direct their students to effective language models from which they have benefited and offer successful language learning strategies they have used. As most successful language learners discover, a significant amount of learning takes place outside the classroom. A 50-minute classroom session should serve as a period of introduction, guidance, and reinforcement. It is not, and cannot be, the main source of language input.

As the pendulum of current trends in this field shifts to a preference for real-life English, a good ESL teacher should be defined as someone who considers variations of English as the status quo and alerts, as well as exposes his or her students to them because no language can be correctly understood outside its context—the societies where it is used and the people who speak it. Because English is spoken not only by whites, but also by many ethnic groups in several countries (U.S., Canada, Britain and its former colonies, etc.), the definition of “proper English” should be broadened to acknowledge this variety. Therefore, exposing students to “different Englishes” and to real-life English will be beneficial, not harmful, because when ESL students finish their courses, most of them will enter university classes taught by non-native instructors, and will later function in a society filled with people from different ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds.

Native speakers and non-native speakers have different strengths as language teachers. NNESTs certainly have some challenges; however, they also possess some unique advantages that can be invaluable assets to the ESL program.

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**A NNEST can alert the students to common linguistic mistakes that they might make.**

Eun-Young Kim, Ph.D. (English, TESOL emphasis), was born and educated in South Korea until partway through college, when she came to Union College in Nebraska to prepare herself to teach English. She has taught English at Sahmyook University in South Korea and in Illinois, and is currently an Assistant Professor of ESL and Director of the ESL Program at Southwestern Adventist University in Keene, Texas.

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2. Ibid.
Thirteen years ago, I was preparing to begin my work as the director of English as a Second Language (ESL) at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska. I had taught “regular” English for many years, both on the high school and college levels, but this was a new experience for me. In this new role, I would be teaching and directing a program that helped international students polish their English language skills and prepared them for the academic rigors of university-level work.

To prepare for this new position, I took some courses in Teaching English as a Second Language, immersing myself in the methods and materials of the field. This was an invaluable experience that opened my eyes to the unique experience of learning English from an international student’s point of view. But I wanted to bring more to my students than just a knowledge of English. I wanted my classes to have mission and vision. I wanted my students to learn to know God. This quotation from Ellen White intrigued me: “In every line of instruction, teachers are to seek to impart light from the word of God.”

I decided to take this injunction literally and began a teaching practice that I still use today. In every class, before we study the main lesson of the day—reading, comprehension skills, or outlining a comparison/contrast essay, we begin with prayer requests, prayer, a song, and Scripture. This typically takes about 10 or 15 minutes, but in my opinion, it’s the best part of the class. This time sets the tone for instruction and interaction in the classroom. Students who have come to class with a heavy burden are able to share their concerns. The songs, which are usually short choruses, lift up their hearts. Often during the rest of the hour, I hear students humming the melody.

However, I believe the greatest blessing in my classes has been the use of Scripture. Not only does it provide an opportunity for students to meditate on the meaning of God’s Word and its poetic beauty, but it also provides them with an opportunity to explore language issues and adds to their understanding of English.
In every class, before we study the main lesson of the day—reading, comprehension skills, or outlining a comparison/contrast essay, we begin with prayer requests, prayer, a song, and Scripture.

grammar, syntax, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Sometimes the Scripture even suggests discussion topics or writing assignments.

Combining Spiritual and Academic Benefits

My first priority in choosing Scripture for my class to study is that the words contain meaningful spiritual thoughts of comfort, guidance, and assurance of God’s love. The beauty and symmetry of language is also a powerful consideration. I look for interesting linguistic points that support my lesson plans. For example, if I am teaching prepositions, I select a passage that contains several interesting prepositional phrases. As the semester progresses and the assignments become more challenging, I choose passages with more complex structures. God’s Word is full of both spiritual blessings and academic possibilities. My goal is to let God speak through His Word. A student once told me, “I can’t wait to see what Scripture we will learn because it always meets a specific need in my life at just that moment.”

In choosing passages to assign, I always consider the variety of cultures in my classes. At Union College, we have quite a remarkable mix considering our location in the heartland of America. We have students from Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Brazil, Peru, Mexico, Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, America Samoa, and various countries in Africa. We have Muslims, Buddhists, Catholics, Adventists, evangelical Christians, and even some agnostics. I have learned to choose Scriptures very carefully so as not to offend. References to “Jesus” or “Savior” would be problematic to some, so I choose passages that refer to “the Lord” or “God.” The reference to God as “Father” has also raised some questions because of the implied relationship to the “Son.” In addition, since I am interested in teaching practical English to my ESL students, I use modern translations or a paraphrase such as The Clear Word Bible.

Matching Texts and Learning Activities

The following are a few of the scriptural passages and language activities that I have used in my ESL classes over the years.

Scripture: “O Lord, search my heart for me; test me so I can know my thoughts as you know them. Let me know if there is any wicked way in me, and then help me walk the way I should” (Psalm 139:23, 24).

Vocabulary: Depending on the level of the class, students may need vocabulary help with some of the words: search, test, thoughts, wicked. One effective way to teach vocabulary is to have students who know, or think they know, the meaning, act out the word for the rest of the class.

Imperative Verbs: One of the first structures beginning students learn is the imperative verb, with its command or request structure: stand up, sit down, open your book, hand in your papers, etc. “Search my heart,” “test me,” “let me know,” and “help me” are all examples of this structure. After I point these out, students can create their own imperative commands or requests. The polite request, which includes “please,” is a

For ESL students in Peggy Wahlen’s Advanced Reading class, Friday is “stand and deliver” day, when students can earn extra credit for reading a Scripture passage aloud to the class. Above, a Japanese student laughs at his first attempt at pronunciation and phrasing, and is happy to have the chance to try again.
nice addition to this structure. The game “Simon Says” is an active and fun way to practice imperative verbs.

**Modals:** Modals are auxiliary verbs that add different meanings to the main verb: *Can, should, must, might,* etc. I can work—ability; I should work—advisability; I must work—necessity; I might work—possibility. In the text from Psalm 139, we see some modals: “so I *can know* [so I am able to know] my thoughts as you know them” and “help me walk the way I *should*” (in the way that is advisable). ESL students must learn not only the form of modals (modal + base form of the verb) but also the various meanings of modals. Some modals are quite challenging, carrying multiple meanings. Notice the following multiple meanings of *could.* When I was young, I *could run* fast (past ability). It *could rain* (future possibility). Could you help me? (request for help). The Scripture about God searching our hearts, which uses the modals *can* and *should,* is a simple way to introduce the study of modals or to review modals for more advanced students.

**Scripture:** “Don’t be awed by the rich and famous, no matter how rich or famous they are. They can’t take their wealth with them when they die. How can they use their riches when they’re lying in the grave?” (Psalm 49:16, 17).

**Parts of Speech:** For a simple grammatical activity, have the students count the number of nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc., in the text. The words *rich or riches* in the text in Psalm 49:16 and 17 provide an interesting example for the students to consider. “The rich” includes a noun that designates a group of people. The article *the* is a big clue indicating that the word it modifies is a noun. Later in the Scripture, we find the words, “no matter how *rich or famous* they are.” Here, the word *rich* is an adjective, describing the people. Turned around it reads, “They are rich or famous.” Finally, “How can they use their *riches ...*?” This is another noun, referring to money or wealth. The possessive adjective *their* before *riches* is another clue that a noun follows. Have the students try telling the number of nouns or verbs in a passage. They will enjoy searching, and then sharing what they have found.

**Questions:** ESL students must be taught the correct formula for asking questions. First, they should learn the two main categories of questions: yes/no questions (Are you happy? Did you work today?) and information questions (Where do you live? When did you arrive here? Why are you studying English?)

The question in Psalm 49:16 and 17 is an information question: “How can they use their riches ...?” The formula is not complicated: question word (how) + auxiliary word (can) + subject (*they*) + main verb (*use*).

Once students understand this simple formula, they can practice asking each other interesting questions. Students particularly enjoy this process near the beginning of a semester or quarter when they don’t know their classmates well. It’s a practical and fun way to get acquainted. For more advanced students, it’s useful to point out that the word *when* in the text (“when they die” and “when they’re lying in the grave”) is not a question word but rather a subordinating conjunction that introduces adverb time clauses. They will also notice that the order of the subject and verb in clauses is normal, not inverted as in questions.

**Homophones:** ESL students are interested in some of the little quirks of the English language, such as “*their* riches” and “they’re lying in the grave.” When the third homophone, *there,* is added to the group, it becomes a challenge to distinguish among them.

**Irregular Verbs:** I teach irregular verbs in a systematic way, about 10 or 15 each week. I point out the four main forms of the verbs such as *eat/* *ate/* eaten/* *eating* and *take/* *took/* *taken/* *taking,* and have the students learn the four verb forms for each irregular verb as well as the correct ways to make statements and ask questions in the main tenses. Two of the most problematic of the irregular verbs are *lie* and *lay.* This is true not only for ESL students but also for native English speakers. The part of the Scripture, “when they’re lying in the grave,” presents the opportunity to contrast *lie* and *lay.* *Lie* refers to the position of the body: *lie/* *lay/* *lain*/* *lying.* On the other hand, *lay* refers to the putting or placing of an object: *lay/* *laid*/* *laid*/* *laying.* Acting out the verbs immediately clears things up.

**Speaking/Reading/Writing Projects:** The passage from Psalm 49:16 and 17 can also be used to encourage students to consider their values and life goals. It seems that no matter where students come from in the world, they have been influenced to some degree by “the rich and famous”: movie stars, sports figures, musicians, and political leaders. My ESL students have enjoyed exploring the following sequence of language activities:

1. Participating in a lively discussion about who they admire (who “awes” them) and why;
I am convinced that the use of Scripture in the classroom has enriched my students’ language learning experience.

2. Interviewing others about their cultural traditions relating to death and dying;
3. Reading articles and stories about wealthy people and analyzing how they have used their riches (Bill Gates, Oprah Winfrey, etc.);
4. Writing a short essay about “Someone I Admire” or “If I Were a Millionaire”; and
5. Writing their own obituary.

**Scripture:** “The Lord is the One who made the heavens and the earth. He did so by His own power. He created it out of nothing. He formed it by His wisdom and stretched out the heavens according to His understanding” (Jeremiah 10:12).

**Pronunciation:** Students speaking certain languages will experience greater pronunciation challenges when learning English. Taking into consideration the first languages of students, teachers can tailor the pronunciation practice accordingly. However, one particular pronunciation issue seems to challenge almost all international students: the –ed ending for the past tense.

The Scripture from Jeremiah contains three words with the –ed ending, each one illustrating one of the three pronunciation rules:

1. **CREATED:** When a verb ends with the t or d sound, the suffix –d or –ed adds an extra syllable. Take create for example. This word has two syllables. When the –ed is added, forming the word created, it creates a third syllable. Other examples are handed, fasted, and bonded.

2. **FORMED:** When a verb ends in a voiced sound, the added –ed suffix sounds like t with no addition of an extra syllable. Take the word form, for example. The m sound is voiced; therefore, when the –ed is added, the word formed still has only one syllable, with the strong d sound completing the word. The great temptation for ESL students is to add a second syllable and pronounce the word “form–ed.” Other examples are bugged, handled, prayed, and grabbed.

3. **STRETCHED:** When a verb ends in an unvoiced sound, the added –ed suffix sounds like t with no addition of an extra syllable. Take the word stretch, for example. The ch sound is unvoiced, with no vocal chord action. Therefore, when the –ed is added, the resulting word, stretched, is still one syllable, with the soft t sound completing the word. Again, the temptation
for language learners is to pronounce the word “stretched.” Other examples: kissed, popped, talked, and laughed.

Conclusion

I am convinced that the use of Scripture in the classroom has enriched my students’ language learning experience. Sometimes a quick lesson in grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation is all that is needed to clear up a problem area, so why not use examples and passages from the greatest Book ever written?

But more importantly, the students have the opportunity to think and talk about God as a Being who not only cares about them intimately but also sits in majesty over the universe as the Creator and Sustainer of us all.

Over the years, my students have commented about what learning Scriptures means to them. One student’s response particularly touched my heart. She wrote an essay entitled “The Worst Day of My Life,” describing how she had received a negative medical report and had to return for further testing. Alone and far from home, she waited anxiously for the test results. She wrote that dread and fear filled her mind. But then she had been assigned this text to memorize in class: “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should collapse and the mountains slide into the sea” (Psalm 46:1, 2). This text, she said, had comforted and sustained her. Above grammar and pronunciation, above spelling and vocabulary, the student had learned the greatest lesson of all: God’s Word can enlighten not only our intellectual and academic lives, but our spirits and hearts as well.

Peggy Wahlen is the Director of the ESL Program at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska, where she has taught for 15 years. She holds undergraduate and graduate degrees in English and a Master’s degree in library science. Mrs. Wahlen has worked in Christian education and pastoral ministry with her husband for almost 30 years, and says that it is “the deepest desire of my heart to share the gospel message of peace with my students.”

Resources

The following sources are helpful reference works for teaching ESL:


REFERENCES


Guest Editorial

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suggestions highlighted in the issue as well, many of which can be accessed online. Following the Master Teacher’s example, Adventist educators need to assume the responsibility of continually adapting their instructional methods and materials to meet the needs of all learners, including the culturally and linguistically diverse. Let us prepare ourselves to meet this challenge and to reap the rewards!

The Coordinator for this special issue on Teaching English as a Second Language, Carol Campbell, Ph.D., is a Professor of Education at Southwestern Adventist University in Keene, Texas. Her areas of emphasis are reading, language arts, children’s literature, and early childhood education. The Journal staff express their gratitude for her advice and assistance in the planning and production of the issue.

REFERENCES

1. Not her real name.
Good news! The steady growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its institutions has created a demand for qualified personnel who can support its worldwide mission with their talents and education.

In response to this need, the General Conference has launched the Adventist Professionals’ Network (APN)—an electronic global registry of Adventists who hold a degree in any field and have an email address. APN assists Adventist institutions and agencies in locating candidates for positions in areas such as teaching, ministry, health care, management, administration, and research as well as consultants and personnel for mission service.

Once registered, APN members can find job opportunities in Adventist organizations, join one of many Adventist professional associations, and network with thousands of Adventist professionals around the world. Members are protected from solicitations and unwanted mail.

Enter your professional information directly in the APN secure website, free:

http://apn.adventist.org

Encourage other degreed Adventists to join APN and enjoy its many benefits. For questions and comments on APN, contact us through apn@gc.adventist.org