



June 2010

www.atesl.ca

**President's Message** by Audrey Olson

October 1 - 3 found TESL professionals from across Canada meeting together in Banff for the TESL Canada conference hosted by ATESL. We discussed theory and practice, were inspired by experts and colleagues and took time to savour the awe-inspiring natural surroundings of the Rocky Mountains. ATESL members also took time during the conference to celebrate our 30th anniversary with gifts for members, door prizes and a wonderful reception, all strongly supported by Alberta Employment and Immigration and Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Celebrations were also supported at the Local level, and members in Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer and our emerging group in Lethbridge marked this event in their own unique way. This 30th birthday is a significant milestone, and an opportunity to reflect on the path taken over the past decades and to look forward to opportunities that await us in the future.

**President's message**

A message from Audrey Olson

**Feature article: The Job Interview**

by Kerry Louw

**In Conversation: Lionel Laroche**

by Judy Sillito

**Learner contribution**

Poem, *Running*

**Nov. 5 & 6, Edmonton**



**ATESL 2010**

**Call for Proposals**

We are excited to announce the call for proposals for the 2010 ATESL Conference. Deadline for proposals: June 15. More info and proposal form at the news section at [ATESL.CA](http://ATESL.CA).

In November, the new ATESL Board held its annual retreat in Red Deer, where we took part in a planning exercise to examine what we perceived as the Strengths (what we can maintain and develop); Weaknesses (what we can remedy or exit); Opportunities (what we can prioritise and optimise) and Threats (what we can counter) of ATESL as an organization. It was strongly recognized by all Board members that the people, history and the reputation of the organization were definite strengths. The ongoing commitment to and involvement in ATESL of former Board members helps us to keep continuity in our goals and strengthens our connections throughout the province. The participation of members at the Local level through involvement in professional activities or through communication on issues or concerns speaks to the strengths of the organization. On the other hand, as an organization based on the willingness of volunteers to contribute time and expertise and upon funding resources that are variable, we lack true stability. However, we know that there are many opportunities to build on what we have accomplished – by making linkages with other organizations, by reaching out to other locations in our province, and by broadening the benefits and opportunities for our members.

Best Practices, Resource Management, Curriculum Framework – these are three integrated projects that ATESL is involved in with funding and strong support from AEI and CIC and which will bring benefits to program managers, instructors and learners across Alberta and even beyond our provincial borders. The updated Best Practice Guidelines document revises and

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## Provincial Executive

2009 - 2010

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adds on to previous work and was completed after comprehensive consultation with experts across the province. It has now been released to stakeholders throughout Alberta and provides principles and self-assessment tools to be used by all ESL providers in program review and improvement. The Resource Management project will provide a centralized, organized annotated list of information that can be accessed to improve instruction or develop new programs. The Curriculum Framework project is now underway and involves consultants from across the province in developing a framework which will support adult ESL teaching, learning and assessment across institutions; provide a basis for program development or renewal; and serve as one of several means of facilitating an evaluation of new and established programs in a variety of contexts, both urban and rural.

We are now in the process of planning and preparing for our next major professional development activity – the annual ATESL conference, which will be held in Edmonton November 4 to 6. I encourage you all to begin your planning now to be a part of your professional organization – work with the conference planning team, develop a presentation to share your ideas and expertise with your colleagues, consider putting your name forward to be a part of your local organization or the provincial Board, and most of all, do plan on joining us to celebrate another year of ATESL.

## Keynote Speakers at the ATESL 2010 Conference

### Lynda Yates

Currently Associate Professor in the Department of Linguistics, Macquarie University, Sydney, Lynda has taught ESOL in France, Egypt, Armenia and the U.K., and worked with teachers from around the world on practical issues, particularly in the area of pronunciation and pragmatics teaching.

Her research interests include the teaching and assessment of pronunciation, the nature of generic skills for adult learners of English and pragmatics in intercultural communication. She has both a research and a practical interest in the workplace and study experiences of adult EAL users.

### Tom Cobb

Tom Cobb has designed, taught, or coordinated almost every type of ESL reading and writing course in a career of 20 years and five continents.

He was early convinced that whatever the target skill, there would never be enough time for language learners to get very far with it, but that well instructed computers could increase the effectiveness of the time available. He now consults in language program development internationally, supplies learning and research tools to the profession through his website Lextutor ([www.lex Tutor.ca](http://www.lex Tutor.ca)), and helps Montreal ESL teachers learn to use computers in their classrooms.



## ***Pragmatics in the Workplace: the Job Interview***

*submitted by Kerry Louw*

***Pragmatics in the Workplace: the Job Interview*** began in response to a need from my EAL learners to ‘re-ally’ understand what to expect in a job interview. To answer their question, I analyzed job interviews from the misunderstandings that arise in intercultural dialogues and then created and tested a teaching tool designed to support learners’ improvement in pragmatic competence. The study demonstrates that second language speakers improve as a result of the pedagogical intervention and implies that pragmatic instruction can benefit the likelihood of EAL learners’ communicative success in the workplace.

A growing body of research (Campbell & Roberts 2007; Kerekes 2007; Li 2001) has investigated how pragmatic competence (knowing what is culturally and contextually appropriate to say in a given situation) determines a second language (L2) learner’s success in communicating with native speakers. Koester (2006) states that there is a practical application for this kind of research: “With the current emphasis on ‘soft skills’, i.e., on effective communication in the workplace, insights gained from a close analysis of workplace interactions are certainly of practical relevance to the practitioners themselves” (p. 162). Crandall and Basturkmen (2004) and Bardovi-Harlig (2001) emphasize that it is necessary for learners to notice these pragmatic factors first, enabling them to begin to improve their competence. However, there is a shortage of accurate and authentic material available to inform newcomers about what is appropriate in the workplace.

Pragmatic competence relates to an L2 speaker’s success in communicating in the workplace. (Campbell & Roberts, 2007; Kerekes, 2007; Li, 2000; Derwing & Munro, in press) Misunderstandings are due in part to a lack of interpersonal learning opportunities provided to second language speakers. (Gumperz, 1999) Learners benefit from explicit instruction on pragmatic features of a language, such as making requests or apologizing. (Li, 2000) It is imperative that newcomer employees understand how they will be interpreted by a member of the host culture, if they are to be successful in the workplace. (Laroche & Rutherford, 2007)

The purpose of this study is to explore and document one approach to developing and evaluating a pragmatic resource based on the high-stakes discourse occurring in a job interview. It has an applied research focus which may interest English second language (ESL) practitioners on several levels: it concentrates on the field of pragmatics, what English as another language (EAL) learners need to know to succeed in a job interview (pragmatic competence for successful communication), how practitioners can use this research, and the need for developing authentic pragmatic-focused materials.

The study involved filming an English L1 candidate in a job interview and three English L2 candidates in pre- and post-job interviews. The procedure included conducting and videotaping initial job interviews; collecting post-interview responses from interviewers and job candidates; examining pragmatic difficulties, developing and using training materials; conducting and videotaping follow-up job interviews; collecting post-interview responses from interviewers, job candidates & expert ESL instructors; and analyzing expert ESL instructors’ ratings for job candidates’ progress and patterns of pragmatic difficulties.

Comparisons of job interviewers’ interpretations of the EL1 and EL2 speaker’s responses were documented. For example, when reviewing the first asked question, Why did you choose engineering as a career?, interviewers commented that the EL1 candidate replied accurately, elaborated specifically and briefly, and created a good first impression, however, the EL2 candidates were unable to answer the first question as expected, did not say why they personally chose their careers and lost the opportunity to create a good first impression.

Information from EL2 job candidates, interviewers and ESL expert-teachers is also documented. For example,  
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when commenting on the request to, Describe a time when you worked on a project as part of a team, one EL2 candidate mentioned that usually in China they are expected to work together and that he didn't know how to talk about this situation, how to describe it and so he just went round and round. On the same candidate's response the job interviewers commented that the candidate over-talked and seemed nervous or lacking in understanding and that he seemed to go off on tangents. They had wanted to know if he could fit in as a strong team member but weren't convinced because his answer tended to be vague. The expert instructors stated that this candidate's answer was inappropriately long and that he didn't answer the question specifically and failed to recognize the markers provided by the interviewers to stop talking. Transcribing, analyzing and documenting these different interpretations of communicative interactions provide a rich resource that emphasizes the need for pragmatic competence.

Instructional material was developed and used in four 1.5 hour training sessions over a ten day period. In the first session EL2 speakers watched the EL1 speaker's interview for input and then compared it to their own interview. The second lesson provided explicit instructions on pragmatic language skills including answering directly, handling hard questions and sounding assertive. The third addressed the contextual meaning and expectations behind interview questions and in the last, learners prepared and practiced some appropriate responses.

The outcomes of the training clearly demonstrate that second language speakers improve as result of pedagogical intervention. To facilitate pragmatic competence instructors need to understand "the secret rules of language" (Yates, 2004), and introduce learners to a wide range of realistic situations and when possible provide authentic samples of discourse, and then give explicit instruction about context and culture. An implication of the study is that although developing pragmatic competence is an ongoing process and complex and difficult to both teach and learn, if both ESL instructors and EL1 individuals within the workplace have an understanding of the communication challenges faced by EAL newcomers, greater intercultural communication will result.

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Tracey Derwing, Dr. Marilyn Abbot and my colleagues at NorQuest College and the Centre for Excellence in Intercultural Education for their support of this project.

I encourage you to access the research paper, videos and forthcoming journal article at [http://www.norquest.ca/cfe/intercultural/proj\\_TPE.asp](http://www.norquest.ca/cfe/intercultural/proj_TPE.asp) and welcome your responses to the material.

Kerry Louw, Intercultural Communication Facilitator, CEIC  
[kerry.louw@norquest.ca](mailto:kerry.louw@norquest.ca)

## Running (Learner Contribution)

*Storyteller: Mary (Sudan)*

*Poet: Alyssa Hudson*

The war destroyed my stories  
And in the same way that we must replace  
photographs and furniture after a fire  
I had to gather new stories.  
And put them in my mouth  
And roll them with my tongue

After so many hours of running  
Running like the river  
Stretching out toward the sea  
A long line of turtles  
One in front of the other  
The same way I forced my feet  
One in front of the other  
Not moving fast enough  
To escape the perilous fire  
But by God's grace escaping  
One foot in front of the other  
Running, running, running,  
One foot in front of the other  
Not knowing how to get  
Where I didn't know I was going

Running in slow motion  
As if in a nightmare  
My feet crumbling under me  
And all at once I woke up  
On October the eighth  
And sugar was falling from the sky  
I tried to catch it  
But it melted at my touch  
My children caught it in their mouths  
And it disappeared on their tongues  
It covered the ground  
And I didn't know how to walk  
My legs slipped from under me  
But here there was no perilous fire  
Waiting to catch me  
Here was a peaceful place  
Where sugar fell from the sky  
So I got up and I walked  
Slowly, no more running  
Simply one foot in front of the other

The war destroyed my stories  
I took new photographs  
I bought new furniture  
And I tell the story of the sugar sky  
Reminding me, the queen, me, the mother,  
That all I must do is remember  
To put one foot in front of the other.



In Conversation with ...

**Lionel F. Laroche, Ph. D., P. Eng.**

Keynote Speaker at TESL Canada 2009

By Judy Sillito

Few keynote speakers have the enduring relationship with Alberta that is enjoyed by Lionel Laroche. If you have recently attended a conference or an in-service, whether in the career development sector helping immigrants gain jobs in their profession, or a settlement conference, at ESL forums or at intercultural education workshops, you likely have had the pleasure to hear Lionel Laroche. I had the opportunity to chat with Lionel to get a glimpse of the person behind the presentations to discuss how he came to be so connected to Alberta scene, what influences temper his work, and about his goals for the future.



Lionel was born in France and graduated from a prestigious university with a degree in engineering. He married a Canadian woman and upon immigrating to Canada he, like many immigrants, put his mind to creating a game plan for success. Relying on his understanding of the European situation, he surmised that the cultural and business capital of the country was the only place to find professional success so he - a talented and eager chemical engineer – refused to seek a job in Calgary in the oil and gas sector and instead headed for Toronto. That was his first learning about culturally based assumptions that inhibit the success of newcomers.

He eventually found good work in Toronto and soon came face to face with an unexpected set of challenges in this Canadian workplace. Immediately he recognized that he was facing unusual problems that were unprecedented in the French context. Ultimately, he realized that he was not meant to be an engineer in the Canadian sense of the word. Looking for answers, he changed companies and found that although the people were different, the problems were the same. This caused him to wonder about the tensions at play that were making him less influential, and less effective in the Canadian context than he had been in France.

By this time he had developed a real interest in cultural influence on professional success and wanted to direct his career toward that. But the question was “how?” He started reading voraciously, learning, and speaking. With the release of his first book, *Managing Cultural Diversity in Technical Professions* the speaking invitations soared and he never looked back. Since then he has provided intercultural training, coaching, and consulting services to over 15,000 people in nine countries (Canada, the U.S., Bermuda, Mexico, Peru, France, Belgium, Switzerland and China) and has written a second book entitled *Recruiting, Retaining and Promoting Culturally Diverse Employees*.

Then life turned as it is apt to do. With two small children and a wife battling cancer, Lionel found himself in need of a more secure financial situation than his rather sporadic speaking engagements provided. He speaks of this era as the time he was forced to activate a crucial idea that he now tries to inspire in his work with newcomers: “Find a way to make it work, somehow”. And he did.

He found a job at a job placement agency where he became more intimately aware of the critical nuances of the Canadian labour market. Later, he was hired to do coaching for the internationally educated professionals and this opportunity broadened his knowledge of the challenges of integration. Eventually, he was contracted by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to deliver coaching and workshops for their immigrant professionals and



to this day PWC remains one of his largest clients.

PwC has a large stake in Alberta and is one reason why Lionel continues to visit here so frequently. But he admits that another draw is his admiration for the unique spirit of Albertans. He talks of the boom or bust cycle that is so much a part of the Alberta psyche – when the price of oil is down everyone accepts that nothing will happen and when things are booming, it takes no time at all to convince Albertans to try new things.

In the course of his work Lionel has had many opportunities to intersect with the ESL world. He speaks candidly about the CLBs and his experience with unique language difficulties faced by professionals. He says, “It’s not only about communicative ability, your value as a professional is the value of your ideas; even at CLB 7 it’s difficult to convey the full merit of an idea.” He fears that too few ESL teachers understand the challenge of this reality.

Lionel’s passion for his work has roots in his childhood in France. As a young boy, he witnessed the demise of the steel industry in his community and watched how the lay-offs, strikes, and demonstrations traumatized people. Although his family was not directly affected, he was deeply impacted by the trauma caused by employment insecurity. He sees similar suffering with the employment insecurity faced by immigrants in Canada and is devoted to forging change. He admits there is still much to do and his future aspirations include working to influence public policy, and perhaps a third book.

## Professional Development Bursaries

Apply for an ATESL professional development bursary.

Deadline Sept 15

<http://www.atesl.ca/cmsms/membership/bursaries/>

### ATESL Mission Statement

The Alberta Teachers of English as a Second Language (ATESL) is a professional organization that promotes the highest standards of teaching and English language program provision for all learners in Alberta whose first language is other than English.

We do this by:

- encouraging and providing professional development opportunities that are consistent with generally accepted principles of adult learning and with currently understood principles of second language learning and teaching;
- liaising with other organizations, local, provincial, national, and international, engaged in education;
- creating awareness about immigration, settlement of immigrants, and English language learning by communicating with government, business, and the general public;
- encouraging awareness of issues of accountability and program standards by communicating with English language program providers and learners;
- encouraging the highest standards of teacher preparation and performance by administering an ESL teacher accreditation process;
- working collaboratively with government to develop policies and procedures which govern the provision of English language programs and related services for immigrants to Canada;
- encouraging and supporting the participation of learners in the decision-making processes that determine their educational choices.

*The ATESL Newsletter is published quarterly.*

*Deadlines: **Feb.15, May 15, Aug.15, Nov.15***

*Announcements, workshop dates, book reviews, teaching ideas, and articles relevant to the field.*

*Contact: Irene Wood at [atesl.admin@shaw.ca](mailto:atesl.admin@shaw.ca)*

More information and archives at [atesl.ca](http://www.atesl.ca)

# Call for Presentations

## Presenter to whom communication should be sent:

Last name: \_\_\_\_\_

First name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Position/Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Affiliation/Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

## Additional presenters, in the order to be listed in the program:

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

First name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Affiliation/Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

## Target audience (choose ONE only please)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adult ESL                | <input type="checkbox"/> Multiculturalism         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EAP/ESP                  | <input type="checkbox"/> English in the Workplace |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum               | <input type="checkbox"/> Administration           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Methodology              | <input type="checkbox"/> Assessment & Evaluation  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ESL for children & youth | <input type="checkbox"/> Settlement               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ESL Literacy             | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Research                 |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Technology               |   |

## Type of Presentation (CHECK ONE ONLY):

- |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Paper    | Presenter discusses current research and its application in language teaching  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Workshop | Facilitator(s) present a theory or technique and work with the participants to help them explore the theory or develop a specific teaching or research technique |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Panel    | Several presenters contribute to a variety of views on a topic   |

**Presenters are required to provide their own laptop computers. Other A/V requirements:**

- Media/Digital Projector and screen
  - Sound
  - No sound
- Internet access (limited availability)
- TV with DVD player (limited availability)
- OHP: overhead projector (available in one room only where there is no media/digital projector)
- CD Player
- Flipchart

**Changes:** changes to your AV requirements cannot be made after **October 1st**.

**Which length would you prefer?**

- 60 minutes
- 75 minutes
- doesn't matter

**Days you are available to present?**

- Friday
- Saturday
- Either day

**Please send the following information with this form.**

1. Presentation title (maximum 12 words)
2. Presentation synopsis as it will appear in the program book (maximum 100 words; in MS Word please)
3. Biographical statement(s) (maximum 25 words per presenter; MS Word)

All presenters **MUST** register for the conference.

**If your presentation is accepted, you must register for the conference by October 1<sup>st</sup> or your presentation may be withdrawn.**

Details will be posted on the conference website as they become available: [www.atesl.ca](http://www.atesl.ca)