



The ATESL  
Newsletter  
<http://www.atesl.ca>

May 2008

### President's Message

ATESL continues to be very active this year. The Calgary, Edmonton, and Central Alberta local committees have each provided a series of stimulating workshops to enthusiastic members and interested guests. Thank you all for your leadership and participation at the local level.

The Enhanced Language Training (ELT) conference in Edmonton from March 3-5 was very successful. This event was sponsored by Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry, and Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and organized by ATESL. Thank you to Judy Sillito, Conference Chair, and Karen Bradley, Logistics Coordinator, for their excellent work on this project.

Plans are now well underway for the ATESL 2008 conference, "Bridging The Gap", to be held in Edmonton October 17-18. The Call for Papers will be coming out soon. Please consider submitting proposals for workshops and sharing your experiences. The ATESL 2008 volunteer sign-up form is on the conference website if you'd like to provide on-site assistance.

The TESL Canada 2009 conference, co-hosted by ATESL, will be held in Banff from October 1-3, 2009. Thanks to the Calgary local members for the important role that they will play in organizing this conference. Volunteering at local, provincial, and national meetings offers rewarding opportunities to develop community and to enhance professional development. The call for TESL Canada 2009 volunteers will soon be available; thanks to all of you who volunteer for and/or plan to attend these exciting events.

Because our field is growing and becoming increasingly diverse, you will be receiving an email in the coming month asking you to identify your area(s) of special interest in TESL. We look forward to your responses; this information will enable us to organize forums or colloquia on specific topics at upcoming conferences, as well as facilitate discussion among members on an ongoing, more informal basis.

I hope that you're finding our new ATESL website useful. If you have information that you would like to see posted on the website, we would be happy to hear from you. If you have issues or concerns that you would like to raise at the Board level, please let me know.

In closing, I would like to thank the ATESL Board members and local volunteers for their continuing assistance and support for the work that we do.

Sincerely,  
Marian Rossiter  
ATESL President



**Friday, October 17th & Saturday, October 18th, 2008**

Crowne Plaza Chateau Lacombe  
Downtown Edmonton

**Jian Ghomeshi**

*Broadcaster, Writer & Host of CBC Radio's "Q"*

**Murray Munro**

*Professor of Linguistics & Director of TESL  
Simon Fraser University*

**Proposals for presentations are being accepted now!**

For more information, see the ATESL website:

[www.atesl.ca](http://www.atesl.ca)

## In Conversation With ...

### In Conversation with Tara Holmes

Gail Kingwell

Sit down with Tara Holmes to explore her career in the ESL field and several themes emerge. She has an interest in exploring different ways of looking at the world, has never tired of the puzzle posed by language learning and teaching, has a desire to work with colleagues to create environments where learners can flourish, and she expresses an ongoing discomfort with the *status quo* – constantly searching for better ways of teaching or organizing programs. She recounts highlights of her career in terms of ‘we’ not ‘me’- feeling privileged to have worked with so many wonderful people – teachers, learners and others.

Her career choice was motivated by a desire to travel and explore the world – and to find a job which she thought would support her while she figured out what she wanted to do when she grew up! Her teaching career began at the Language Institute of Japan, where teachers taught small classes of adult learners for 50 contact hours a week. Teachers and learners lived together at the Institute and when they were not teaching, teachers hosted small groups of learners in discussions about culture and world events. Thus, began the exploration of other world views.

Returning to Canada to teach at Mount Royal College in Calgary entailed a big adjustment. The learners were immigrants under intense pressure to become contributing members in Canadian society. They were in ESL classes for short periods of time and had goals beyond learning English. And there was less opportunity to establish the relationships that Tara feels are crucial to teaching and learning. Still intrigued with the puzzle, Tara began a Masters program at the U of C where people were exploring the connections between language, thought and the learning potential in exploratory talk. She became convinced that well-planned, intentional small group work was crucial to language learning – and this became the focus of her thesis.

She moved on to a position with the Calgary Board of Education (CBE) – coordinating the School of Languages – courses in ESL and everything from Arabic to Conversational Mandarin. While at the CBE she worked with colleagues and community partners to implement many creative programming initiatives. Programs addressed the needs of women moving into the world of work, assisted women to make a transition from home to community by providing an initial period of tutorials in homes, and provided academic upgrading for young marginalized immigrants with limited educational backgrounds. One program was accepted for entrance to SAIT and Korean teachers came to improve their English and to learn about new teaching methods.

At the same time Tara worked to craft a vision for a coordinated ESL program that provided

clear pathways for learners. One mechanism that emerged to unite the somewhat fragmented menu of programs was an assessment framework. And this was Tara's entrance into the world of the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB).

Since leaving the CBE, Tara has moved on to establish a successful private consulting business, participating in many local, provincial and national initiatives related to the CLB – as well as other projects relating to ESL and the settlement of immigrants in Canada. She is an acknowledged expert on the CLB and has worked with teachers across Canada to develop deeper understanding of applications of the CLB in the classroom. She has been an ATESL representative on the CCLB Board and is a trainer for the CLBPT.

She is currently working on her PhD at the University of Calgary, using the lens of hermeneutics and critical theory to explore the transition experience of immigrant professionals in Alberta. She continues to challenge the *status quo*, asking questions about what we as ESL professionals are really doing, how we are working in common enterprise with learners to create welcoming classrooms and communities in which newcomers can thrive.

Does she know what she wants to do when she grows up? She can hardly wait to finish her PhD so she can go off to travel and explore the world. Japan anyone?

*We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.*

Eliot, T.S. (1936) From: *Little Gidding*. Collected Poems: 1909-1962. Faber and Faber Limited. London. UK. p 214.

## ATESL Feature Article

### Figuring Out Phrasal Verbs: Practical Ideas from Research

Leila Ranta  
University of Alberta

Despite the fact that phrasal verbs are very frequent forms in spoken English, many ESL students avoid using them just as many ESL teachers avoid teaching them. Phrasal verbs are one type of what grammarians call *multiword verbs*. These consist of a verb + adverbial *particle* (*figure out*), or a verb + prepositional phrase (*rely on me*), or a verb + adverbial particle + prepositional phrase (*go on about it*). New phrasal verbs are constantly being created (I recently heard for the first time “staff it out” on *The West Wing*). They are also reliable sources of humour as in “Ours is the house by the cliff. We’d love to have you drop over.”

Many ESL textbooks make no distinction between phrasal and prepositional verbs calling them both ‘phrasal verbs’. Unfortunately, this simplification may lead to greater confusion in the long run because phrasal and prepositional verbs have different characteristics. All prepositional verbs must take a direct object but phrasal verbs don’t have to. Most phrasal verbs allow the particle to be separated from the verb so that both *figure out something* and *figure something out* are possible. But whenever the direct object of a phrasal verb is a pronoun, there is a strong preference for the separated form *I can’t figure it out*. In contrast, prepositional verbs do not allow the preposition to be separated from the verb. Phrasal verbs also have their own intonation pattern; the particle is always stressed (*He woke up* not *\*He woke up*). This is not the case with prepositional verbs (*rely on* not *\*rely on*). Finally, the most frequent phrasal verbs consist of a small number of highly frequent verbs like *take*, *get*, and *put* combined with a small number of particles whereas prepositional verbs consist of a wide range of verbs combined with a wide range of prepositions.

Given this complexity, it is important that ESL teachers know all about multiword verbs and teach them to their students. I suggest that teachers supplement traditional fill-in-the-blank exercises with the following techniques inspired by applied linguistics research:

1. Focus on the phrasal and prepositional verbs that are most frequent and therefore the most useful for learners. (See frequency lists in Biber et al., 1999 and Gardner & Davies, 2007.)
2. Avoid teaching similar multiword verbs like *run on*, *run away*, *run into* at the same time because *lexical sets* can lead to interference (Nation, 2000).
3. Focus on the meaning of the particles (*out*, *up*, *down*, etc). Rudzka-Ostyn’s (2003) book is a valuable guide to understanding the basic metaphorical meanings of the particles, which can help learners to organize their knowledge of phrasal verbs more effectively than in a list.
4. Help learners to notice multiword verbs by including listening practice activities where learners listen and fill in a cloze passage where the particles or prepositions have been deleted.
5. Provide pronunciation practice to help learners notice the difference between stressed phrasal verb particles and unstressed prepositions.

Many ESL students enjoy learning phrasal verbs because it makes them sound more like native speakers. I hope that I have convinced you that in order to teach them effectively, there is nothing more practical than a good theory!

### References

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**From the Learner**

**The Best Thing about Learning English in Alberta**

Igor Teterski

As you know, the Federal government of Canada has a LINC program – Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada. Alberta also has the ESL program – English as a Second Language. Alberta gives us the chance to study English more and at the high level for future studying in colleges and universities. Newcomers have the possibility to return to their professional fields after studying English. In my case, ESL classes will help me to return to my job. I am an Electronics engineer, and if I want to work in Alberta, I have to pass the TOEFL exam. I also know that I have to receive high scores in TOEFL.

Moreover, I plan to work with people. It is necessary that people understand me. For this reason, I have to improve my speaking and listening skills. I know that Alberta has the ESL program for new immigrants. I am very grateful to the Albertan government and to all Albertans for this possibility.

I have a friend who lives in Boston in the USA and cannot study English because Boston doesn't have the same kind of program for newcomers. Even though my friend can speak and understand English, he cannot study at the university because he must have a higher level of English for this. It is also the reason why my friend cannot find a job in his profession.

I think Alberta does well for us, newcomers, and for the province itself as well. Every year our province gets hundreds and hundreds of new engineers, technicians, accountants, and labourers. It is only possible thanks to ESL programs for newcomers.

*“Would you like to submit your learner’s writing for a future newsletter?” Send it to the Editor.*

**ATESL**  
2007



**Enriching Our  
Environment**

**Reading Topics for Adult Immigrant ESL Learners:**

**How to get them hooked**

A Presentation Summary from Enriching Our Environment – ATESL Conference 2007

Maroro Zinyemba

Growing up, I was always surrounded by books that took me on various journeys throughout my childhood and adolescent years. One book that accompanied me on a journey that I will never forget was *Zenzele – A letter for my daughter* by Nozipo Maraire (1996). My father gave me this book to read at a crucial time in my life - I was leaving home for the first time

at the age of 18 to pursue my education abroad. Zenzele, the heroine in the story, was doing the same. The excitement and emotions that I experienced while reading that book on the plane rang true to C.S. Lewis's words "we read to know we are not alone". Indeed, since leaving home, I have not experienced nor overcome identity crises, settlement issues and academic challenges alone. I have always managed to find, as Gold (2001) puts it, the right book that acts as a mirror and reflects the veiled parts of myself and my life. Seeing my reflection in the stories that I have read has allowed me to perceive things differently and alter my way of thinking for the better.

The possibilities of seeing one's own reflection in a story, of seeing alternate perspectives to a problem, and of undergoing healthy change are I believe, important for ESL students to experience while reading in their second language and living in a host country. As an ESL instructor, I am always encouraging my students to engage in pleasure reading not only for the linguistic gains but also for the psychological benefits that accompany reading the "right book". Research shows that reading materials must be at the appropriate linguistic level and interesting to the reader (Krashen, 1993). There are various formal and informal reading level tests such as Flesch-Kincaid Readability Scale, Fry Readability Graph and simple word recognition tests that teachers can use to help them choose texts that are at a suitable linguistic reading level for their students (Allison, 1996; Fowler, 2001). However, there is very little research on which topics ESL students are interested in reading. The objective of my study was to establish which topics adult immigrant learners of ESL in my sample find most interesting and why they are interested in certain topics.

Adult immigrant ESL learners (N=99) were recruited as participants from the ESL program at a community college in Edmonton. A Reading Topic Interest Questionnaire was designed and administered during class time over a one-week period. The questionnaire contained 20 short story summaries suggested by researchers, ESL instructors and librarians. The topics were culture/ cultural practices, identity, settlement issues, social justice, literacy and learning, family matters, animals, nature, horror, technology, religion, romance, freedom, science fictional themes, sport, politics, surviving life threatening situations, crime, and war.. The story summaries were selected from lists of graded readers, children's and juvenile literature.

The results show that these participants were most interested in reading about freedom, business, nature, war, crime, and surviving difficult situations. Learner variables such as gender and time spent in Canada were related to reading topic choices. The major factors affecting topic choices were pleasure, desire to gain specific knowledge, feelings aroused from text, personal identification with the story, and reading for/because of children.

Participants demonstrated an interest in topics that can be used for "therapeutic" reading. Teachers, librarians, writers and publishers need to recognize such interests when selecting reading material.

Another important point that publishers, librarians and teachers must take into consideration is that of content. Many ESL learners are keen to have more reading material with Canadian

content. As they correctly noted, a large amount of reading material that they have access to is of American and British content. While one can find Canadian content in a number of juvenile books and in children's literature, one must keep in mind that not all adult immigrant language learners are interested in reading juvenile and children's literature. Providing ESL learners with access to literature that contains topics they find interesting in libraries and in classrooms would allow them to experience the full benefits of extensive reading.

Extensive reading is not merely for linguistic development (i.e., improving general language proficiency, building reading fluency, and vocabulary development) and pleasure but also for personal growth. It is important that reading teachers, librarians and publishers understand and appreciate the reading topic interests of adult immigrant ESL learners. Responding to these interests is one way to provide learners with the language tools necessary for coping with emotional problems or changes in their lives in a host country and to get them "hooked" on reading.

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### **ESL Support for Smaller Providers**

**A Presentation Summary from Enriching Our Environment – ATESL Conference 2007**

Dawn Seabrook de Vargas

Over the past six years NorQuest College has provided ESL guidance, support and professional development to communities outside of Edmonton and Calgary through an on-going project called Rural Routes. Rural Routes provides as needed (in-time), appropriate, readily accessible support to smaller communities in serving their English as a Second Language clients. Funding for this work has come from Alberta Advanced Education and Technology as well as from Alberta Employment and Immigration .

The purpose of this innovative project has been to increase ESL delivery capacity and effectiveness in rural Alberta communities. Some of the activities this project has provided include:

- Mentoring
- Workshops



- Newsletters
- Resource development
- Supported pilot projects

The work of the Rural Routes initiative is carried out by two ESL consultants who work with smaller communities to help them identify their needs and develop suitable responses to the need. They often act as a sounding board for a new idea, a guide for developing a plan and support for the implementation. The consultants are responsive and able to research and provide tailor made solutions.

Through this project several resources have been developed to enhance ESL programming in Alberta communities.

**ESL Resource Package for Alberta Communities (ERPAC)** - This resource provides background information for newcomers to ESL instruction. It includes a curriculum based on the Canadian Language Benchmarks, informal assessment tools and strategies and techniques and resources for delivery.

Access this resource at <http://www.norquest.ca/corporate/edresources/index.htm>

**A Needs Assessment Tool for ESL Programming** – This resource provides a guide for conducting a community needs assessment to identify ESL needs as well as sample tools to use in the process.

Access this resource at <http://www.norquest.ca/corporate/edresources/index.htm>

#### **Online Professional Development Workshops**

- One-On-One Instruction
- Teaching Pronunciation
- Teaching Strategies

These three workshops, available in an online format, offer a professional development solution to communities which cannot always access training.

Access this resource at <http://webct.edu.norquest.ca/public/eslworkshop>

**ESL Rural Routes Newsletters** – To date, three newsletters have been developed. They offer pertinent ESL information that includes teaching techniques, announcements about upcoming events, resources that support effective instruction and news about what's happening across the province.

Access this resource at <http://www.norquest.ca/corporate/edresources/index.htm>

**ESL Lessons – A Mini-Curriculum Based on ERPAC** – This is a set of 10 lesson plans, at both CLB 2 and 4, which follow the themes and grammar provided in ERPAC. When the pilot delivery is complete, they will be available on the NorQuest website.

#### **Published Workshops**

- ESL Literacy
- Introduction to ESL Resource Package (ERPAC)

Two workshops include a facilitator's guide, power point slides and handouts that coordinators can use to introduce their instructors and tutors to teaching ESL. This resource is still being piloted.

That the Rural Routes initiative is a welcome service is evidenced by how it has expanded

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over the years. Access to the mentoring service alone has increased from 8 pilot communities in the first year to 40 communities last year. Coordinators of ESL programs have expressed appreciation for the support they have been able to access. This service was “*not valuable – (it was) priceless!*” and coordinators “*use this service again and again! It was very valuable!*”

Communities’ needs are constantly evolving. This project has been very responsive to supporting and anticipating change. Some communities are just beginning to initiate ESL programming because of increased numbers of immigrants moving into the community. Others who have traditionally offered ESL instruction one-on-one are seeing a need, not only to recruit and train new volunteers, but to also set up classes. Other communities now have well-established on-going ESL programs and an established group of instructors. They are now looking at more targeted support in needs such as customizing curriculum.

Up to now the project has largely focused on providing support to the 83 Community Adult Learning Councils and 72 Volunteer Tutor Adult Learning Programs throughout Alberta. However, it has become evident that there is need in other ESL training organizations as well. These organizations are located both in rural communities and the larger urban centres of Edmonton and Calgary. Many of them have similar needs for professional development and support for providing ESL instruction. Consequently the service is now expanding to include smaller urban ESL providers.

For additional information on the project contact Dawn Seabrook de Vargas by e-mail: [vargas@telusplanet.net](mailto:vargas@telusplanet.net) or phone: 780 479-2521

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2007-2008  
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**THE ATESL NEWSLETTER**

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

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

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**The Alberta Teachers of English as a Second  
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