The ATESL Newsletter

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

February – March 2006

ATESL ESL-C CONFERENCE 2005
Connecting Communities, Honouring Voices!

ATESL Conference 2006 – Update

The 2006 ATESL Conference will take place on Friday, October 13 and Saturday, October 14.

The Coast Edmonton Plaza Hotel is our venue (102 Avenue and 105 Street); we'll also be having technology-based workshops in computer labs at NorQuest College - just 2 blocks away.

"Currents Under Currents" is our theme. On Friday, our potential keynote speaker is Anna Maria Tremonti of CBC Radio's "The Current". On Saturday, Ilona Leki, an American academic specializing in writing and instructor feedback on writing is lined up.

Barbara Penner

ATESL ESL-C CONFERENCE 2005 CONNECTING COMMUNITIES HONOURING VOICES!

Conference Report 2005

For the first time in many years, two distinct yet common councils; ESL-C and ATESL, embarked on a journey to host a joint ESL conference. In October of 2003, ATESL and ESL-C engaged in discussions to unite educators of ESL learners across Alberta, under one conference umbrella. The result of two years of planning was the establishment of a joint conference – Connecting Communities: Honouring Voices – at the University of Calgary.

For 527 teachers, administrators and researchers who attended the conference, it was a time to renew and reconnect with colleagues and the ESL field. Many needs were addressed on behalf of the two councils. Participants were able to choose from 60 different breakout sessions from a variety of presenters involved in K-12 and adult ESL communities. In addition the conference was able to provide delegates with three keynotes speakers; Dr. Barbara Burnaby, Jacob Magot and Dr. Sylvia Helmer.

The 2005 conference has been the largest conference to date for both councils. The commitment of time, energy, and ideas by our volunteers made a tremendous difference in helping to create a successful conference. It has been a great privilege to work with such a dedicated group of professionals. Your efforts have shown that a joint conference can be accomplished when strong hands and minds work together!

Conference Co-chairs,

Lesley Dudley
Adriana Bejko
Dora Foscolos
Anne O-Bryne

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TESL Canada Conference 2005

DISTANCE EDUCATION: A SIMPLE INTRODUCTION

Subhadra Ramachandran

This summary is a modified version of the presentation that the author delivered at the TESL Canada conference in May 2005 in Ottawa.

1. What is Distance Education?

Distance education seems new to many when in actuality it has been around for some time. It began as correspondence learning in the last century and continued into this century, transforming into mass communications through the use of radio and television. Now, distance education takes on many forms: electronic mail, web-based instruction, computer networks, teleconferencing, chat rooms, satellite television, and virtual classrooms just to name a few. Distance education has evolved from the use of primarily print-based materials into a worldwide movement using various technologies.

Conventionally defined, distance learning refers to any educational or learning process or system in which the teacher and instructor are separated geographically or in time from his/her students. It is also a teaching situation in which students are separated from other students or educational resources. Most often, distance learning has been thought of as prepackaged text, audio, and/or video courses taken by an isolated learner with limited interaction with an instructor or other students. This perspective, however, is changing. Today information technologies can allow a rich interactive distance learning experience that may surpass the interactivity of a traditional classroom. Contemporary distance learning is effected through the implementation of computer and electronic technology to connect teacher and student(s) in either real (synchronous) or delayed (asynchronous) time or on an as-needed basis. Content delivery may be achieved through a variety of technologies, including satellites, computers, cable television, interactive video, electronic transmissions via telephone lines, and others. It is important to remember that distance learning does not exclude traditional learning processes. Frequently, it is used in conjunction with in-person classroom or professional training procedures and practices.

2. What is *distance*?

Distance education is not just a matter of geographic separation of learners and teachers, as generally assumed. In fact, it is interpreted as a pedagogical concept that Moore (1993), in his theory of transactional distance, describes as "the universe of teacher-learner relationships that exist when learners and instructors are separated by space and/or by time". Transactional distance refers to a physical separation that causes a psychological and communicative gulf between the instructor and learner in an educational event. Although there is some

transactional distance even in face-to-face education, it is relative and different for each person, and often different from one distance education program to the next.

The old myth that distance education will generate socially isolated zombies is clearly untrue. Russell (1999), after cataloging over 400 students, concluded that the medium is rarely the determining factor in learning effectiveness. Classroom students tend to perform just as well as their off-site counterparts in the same courses. It is course design and pedagogy that matter the most. However, some research suggests that for learning to take place, a sense of community for the learners needs to exist. If this is the case, then, a key question arises: How do learners and facilitators in a virtual classroom build and sustain a sense of community? A review of the professional literature suggests that many factors influence the quality of interaction and the sense of community within any distance learning environment. These interrelated factors, in turn, influence course design and pedagogy.

3. How is Distance Education Delivered?

A wide range of technological options are available to the distance educator. They fall into four major categories, namely, a) Voice, b) Video, c) Data and d) Print:

Voice - Instructional audio tools include the interactive technologies of telephone, audio-conferencing, and short-wave radio. Passive (i.e., one-way) audio tools include tapes and radio.

Video - Instructional video tools include still images such as slides, pre-produced moving images (e.g., film, videotape), and real-time moving images combined with audio conferencing (one-way or two-way video with two-way audio).

Data - Computers send and receive information electronically. For this reason, the term "data" is used to describe this broad category of instructional tools. Computer-based applications for distance education are varied and include: electronic mail, fax, real-time computer conferencing, and Internet-based systems.

Print - is a foundational element of distance education programs and the basis from which all other delivery systems have evolved. Various print formats are available including: textbooks, study guides, workbooks, course syllabi, and case studies.

Although technology plays a key role in the delivery of distance education, educators must remain focused on instructional outcomes, and guard against becoming too focused on the technology of delivery (the 'message', not the 'medium'). The key to effective distance education is focusing on the needs of the learners, all aspects of the content, and the problems that may be faced by the teacher, before selecting a delivery system. This approach may result in a mix of media, each serving a specific purpose.

4. Who is Distance Education for?

What characteristics improve an individual's chances of success as a distance student? Obviously, not all students are suited for all programs: in distance learning, one size definitely *does not* fit all. One of the major differences between traditional classroom instruction and

distance education is the amount of face-to-face contact students have with their teacher and with other students. For most people, learning is a social process, and the support of teachers and classmates forms an important element of the learning that occurs. Distance learning students still have contact with their teacher, although the forms through which that contact occurs are different. Teachers and students may meet only once or twice over an entire course, with the remainder of the communication occurring on the phone, via mail, via e-mail or through online learning communities. Many distance learning students have little or no face-to-face contact with other students taking the same class, although some programs do encourage and facilitate student-to-student support (this may be in person, but may also occur through distance modalities). Studies suggest that students that are most likely to succeed are the ones who are motivated, able to work independently, and who possess strong study and organizational skills. While less tangible than academic skills, these are important issues to address with potential learners. As mentioned above, learning is a social process, and the support of teachers and classmates can be an important element of the learning that occurs. Some discussions pertaining to this issue have suggested that the skills needed to succeed vary depending upon the model of distance education used. Students with higher academic skills, such as those studying for a university entrance test, may be comfortable with a pure distance approach. However, lower-level students, or those who need more support, may fare better in a blended program that combines distance education with some face-to-face interaction. In addition to these skills, studying at a distance often requires that the student have access to various forms of technology (e.g., webcam, CD player, VCR, computer, etc.). In effect, learner characteristics and technology requirements are two of the most important learner-centric factors to be considered for the success of a distance education course.

5. The Future of Distance Education

Believe it or not, online learning (as opposed to distance education) is still in its infancy. As pioneers grapple with new technologies and new practices, the discipline of distance education continues to evolve. Despite the frenetic pace of change, trends which point to the future of online learning can be easily identified. Let us take a very brief look at some of those trends.

Bandwidth: By bandwidth, we mean the amount of information which may be delivered from a server site, such as an educational institution, to a receiver site, such as a student's computer. In the near future, bandwidth will become unlimited – and possibly ubiquitous and inexpensive. A number of telecommunications companies are already responding to the changing needs of the different types of users with better data compression technologies, such as ADSL.

Computers: The tools used in education, such as books, notepads or paper, writing implements and blackboards have remained unchanged for the last several centuries. These tools will be absorbed by the new technology in the form of Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs). PDAs are portable computers that are designed to act as organizers, note takers and/or communication devices. Due to the small physical size of these devices, they often possess the latest and most compact user interfaces such as touch screens, hand writing recognition, or miniature keyboards (both on-screen and attached to the device), in addition to high speed

wireless internet access. With these features, the PDA is destined to become the dominant tool for online education. PDAs are very easy to use and easy to back up to one's PC, and very easy to share data with others via infrared port beaming or the internet. They permit one to use thousands of applications that allow one to do lots of other things like read and send email, view web pages, documents, spreadsheets, databases, charts and so on. They can store a lot of text data, such as entire books, and smaller portions of multimedia such as movies, audio and graphics.

Software: The focus of educational software will not be so much to present a torrent of information to a student as it will be to place the student in a learning environment where the information needed for success will be actively sought and learned. There are a number of products on the market that can create highly textured multimedia courses, presenting graphics, video and sound, responding to student choices, and connecting to other resources. In the near future, virtual reality (VR) and simulations, which already exist to a great degree of sophistication for scientific/military applications, will move to the personal computer interface level with the development of more powerful PDAs and manipulation devices, such as the data glove, a haptic device. Even more sophisticated total immersion simulators will be available at community learning centres and will be for a variety of skills based learning activities.

In short, the above three areas will continue to influence the way in which future distance courses are designed. Although teaching is at the heart of a distance learning course, the discussions of issues related to the structuring of the lessons, selecting learner-feedback methods and choosing the right assessment strategies is beyond the scope of this outline.

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Public Report: Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks

The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks is pleased to acknowledge contributions from the Government of Alberta in order to support the development of new products and services in support of the Canadian Language Benchmarks in Alberta as well as nationally. With funding in 2004 and 2005 the CCLB was able to:

· Develop and enhance the comprehensive national assessment system that supports the use of CLB in the adult ESL community, education, training and labour market, including a system of recognition of CLB assessors and assessment service providers.
· Strengthen public awareness and image of the Canadian Language Benchmarks and encourage the practical, fair and reliable use of this national standard

Building a National Assessment System

Funding from the Government of Alberta contributed significantly to a series of projects:

1. **Development of Guidelines for Test Development: CLB 2000 Companion Tables**
2. *New* **Workplace Language Assessment (WLA) and pre-screener for CLB 7-10**
3. *New Versions* **of the Canadian Language Benchmarks Placement Test (CLBPT) for CLB 1-8**
4. *New* **Canadian Language Benchmarks Literacy Placement Tool (LPT)**
5. *New* **Canadian Language Benchmarks Self-Assessment Tool (CLB 1-12)**

1. Development of Guidelines for CLB Test Development – Phase 1

Phase 1 of this project involved reformatting the benchmarks into concise tables to provide an overview of key CLB content. This will facilitate use of the CLB 2000 for task selection, task development, evaluation procedures, assessment development and test instrument

alignment activities. An experienced ESL instructor and a CLB Expert worked with the researchers to ensure that the final document addresses the needs of the intended users. The tables were unveiled at a CCLB symposium at TESL Canada in May 2005.

2. *New* Workplace Language Assessment (WLA) for CLB 7-10

The Workplace Language Assessment (WLA), is designed to assess English language proficiency at Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) 7 – 10. It was developed for assessments of internationally-educated newcomers seeking entry into bridge-to-employment and other higher-level programs which prepare new workers to enter the Canadian workforce.

Until now, there has been no standardized tool available to provide reliable reports of language-proficiency in the CLB 7 – 10 range. Development of this tool began only after consultation with agencies serving internationally-educated newcomers to determine the communicative language needs of workers in professional settings including IT, engineering and accounting.

WLA was piloted with test-takers who have post-secondary education, some work experience and are seeking access into the Canadian workforce. The tool will assess clients in approximately 90 minutes and will measure English language proficiency in four basic skill areas: speaking, listening, reading and writing.

National pilot-testing was conducted in Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg and Toronto to ensure that it provides reliable CLB scores in a time- and cost-efficient manner.

One of the unique features of this tool is a pre-test screening tool to help employment counsellors and assessors identify clients in the CLB 7 range before referring them either for a full assessment or for CLBPT/BA assessments for LINC and basic ESL programs. It is expected this will help clients achieve more positive results from the tool. The WLA will be available to meet the needs of a range of workforce-related programs across Canada.

The National Advisory Committee for the WLA project represents a range of stakeholders including workplace trainers, CLB assessors, immigrant-serving agencies and employment preparation programs.

3. New Versions of the Canadian Language Benchmarks Placement Test (CLBPT) for CLB 1-8

The CCLB has completed development of two new versions of the Canadian Language Benchmarks Placement Test (CLBPT) (Forms 2 and 3). Following a meeting with Regional

Trainers in February, minor changes have been made to these new versions that will apply to all CLBPT test forms.

The Assessment Guide for Forms 2 and 3 includes writing exemplars to be used for orientation sessions, for self-study and skills sharpening. All three sub-tests (reading, writing, and speaking and listening) are completely new. Half-day orientation sessions will be available beginning in the late summer. These will be delivered by CLBPT regional trainers and are mandatory before using the new test forms.

An employment-related version (Form 4) has also been developed and piloted at Bow Valley College and NorQuest College. Form 4 will be appropriate for use with ESL learners seeking entry into employment and career preparation programs that cover the CLB 4 -8 range. As the tasks relate to employment and job-search experiences both in Canada and abroad, it will not be suitable for placement into general language training programs.

4. Canadian Language Benchmarks Literacy Placement Tool (LPT)

Development of a new *Canadian Language Benchmarks ESL Literacy Placement Tool* aligned to the literacy benchmarks began in 2004-2005, with the completion date scheduled for the late fall of 2005. The new resource will facilitate the placement of ESL learners into appropriate language and literacy training programs.

The Literacy Placement Tool was reviewed by ESL literacy assessors in order to prepare for a national validation process in May 2005. Assessors and literacy practitioners in ESL and LINC centres participated in the process, along with over one hundred literacy learners.

These tools will identify learners whose observable skills and strategies reflect CLB Foundations and Phase 1 literacy competencies in a streamlined one-on-one assessment procedure. In response to needs expressed by practitioners, Phase 1 numeracy competencies can also be assessed.

Practitioners in multi-level classes will find the tool of particular value to identify what a new learner can do in English before beginning to target training to meet particular needs. The LPT facilitates improved referral opportunities to programs where the literacy benchmarks are used as a framework for training and evaluation.

The LPT package includes a self-training guide, a standardized, scripted set of instructions for administering each task, a checklist of skills and strategies observed during the assessment, and a simple scoring methodology. Experienced practitioners and assessors can administer the LPT in a range of settings (e.g. classrooms, community-based programs, controlled intake assessment centers).

Strengthening Public Awareness & Image of the CLB

The growing interest in the Canadian Language Benchmarks is a natural consequence of the evolution of the whole Canadian Language Benchmarks initiative. The benefits of the Canadian Language Benchmarks are increasingly recognized as a commonly understood and articulated national framework useful for describing a person's ability to accomplish particular tasks involving reading, writing, speaking and listening skills.

The CCLB Board and staff worked hard to increase public awareness and image of the CLB.

New Vision, Mission and Strategic Outcomes:

The Board of Directors identified the need to review and update the mission of the CCLB in response to the changing environment within which the CLB are being used nationally and internationally. A comprehensive strategic planning process resulted in the new vision, mission and strategic outcome statements, taking into account both what the CCLB has already accomplished, and needs to accomplish to meet its objectives.

Endorsements for the national standards:

The CCLB gathered numerous high profile endorsements regarding successful use of the CLB from national organizations including sector councils, regulatory and licensing bodies, postsecondary institutions. Testimonials were received from 22 organizations including:
· Canadian Nurses Association
· Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council
· Canadian Trucking Human Resources Council

Participation at national and provincial conferences and forums:

CCLB staff connected with the adult ESL and immigrant serving communities across the country at numerous national and provincial conferences through presentations, workshops and exhibits. A partial listing of events is listed below:
· Alberta Human Resources Conference
· Association of Canadian Community Colleges: Symposium on Immigrant Settlement Programs and Services in Canada's Colleges and Institutes
· ATESL Annual Conference
· Canadian Association of Prior Learning and Assessment
· Canadian Society of Training and Development
· Conference Board of Canada
· National Consultation on Career Development
· TESL Canada

ESL MULTIMEDIA RESOURCES PROJECT

Public Report
June 2005

The purpose of the ESL Multimedia Resources Project was to disperse ESL online course materials and digital learning objects previously developed by the Calgary Board of Education with support from Alberta Learning and to provide workshops to ESL instructors, tutors and coordinators associated with Community Adult Learning Councils and Literacy Councils in Alberta.

The purpose of the project was to familiarize workshop participants with the contents of the ESL Multimedia Resources CDs, assist them in using the resources in a distributed learning mode, and teach participants to customize and re-purpose the resources in order to suit the needs of learners in a variety of contexts.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Ten workshops were offered to 136 participants throughout the province. In total, 160 CD programs and packages were distributed to participants. Introductory emails as well as CD packages (including a 4 CD set, CD Directory and ESL Multimedia Resources Manual) were sent to contacts in Edmonton, Banff, Red Deer, Grande Prairie, Lac La Biche, Cold Lake, Calgary, Fort McMurray, Brooks, Lethbridge, Pincher Creek, High Level, Taber, Westlock, and Vermilion.

Subsequent to their attendance at the workshops, all participants were contacted via email in order to answer questions and troubleshoot technical problems. In addition, the PowerPoint presentation used in the workshop was emailed to a number of program coordinators who requested it in order to share the materials and instruction with teachers in their areas who were unable to attend.

In addition to those who attended the workshops, a number of CD packages were sent out to areas that were unable to schedule workshops but were interested in sharing the resources with their instructors and tutors. For example, eighteen packages were sent out to Grande Prairie to be shared with regional coordinators at their annual meeting in May, 2005. In Lethbridge, Fort McMurray and Red Deer, the resources were deemed to be too advanced for their learners and for this reason, workshops were not held in these Centres. In Red Deer and Cold Lake, the appointment of new coordinators who were unaware of the resources made scheduling a workshop impossible within the time frame of the project. In the case of Vermilion, the original project end date (March 31, 2005) was extended in order to include instructors in this area. In many cases, particularly in the fall of 2004, there were other professional development opportunities (eg. Norquest College) being offered in many of the regions, and coordinators were hesitant to ask instructors to come in to a central location for

more than one workshop in the fall term.

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Workshop participants were asked to complete an online or hard copy evaluation form at the conclusion of each workshop. Sixty-five participants responded to the online survey. Asked to evaluate the workshop, 99% responded that it was excellent or very good. Asked how appropriate the resources were for their learners, 59% responded that they were extremely or very useful, while 38% selected somewhat useful.

The workshops were well received, as evidenced by the following comments made by participants on the workshop evaluation surveys:

> *"This is exactly the help I needed for multi-level classes."*
> *"There is lots to work with on every level. It will take me some time to find my way around but with some trial and error, it will be a great tool for both me and my students."*
> *"Thank you for your "Guru Team" impact on my world of ESL. I know so little re the great potential of this multi-media tool and/or the impact this will have on my ESL communicative style of teaching….The permission to hand out to students impacts mega on student oriented process that makes an incredible tool affordable and again student-focused. Thank you to each of you."*
> *"My students are working mothers who of course are very busy. We have a 2 hour lesson per week which isn't very much. They will now be able to spend time learning English at home when they have time."*

The participants, including teachers, tutors and program coordinators, were excited to receive such excellent resources, free of charge. They were also very pleased to be able to reproduce the CDs as necessary for their learners. The workshop activities were mainly hands-on, and participants appreciated having the opportunity to look through the materials to find those that would be suitable and useful for them. In fact, several participants suggested that the CD resources should have been presented in two stages:

> 1) Stage 1: cruise, navigate, hunt, explore
> 2) Stage 2: customize and apply.

In terms of technology, the participants' abilities were diverse and, as a result, the workshops were customized in each location. In some cases, the participants were able to not only become familiar with the resources and discuss how they could be used in a classroom setting, but also master the technical skills required for accessing the file structure and customizing individual files. In cases where the participants' technical skills were somewhat limited, the focus of the workshop was on exploring the resources and sharing instructional strategies for incorporating them into classroom work. For all participants, sharing with other teachers

was a key component of the workshops.

Workshop participants described their next steps in a number of ways but were clearly focused on further exploration and sharing, as evidenced by the following comments from the evaluation surveys:

> *"I will be investigating the CDs, looking for pieces that I can pass on to tutors. I will probably burn a copy of the introductory CD to pass on to a computer literate student."*
> *"reflective…copying several for instructors and meeting as a group to discuss use with literacy learners."*
> *"lots of browsing; pass set on to our employment services for business English; burn class sets."*
> *"To burn copies for teachers at my school, to take a more in-depth look at the program and possibly to set up a little workshop at my school to share the information as you have done here."*

Participants praised the facilitators for their knowledgeable and practical approach while facilitating workshops; they liked the fact that the presenters were approachable and ensured that everyone understood what they needed to understand; they appreciated facilitators' enthusiasm ; thought that the workshops were well presented and very productive. It allowed for a variety of learning styles, questions and discussions .

OUTCOMES

As a result of the distribution of the ESL online course materials and the delivery of the accompanying workshops, coordinators, instructors and tutors from Community Adult Literacy Councils and Literacy Councils across Alberta were provided free access to these excellent digital course materials. As a result of attending the workshops, the participants are now:

- familiar with navigating the ESL Multimedia Resources CDs
- able to access resources appropriate to their learners' needs
- able to access Teacher CD resources including quizzes, tests, answer keys, rubrics, suggested syllabi and print reading packages
- able to design a lesson or unit of study incorporating the CD resources with their own resources
- able to apply the concept of distributed learning in an ESL environment
- familiar with a variety of ways in which the resources can be used, as shared by other workshop participants and the workshop facilitators

As a result of the ESL Multimedia Resources Workshop, participants with more advanced technical skills are now able to:

- access individual files on the CDs in order to customize the resources to fit their classroom needs
- retrieve, manipulate, revise and re-purpose learning materials located in the CD file structure

EXTENDED OUTCOMES

For many of the workshop participants and program coordinators, this was the first time that they had access to digital ESL instructional materials. They were intrigued by the multimedia components and felt these would be motivational for their students. Many were surprised that they were able to customize the files for their own use and that the technical skills required were minimal. Exposure to the use of these materials may lead to increased interest in digital ESL resources in the future, including digital learning repositories where teachers can search for multimedia and text-based materials for their own learners. For example, some coordinators asked about the availability of digital math resources to help their learners prepare for math tests they must pass in order to continue working in specific trades.

In terms of distributed learning, the fact that these resources are available in CD format means that even in rural areas where Internet connectivity is limited or slow, teachers can plan individualized remediation or enrichment programs for their learners, beyond the boundaries of the classroom. This is an area in which many workshop participants expressed interest. While suggestions were also made to expand the resources to include pronunciation as well as reading/writing/grammar materials at Canadian Language Benchmarks 2 – 5, many participants were appreciative of the fact that these resources were designed for students at CLB 5 – 10 because, in most cases, they had few resources for such high level learners.

In summary, the broader outcomes of the project are:

- increased awareness of and interest in digital ESL resources
- interest in expanding knowledge of how to access and use distributed learning resources, particularly in CD format, where Internet access is limited or slow
- increased technical capabilities, in terms of file management and customization
- increased interest in and capability for providing customized learning experiences for ESL and literacy learners with a wide range of abilities, needs and challenges

CONCLUSIONS

Project design

Project resources were well designed to meet the broad spectrum of learner needs. Workshop delivery received very good feedback from participants who thought that the initiative was something they needed that provided support for them in preparing for the use of ESL Multimedia Resources CDs.

Facilitator Role

Facilitators delivered workshops in an efficient and practical manner while also demonstrating expertise in the subject matter and readiness to support participants at their level of comfort technology and content wise. Survey participant responses clearly demonstrated that the role of the facilitators was critical in understanding ESL Multimedia Resources CDs and assisting the participants in using the resources in a distributed learning mode while also teaching them to customize and re-purpose the resources in order to suit the needs of learners in a variety of contexts

Major learnings

After attending the workshops the participants:

- o became familiar with navigating the ESL Multimedia Resources CDs
- o are able to access resources appropriate to their learners' needs
- o are able to access Teacher CD resources including quizzes, tests, answer keys, rubrics, suggested syllabi and print reading packages
- o are able to design a lesson or unit of study incorporating the CD resources with their own resources
- o are able to apply the concept of distributed learning in an ESL environment
- o are familiar with a variety of ways in which the resources can be used, as shared by other workshop participants and the workshop facilitators

RECOMMENDATIONS

Similar projects could be improved by
- offering separate instruction for participants with limited computer skills
- providing more time for workshops or possibly a two-stage workshop
- including more digital resources in Math and at lower CLB levels
- avoiding overlap with other professional development opportunities funded by Alberta Learning's Language Training Programs

ATESL Mission Statement

The Alberta Teachers of English as a Second Language (ATESL) is a professional organization which 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 which 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, which are engaged in education

- communicating with government, business, and the general public to create awareness about immigration, settlement of immigrants and English language learning

- communicating with English language program providers and learners to encourage awareness of issues of accountability and program standards

- administering an ESL teacher accreditation process which encourages the highest standards of teacher preparation and performance

- working collaboratively with governments 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 process which determine their educational choices

ATESL Professional Development Bursaries

ATESL members are eligible for bursaries for conferences or courses of study (maximum $500).

Deadlines for application in 2006 are: March 15, June 15, September 15, and December 15.

Apply now by completing the official application form: http://www.atesl.ca/participate_bursary.html

You are eligible to apply if:

- You have been a member of ATESL for at least two years

- You have not received a bursary from ATESL in the past two years

- Your membership fees are paid in full

- You plan to return to Alberta after your conference or course of study, if it is outside the province.

Priority will be given to candidates who demonstrate need for financial support.

Successful candidates will agree to provide a written evaluation of the event or course, which may be published in the ATESL Newsletter or web site.

Post High School ESL Literacy Research and Development Project
Phase II: Public Report

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Post High School ESL Literacy Research and Development Project was a literacy training initiative piloted at Bow Valley College and funded by Alberta Learning. The purpose of this research and development project was to investigate the educational needs and employment goals of young adult ESL literacy learners and to design and deliver a bridging program tailored to their needs.

Phase One of the project, undertaken in 2002-2003, involved investigations into the educational needs and interests of immigrants between the ages of 18-25 with ESL literacy difficulties who are no longer eligible to continue learning in a high school setting, but are unlikely to obtain a high school diploma because of their language barriers. Based on the research findings, a program was developed to help these learners improve their reading and writing skills and assist them in creating a concrete plan to reach their career goals.

Phase Two of the project ran from 2003-2004, and involved the delivery of the pilot program, development of career plans for each individual learner, and the revisions to the curriculum based on the pilot program results.

Fifteen young adult learners with reading and writing Canadian Language Benchmarks literacy levels between Foundation and Phase III and listening and speaking proficiency levels between CLB 2 and 6 were accepted into the program. They attended part–time small group classes for a total of sixteen hours per week. Classes ran for two eighteen-week sessions from fall 2003 to summer 2004. Clients also met with a career advisor to discuss future education and career plans several times over the course of each session.

Program Objectives
The Post High School ESL Literacy Research and Development Project Phase Two proposed to:
- assist young adult ESL literacy learners in improving their reading and writing skills through small group instruction.
- develop further education and employment action plans in conjunction with the learners to map their educational / vocational journey towards their career goals.
- pilot, evaluate and revise the course guide developed in Phase One of the program to fine tune it to the needs of the learners.

SUMMARY OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Phase Two of the Post High School ESL Literacy Research and Development Project can be broken down into three parts. The principal activity undertaken in the project was the instructional element. Learners attended small group classes that focused on improving their reading and writing skills through age and interest-appropriate content. The second element involved the development of an educational and employment action plan which mapped out each learner's educational journey towards their goals. The third project element was the piloting and revision of the course guide developed in Phase One.

Instructional Element:

In the instructional element of the project, young adult learners met with qualified ESL literacy instructors in small group classes for a total of sixteen hours per week for two eighteen week sessions. The content covered in the classes focused in particular on improving the clients' reading and writing skills. The materials used were age appropriate and addressed the Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000, ESL for Literacy Learners competencies as well as incorporating competencies from the English as a Second Language Senior High curriculum. The instructional process was undertaken as follows:

a) Learners were interviewed before the classes began in order to determine program suitability, previous education and literacy needs.
b) Suitable learners' reading and writing levels were then assessed at the beginning of the program to place them in the appropriate class for their language level.
c) Learners met in small group classes for a total of 16 hours per week, for two 18-week sessions.
d) Classes focused on developing the learners' reading and writing skills, and preparing them for upgrading courses or training programs. Instructors piloted the course guide developed in Phase One
e) Throughout the course, instructors monitored day-to-day learner progress using competencies checklists developed for the program. Instructors also kept track of progress through graded reading assessments and assignments in class.
f) At the end of the second 18-week session, the reading and writing skills of the learners were assessed once again through assessments and competency checklist scores and compared to their entry level scores to determine progress.
g) Once students had been evaluated and their scores were discussed with them, referrals were made for future studies

Action Plan Element:

As part of the program, learners met with a career advisor to determine further education and career goals and to map out a path to achieve these goals.

a) At the beginning of the first session of classes, action plan interview sheets and action plan charts were designed for the program.
b) Learners met with a career advisor early in the program to discuss their career

goals and the necessary educational / training path.

    c) Learners met with the career advisor several times over the course of the program to discuss progress and any changes to their goals.

    d) An action plan was drawn up for each learner in the program to outline the steps towards each one's goals.

    e) At the end of the course, learners were assisted with registration and referrals for the next step in their educational journey

<u>Course Guide Element:</u>

    a) The course guide created in Phase One of the program was piloted in the classroom with the learners.

    b) Necessary changes and additions were noted throughout the program.

    c) The course guide was revised following the end of the instructional component of the program.

LEARNER PROGRESS

The Post High School ESL Literacy Program proved to be a very successful program. As seen below, all clients who completed the year in the program demonstrated progress in both reading and writing skills. The extra support that the learners received in the program and content tailored to their needs resulted in noticeable progress. Another major factor in the amount of progress made was determination and dedication to learning on the part of the clients.

11 clients completed the course. When their pre-test and post-test scores are compared, of these 11 clients, 100% moved up at least one literacy benchmark phase in reading.

    9% (1) moved up three literacy benchmark phases
    45% (5) moved up two literacy benchmark phases
    45% (5) moved up one literacy benchmark phase

Similar results can be seen in writing. When the pre-test and post-test results were compared, 100% of the clients who completed the one-year course moved up at least one literacy benchmark phase.

    9% (1) moved up three literacy benchmark phases
    64% (7) moved up two literacy benchmark phases
    27% (3) moved up one literacy benchmark phase

When competency checklist results are compared, progress is also apparent in all learners. All participants that completed the program demonstrated progress. 70% of the learners who completed the program demonstrated an average increase of 25.5% in reading competencies. The overall average increase for all participants in reading competencies was 21%. When writing competencies are compared, the results are also consistent, with 70% of the learners who completed the program demonstrating an average increase of 26%.

The overall average increase in writing for all participants that completed the program was 21%.

Overall, learners were quite dedicated to improving their English skills, but life factors and outside influences did affect results. Those who were more determined to advance and get on track to their goal showed marked improvement over those who were not quite as focused, or who had multiple outside pressures interfering with their learning. With some learners, attendance was an issue, and this was reflected in their progress. Over the course of the term, however, as learners began to see the improvement in their skills and recognize that they were moving closer to their goals, they tended to work even harder.

Instructors kept track of learner comments and notable progress. Some of their anecdotal comments regarding student progress are included below:

- (He) often mentioned that he wanted to be an electrician. In February, he mentioned that he would be interested in doing some extra reading about science and electricity. A few months later, he was reading an electronics textbook that he had taken out of the public library.
- (She) said that members of her family were noticing how much better her English was. She was very happy to tell us that her family was proud of her and how hard she was working.
- (She) said that she feels she has already improved a lot, and she is so proud that she can write an essay. She said that at the beginning of the year, she didn't even know what an essay was.
- In the winter, (he) brought a job application form in to tutorial class. We worked on it together and helped him put together a cover letter. He got a job as a translator for the School Board.
- She said that her reading and vocabulary had really improved…she was happy because she had several experiences where she could do things that she couldn't do before.
- After Christmas, (her) attendance, attitude, and class work improved…Her confidence steadily improved. These changes were reflected in her scores on the mid-point test.
- (He) worked especially hard on writing…he used relatively complex structure when he wrote. He hopes to return to the program in the fall of 2004. If we can get him to come to class regularly, he'll do well.

LEARNER EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER GOALS

Learners in the Post High School ESL Research and Development Project had varying goals for the future, but all needed to improve their literacy skills and then attend upgrading programs as the initial steps. Short term goals among the learners included the following: take upgrading courses; get a high school diploma; become a health care aide; or become a com-

munity interpreter.

Long term or career goals included the following: become a health care aide; become a social worker; get certified as an electrician; become a mechanic; train to be a nurse (LPN); become a doctor; become a chef.

When the participants' future goals were analyzed, the following educational needs were apparent:
- 100% of the clients who enrolled in the Post High School ESL Literacy Program will require at least some high school equivalency courses to reach their short term and or long-term goals.
- 33.3% will also need to enroll in a community college certificate program to reach their long-term goal.
- 33.3% will also need to enroll in a technical college certificate program to reach their long-term goal.
- 20% will also need to enroll in a university degree or college diploma program to reach their long-term goal.

In September, 2004, follow up was done with learners from the 2003-2004 program. 93%, or 14 of the 15 clients who had enrolled in classes in the Post High School ESL Literacy and Development Program in the fall of 2003 were continuing along their learning path and had registered for education programs for the 2004/2005 year:

6, or 40% went on to Basic Education / Upgrading programs

6, or 40% enrolled in a second year of literacy focused education

2, or 13% enrolled both in Basic Upgrading Programs and in further literacy training.

1, or 7% of the learners had withdrawn from the program due to pregnancy and was not enrolled in a training program at the time of the follow up.

CONCLUSION

There are young adults with ESL literacy needs who are slipping through the cracks due to lack of appropriate post high school programming. The learners who attended classes in the Post High School ESL Literacy Research and Development Project would have been stuck at dead end jobs had they not been given the opportunity to improve their language skills. All learners in the program showed noticeable improvement in their English skills and, as a result, their self-confidence. They all had goals and dreams for the future to become active members of the work force. With a focused language training program and specialized ESL support, these learners were able to get themselves on track to begin the journey towards reaching their goals. These youth are the workforce and society builders of the future, and it is vital that we give them the educational foundation from which to begin, thus encouraging future success.

Public Report on ESL Workshops for Rural Alberta

NorQuest College – Language Training and Adult Literacy

February 11, 2004 – March 31, 2005

In recent years as Alberta's economy has surged, more immigrants have begun to settle in smaller communities around the province. Many immigrants require English language and literacy training, which is provided by instructors and volunteer tutors working through Community Adult Learning Councils and Literacy Alberta Community programs. The practitioners have indicated a need for professional development to enhance the training they provide to newcomers.

In 2004 and 2005, NorQuest College contracted two consultants to carry out the development of 15 professional development workshops on topics of interest. Their objectives were to identify specific topics of interest and need and to develop and deliver up to 15 workshops to provide training on those topics. The communities were involved in selecting topics for the workshops and in choosing locations to maximize the number of participants and to reach the most remote areas of the province as well as those that have recently experienced a large influx of immigrants. After conducting a survey, the consultants identified the following topics:

- One-on-One Instruction
- Teaching Strategies
- Teaching Pronunciation
- Assessment Strategies
- Resources
- Cultural Diversity
- ESL Literacy
- Lesson Planning
- Multi-Level Classes

The consultants then prepared workshop presentation and materials for each topic. 13 workshops were delivered over seven months from fall 2004 to spring 2005. the following communities received workshops: Brooks, Coaldale, Drayton Valley, Fort McMurray, High Level, Medicine Hat, Smoky Lake, Westlock, Edmonton, Grande Prairie, Hinton, Red Deer, Vermilion. A total of 251 instructors, tutors and coordinators representing 52 Alberta communities attended and expressed their appreciation for the workshops. The three most requested workshops were videotaped and will be put on-line so tutors and instructors can access them as needed.

As a result of this project, NorQuest College has observed a wide range of experience and

need for training among ESL tutors and instructors. The need for professional development is growing in the areas of ESL and Workplace Essential Skills. In consequence, NorQuest College recommends continuing with the workshops, adding workshops dealing with Canadian Language Benchmarks and ERPAC resources, and using the consultants to encourage collaboration among communities and creating networks among organizations that deliver ESL instruction.

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 welcome
Editor: Thomas Jiry, 1-780-463-5576
tom.jiry@norquest.ca

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