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 2005

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1979 – 2004

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

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- An active member of a professional community with a proven ability to interact with a diverse range of ESL educators
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ESL Enrichment for NorQuest College's
Practical Nurse Re-entry Program for International Students
Donna Anderson, NorQuest College

The Practical Nurse Re-Entry Program for International Students at NorQuest College assists foreign trained health professionals to fast track into the Canadian health care workplace by becoming Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs). It is one of six practical nurse programs at NorQuest. Originally, the Practical Nurse re-entry program was designed with the Canadian-trained Licensed Practical Nurse in mind; the target student population consisted of nurses who had been out of the workplace too long to maintain their accreditation. It was not designed with the foreign-trained professional in mind. However, over the years a large number of these professionals have chosen to participate in this re-entry program and have done so with a rewarding degree of success.

Immigrants and new Canadians choose this program for a number of reasons. First, the coordinator of the program will assess academic credentials (Prior Learning and Assessment Recognition, or PLAR) and may give credit for certain courses. After assessment, the applicants may then challenge up to 11 of the program's 15 courses over a period of four months. Finally, the program is delivered through self-paced distance learning and offers continuous intake. It can be completed – after the challenge period – within 12 months, with many students completing the program within eight months. While the courses are distance, there are skills workshops that students may attend, and a required instructor-led practicum.

There are two groups of immigrants who participate in the Practical Nurse Re-Entry Program for International Students. The first are foreign trained nurses and doctors whose language of instruction in their home country was English. The second group are those who studied nursing abroad, but not in English. The former group comprises the bulk of the student population. The fact that the nursing program was delivered in English, however, does not necessarily insure success for a nurse in the Canadian work environment. Because the program was not designed for this student population, it became clear to the re-entry coordinator that there were gaps in the students' professional development. As a result, the English Language Training Division has been working with the re-entry coordinator to develop ESL enrichment for nurses. The result is "Canadian Culture and Language for Practical Nurses (CCLPN)," a modular course designed to address linguistic and cultural gaps in the re-entry program specific to the internationally-trained student.

Process

I began working on this project in April 2004. The first three months were dedicated primarily to research. This consisted of reviewing the re-entry program's course materials and familiarizing myself with the issues facing foreign trained professionals (especially health care workers) in Canada and the efforts being made nationwide to address those issues. It also included learning about nursing, the communicative skills needed for nursing, and the difficulties some foreign trained health professionals seemed to have with either developing or applying these skills at work as nurses. During this time, the coordinator of the Practical Nurse Re-Entry program at NorQuest, was available to answer questions regarding the nursing environment. She also offered a great deal of personal and professional insights into the language gaps she saw in her international students, and expressed concerns about how these language gaps may negatively impact their abilities to either find or retain positions as LPNs.

Instructor Feedback

During this time, I interviewed nursing instructors at NorQuest both informally and through an instructor focus group. The instructors confirmed the coordinator's concerns about language and cultural limitations of the international student at NorQuest. To be clear, however, these nurse instructors were working with ESL students who were NOT trained as nurses abroad, but were beginning and completing their nursing education at NorQuest. If these students made it through the program (and unofficial estimates by nursing faculty suggest that 25% of ESL nursing students drop out of the program), then they participate in the practicum at hospital sites and are observed closely by a nursing instructor and the staff at the practicum site. All instructors, like the coordinator, were concerned about certain communicative skills that seemed lacking, and certain cultural knowledge – or behaviour – that was lacking as well.

- *lay terminology used in medical settings*
- *students have difficulty asking questions when they are unsure of something, and do not always admit to a lack of understanding when questioned*
- *students in practicum are unable to pronounce or understand the pronunciation of key medical vocabulary and use inappropriate language and register when interacting with patients (such as calling the elderly "dear")*
- *students in practicum do not apply communication skills such as attending behaviours, directed small talk, and explanation of process with patients.*
- *students are unable to complete writing tasks in a manner appropriate to the field*
- *students in practicum do not understand the role of the LPN in Canada. They seem either unwilling or unable to understand that the LPN in Canada has certain professional expectations placed on her/him by a licensing board, and do not seem able or willing to work within those expectations.*

Nurse instructors identified these limitations by their own informal observations over time, in which they observed what they perceived as a pattern. These observations were further confirmed through article reviews and conversations (phone and email) with coordinators of nursing departments in other colleges and universities.

Practicum Observations

After speaking with nurse instructors and confirming their concerns through research, I then asked to follow practicum in order to observe the students in the workplace. While my contract mandated that I observe the target population (re-entry international students), the re-entry coordinator informed me that there were no students in practicum to observe at that time. Instead, she was able to arrange two practicum visits through the base program. While I was uncomfortable about being unable to observe and interact with the target population itself, I believe the practicum observations were still useful for this project.

The first practicum was a group of base students on the orthopaedic floor of the University of Alberta Hospital and contained no ESL students, but did include two students from outside of Canada. The first was a native-English speaking African immigrant, and the second an immigrant from Scotland. Both spoke with heavy accents and used idiom and slang unusual to Canada. A NorQuest nurse instructor supervised these students. The second practicum was also a group of base students led by a nurse instructor, but this group contained four ESL students. They were assigned to the gynaecological surgery unit at the Royal Alexandra Hospital. The students were immigrants from India, China, Russia and the Philippines.

With each practicum, I observed nursing language used between nurses and between nurses and their patients. All participants were willing, helpful, and inclusive. I was also able to speak somewhat informally with staff at both hospitals, and I distributed the write-up to the floor/charge nurses and to any other nurses I spoke with. After one day of observing the nurse instructor, I arranged to shadow individual students during their shifts. The amount of time I spent with each student varied depending upon circumstances. I used a chart to keep track of different communication tasks and how often I observed the tasks during the students' interactions with patients and staff. I also kept notes on any other relevant observations.

Results of observations

There were a number of interesting results. Firstly, I was able to confirm some of the nursing instructors' beliefs. The ESL students were less likely to engage in "small talk" with the patients, thus limiting the development of rapport. For example, an ESL nurse might have asked the patient, "How are you today?" but upon receiving the answer, "oh, fine," the nurse simply ended the conversation. The Canadian nurses were more likely to pursue it further by asking about breakfast, or if there had been any visitors, etc. This more assertive small talk in nursing situations quite often leads to revelations of patient concerns, discomfort, or problems which, if not disclosed, cannot be remedied. However, this was not limited only to the ESL students, and the term "less likely" is quite relevant here. I observed two students who were particularly good at small talk and attending behaviours: the first was the immigrant from Scotland, and the second was the ESL student from the Philippines.

I also was able to observe the difficulties the ESL students had with charting. On three occasions, I observed the nursing instructor reminding an ESL student to use point form, and to be more selective about what information was included in the charts.

I also, of course, observed variations in pronunciation of medications and medical terminology. The ESL students who had the most difficulty making themselves understood were those from India and China. While the Indian student's grammar was perfect, her intonation and rhythm were characteristically Hindi, which caused comprehension problems for other students in her group. Her buddy nurse was herself an immigrant, and seemed to have no

trouble understanding her. The Chinese student had grammatically clipped English, often dropping the –s from the present singular verbs (i.e. "he go" instead of "he goes") and failing to use articles "the" and "a/an"; her pronunciation was also characteristically Chinese (Mandarin). However, she seemed to have no trouble being understood by her patient, while her buddy nurse visibly showed frustration at having to talk with her, and once simply expressed, "I can't understand what you're saying."

Implications for ESL Enrichment

It was clear through observations that students need to be better prepared for the writing tasks of a nursing job. It is also clear that, as a general rule, international students need to develop their small talk skills for nursing purposes. While the observations did not reveal a clear need to focus on pronunciation and assertiveness, it may be safe to predict problems in these areas as students enter the workplace. Thus, the observations supported the concerns of nursing staff at NorQuest, and the curriculum has been developed to improve students' skills in these areas.

Review of Course Materials

The materials delivered to the ESL participants in the re-entry program were never designed for this student population. Therefore, the curriculum designer began by reviewing the course materials to identify gaps in terms of language and culture. These gaps could then be used as entry points for ESL enrichment. We identified the following areas as benefiting from ESL:

Interpersonal Communication Skills. ESL enrichment in this area should focus on sociolinguistic skills, such as: small talk; expressing sympathy; active and reflective listening; using language of reassurance; communicating actions and intentions, as associated with touch; giving directions and conveying information; and impartial interview techniques.

Reading and Writing for Nursing Practice: There are job-specific writing tasks that LPNs are required to complete in Canada. Students in the re-entry program often come from countries where they were either not required to complete the same writing tasks, or the skills necessary to complete the tasks were different in that health care setting. Our students need practice and assistance with tasks such as charting and incident reports. The writing skills needed are somewhat different from those in most academic situations, and include use of point form and medical terminology.

While reading has not been identified as a particular weakness amongst these students, it is educationally sound to offer reading with writing. Especially in an English for Specific purposes context, the students should see and analyze examples of *good* charting, *good* summary reports, etc. Reading will also provide an inlet into idiomatic usages of the health care workplace, another potential area for enrichment.

Culture of the Canadian Healthcare System: The internationally trained students in this

program would benefit from direct information about the Canadian healthcare system and the culture it is tied to, both in society and in the workplace. Given the original target audience of this program, it is no surprise that the materials used currently do not address this need at all.

The above enrichments, accompanied by the speaking/listening needs identified through practicum observations and interviews with instructors, would address the disparity between courses that are largely designed as a review for Canadian trained LPNs and the needs of foreign trained professionals to learn Canadian nursing expectations and responsibilities for the first time.

Curriculum

Canadian Culture and Language for Practical Nurses (CCLPN) is an English for Specific Purposes course. The content, language, and activities are all nursing-based. Some classes or workshops require an ESL instructor only, while others may require a team of an ESL and a nurse instructor. Overall, this curriculum fully blends nursing, English language and Canadian health care culture.

The re-entry program is a distance learning, continuous intake program. This made delivery of a CCLPN course a challenge. The curriculum has been designed as a hybrid course, incorporating both face-to-face instruction and distance learning. The face-to-face component consists of ESL workshops attached to specific required nursing courses. Many of the language and culture objectives have components that can appropriately be addressed through a distance format, and students will be provided with both print materials and WebCT to prepare for and follow-up on the face-to-face workshops. In-house nursing communication videos can be used in workshops and delivered as distance materials. Assignments can be delivered and completed via distance.

CONCLUSION

NorQuest College is committed to providing quality and timely programs for often underserved segments of Canadian society. The Practical Nurse Re-entry Program at NorQuest welcomes foreign-trained nurses and therefore recognized a need for ESL enrichment to insure these students succeed both in the program and in the workplace. This product should provide a motivated student population with the extra assistance they need to insure their employability and "fit" into the Canadian health care environment. Furthermore, as Canada is choosing to attract foreign-trained professionals to fill an employment need, English for Specific Purposes and Career English curricula that combine ESL with professional skills will become of greater importance; I hope that the process involved in creating this product may be useful to future developers in predicting the challenges involved in such production.

Never Lick a Gift Horse In the Mouth:
And 400 Other Innocent Mistakes
From New English Language Students

A Book Compiled by Bryant Oden

An Interview

ATESL: "never lick a gift horse in the mouth" eh! …Can you tell me a little about yourself Bryant?"

Bryant: "Well, I'm actually from Colorado, I have a B.A. in Humanities with an emphasis in English, and I've had a few different careers—from being a counselor at a group home for abused children to working in a District Attorney's child support enforcement office to working as a customer service rep. at a few companies, among other jobs. I had tutored international students a bit during and after college, and then about four years ago I started tutoring again more or less full time. Then in January of last year I entered the M.E. TESL program at the U of A."

ATESL: "How long did it take you to put the book together? Can you tell us a little about the process?"

Bryant: "The first couple of years I didn't know I was putting together a book. I thought I was just jotting down some of the funny things my students said because they just seemed too good to forget. You know, any of us learning a new language will have our share of blunders, and a few are going to be pretty entertaining to native speakers. So probably every ESL teacher hears some gems now and then. In my case, it's been more than 3000 hours of tutoring, usually conversational English, with the students doing most of the talking. So that added up to a pretty good collection."

ATESL: "And how did you get the idea to turn them into a book?"

Bryant: "Well, a couple of years ago I was cleaning out my desk—a rare occurrence for me—and I pulled out the mistakes drawer that had hundreds of pieces of paper in it. I started reading through them and got inspired to type them up and print them. I happened to leave them on the kitchen table, and later that night I kept hearing laughter from upstairs. I finally went to see what was going on, and my roommates were

reading the mistakes. They said "You've got to turn this into a book!" So that's how it started."

ATESL: "Did your students know about the book? What did they think about it?

Bryant: "They all knew I collected their mistakes and they really understood it wasn't about making fun of them in any way. It was more about really enjoying the nature of language-that wonderful way any of us trying to speak a new language can make the littlest mistake and it totally changes what is being communicated. In the intro to the book I talk about the time when I was at an orphanage in Mexico on a college work trip, and I was going up to each of the children saying excitedly "Buenos Dios! Beunos Dios! They started smiling and laughing, and a friend explained I wasn't saying "Good day", I was running up to these children shouting "Good God! Good God!" It actually broke the ice with the kids, and warmed things up. I think that may have planted a seed for my interest in funny language mistakes."

"So, my students knew where I was coming from, and my later students were all supportive and often excited about the book idea. Sometimes they would ask me something like "Was that mistake book-worthy"?"

"It actually livened up tutoring a bit. It was a little like mining for gold—sometimes there would be a week without any nuggets worth keeping, and then sometimes in one day there would be two or three "keepers"."

ATESL: "Can you give a few examples of some of your favorites?"

Bryant: "Actually some of the ones that I really like aren't the ones that get the biggest laughs. So I usually just share some of the ones I've tested out. Like the student who was describing a parade" and said "It was so exciting to watch! The cheerleaders threw up high into the air". Or the student who was giving some health advice and said "It is dangerous to smoke while you are becoming pregnant." Or one from the recipe category, like "Next, chop all the vegetarians into little pieces."

"But I'll give you a few I don't usually share. One of my favorites, I think just because it came together so perfectly, is when I was phone-tutoring a student who had recently returned to his country. He was trying to describe a beautiful reunion scene that happened when he got off the plane." He said "My father met us at the airport. He gave me a big hog. Then he hogged my wife."

"And there's a few in the book that aren't actually mistakes; they just really left an impression on me." "Like when I asked a student, "If you were a therapist, what would you say to a suicidal person?" To which she responded "Please pay me now."

"And one more comes to mind." "A student told me, "I'm sorry, but I couldn't write my essay. My roommate had a toothache this morning." I said "So you couldn't write your

essay?" She said "Yes! She was swelling and decaying badly!"

ATESL: "How has the response to the book been so far?"

It's really tough getting the word out, and some days it seems like things are going back-wards. But some good things have been happening lately. Here in Edmonton, it's been on the CBC, and in the Sun and Journal, and just the other night I sweated my way through a live TV show, "HelpTV". The book even snuck on the Journal's best seller list last week and the Sun's this week. So word is starting to get around a little. By the way, I'm really looking for a stand-in for the live interviews, if you are interested.

ATESL: "Perhaps I could dress up like a horse!"

ATESL: "Where can people pick up the book?"

Bryant: "In Edmonton, it's available at Audrey's and Greenwood's and in a couple of Chapters and Coles. If it does well locally, then Chapters could pick it up nationally, so that's definitely a goal. And I just got it set up so that I can take Canadian orders through the website, http://www.InnocentEnglish.com. I will send out the books myself, so if it's a gift for someone, I'd be happy to sign something in it. One interesting footnote about the website—I just counted it up yesterday, and it has had visitors from 96 countries. I have no idea how they even found out about it. And some of them have sent in funny mistakes they or their students have made, which I invite people to do on the website."

ATESL: "How can students and instructors use this book?"

Bryant: "I'm doing my practicum at NorQuest this month, and lately, as a kind of warm up, I've been reading 5 or 6 mistakes from the book, asking the class if they understand what the student accidentally communicated, and if they could guess what the student was trying to say. They seem to really enjoy it, and I've been surprised that they can usually understand the humor and re-state the mistake correctly. So I'm looking at the possibility of using some of the mistakes to develop a fun, light exercise book that would be divided into different kinds of errors. That could be interesting."

ATESL: "I've really enjoyed your book and it has been a pleasure speaking with you. Thank you for your time Bryant. I wish you much success with "Never Lick a Gift Horse In the Mouth" and any other future publications such as "You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him sink."

Bryant: "Thanks for giving me the title of the next book…"

Dyslexia in the ESL Classroom:
A Practical Guide to Understanding, Diagnosis and Remediation

Shannon L. Lu
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(A presentation at the 2004 ATESL Conference– Past Accomplishments, Future Directions)

ghoughphtheightteeau

What does this word say? Go ahead. Read it… How long did you spend *trying* to read it? Did parts of the word seem vaguely familiar? Did you struggle to figure out what sounds the letters said? Did you feel that you should be able to read it but just couldn't? Did you give up? These are the frustrations and emotions that people with dyslexia can feel every time they look at written language.

Ironically, teachers of reading tend to be those who have been very successful with language. Teachers of English as a Second or Foreign Language feel confident and competent enough to make the teaching of language their life's work. Perhaps our facility with the written language makes us the least qualified of all to understand the needs and feelings of our students who contend with the problem of dyslexia on a daily basis.

However, qualification is something we can change. In this paper I would like to outline some of the most recent research on dyslexia and propose some simple ways to recognize dyslexic students in the ESL classroom. As well, I will suggest methods of remediation that the ESL teacher should consider. In this way we can bring knowledge of dyslexia and empathy for our students into our daily practice.

What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia did not become a household buzzword until the 1980s. Until that time little research had been conducted and our understanding was poor. Unfortunately, many myths about this disorder persist. It will be helpful to discuss not only what dyslexia is but also what it is not.

It is important to note that, although no people group has ever been discovered to be without spoken language (Pinker1994), reading and writing is a fairly recent invention for many people groups (Archibald and Libben, 1995). The implication is that while we may be "hard-wired" to learn to speak and listen (the "universal grammar" of Noam Chomsky, 1957), the manipulation of language on clay, dirt, cave walls or paper has not come easily. To many it has not come at all.

For many years people have believed that dyslexia was related to low intelligence. This is, emphatically, not so. In fact, to be diagnosed as a dyslexic, a person must test at or above normal intelligence on a standard intelligence test such as the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT). Quigley (1998) states: "…if you are of average intelligence and you have deficiencies in one or more of the components of intelligence (language, memory), you must have superior abilities in other areas."

These include many areas thought to be governed by the right hemisphere of the brain such as art, dance, creative writing and divergent thinking. This is important for teachers to remember. These superior abilities can be utilized when helping a dyslexic student overcome their reading deficit.

It is also clear that dyslexic difficulty with language is not the product of poor attitude or lack of motivation (Ganschow et al. 1998). Rather these affective traits are the result of the student's daily struggle.

Developmental dyslexia has its origins in the wiring of the brain. Eisenson (1989) suggests:

> …subtle brain damage in the fetal stage of development…a significant variation is an increase over the usual number of cells in the right hemisphere at the expense of the left. Therefore… the two hemispheres of the brain become rivals for the control of reading, writing and… other language functions. (p.69)

Bakker (1992 quoted in Goldstein and Obrzut, 2001) also postulates an over or under development of one of the brain's hemispheres. In this theory, the "intact hemisphere becomes burdened because it is forced to compensate for the insufficient contribution of the under-

developed hemisphere." (p.277)

Many believe that dyslexia is rare. However, estimates of its occurrence in the general population range between 15% (Quigley, 1998) and 20% (National Institutes of Health quoted on http://www.dys.add.com). Much debate rages over whether or not boys are more affected by this problem than girls. The National Institutes of Health now maintain that the commonly bandied figure of four to one is a myth. Eisenson (1989) maintains that his experience showed a four to one, boy to girl ratio at the younger ages (up to five or six years) and an increasingly disproportionate ratio as the children aged - up to ten to one. Eisenson suggests the effect of testosterone on the developing brain as well as the possibility that girls are more open to remediation. This would explain the increasing gap as children age. There is also a strong genetic link. People who have close relatives who are dyslexic are much more likely to have the disorder themselves (Goldstein and Obrzut 2001).

Another myth is that dyslexia is only found among English-speaking people. Although dyslexia is most evident in students who are learning to read and write in English, dyslexic symptoms are evident in all people groups. For example, in a study on dyslexic Italian readers (Tressoldi et. al., 2001), the only significant difference between the dyslexic group, a control group reading the same passage and a control group reading non-words was speed of reading. Even though this gap continued to widen with age, it remained the only symptom of dyslexia and suggested that, with Italian children, the core problem was the automatization of reading processes. The Italian language has a very direct relationship between letters and their sounds (shallow orthography) and so the actual decoding of words is quite simple. This helps to explain why dyslexia is not perceived as a problem among Italian people.

A study done with Chinese children in Hong Kong (So and Siegel, 1997) tested those least successful (below the 25th percentile) Chinese readers in tone and rhyming discrimination, choosing similar words and sentences meanings and an oral cloze. They found that phonological and semantic problems are evident in dyslexic children reading both Chinese and English. Although the Chinese language is logographic (not written with letters), each character does contain important phonological markers and visual clues (Archibald and Libben 1995).

Dyslexic children have also been found to have deficits in visual memory span (Gang and Siegel 2002). They could remember words at the end of a sequence (iconic memory) but

had trouble remembering earlier list items. Newly learned sound-symbol relationships are difficult for dyslexic readers. Phonological rehearsal may prove a "bottleneck" of learning for dyslexic learners (Lundberg 2002). Finnish children who were given a nonword repetition test (Service 1992 cited in Lundberg 2002) clearly demonstrated that this difficulty in rehearsing phonological sequences was linked to their later ability to learn English.

This phonological weakness makes it hard for students to deal with an alphabetic script. Archibald and Libben (1998) propose a "two-route" model of reading. "Route A" is the visual route. This is the route most used by readers of logographic script. However, "Route B", the phonological route, is heavily utilized by readers of alphabetic scripts in the beginning where the student is using a "bottom-up" approach to reading. As their reading acquires more automaticity, they begin to rely more on the visual route and apply a "top down" approach. Tehy use the suond inomrfation fo the wrod but rley mroe hveialy on the gnereal saehp and copimostion of the wrod. However, dyslexic students, as has been noted, have trouble acquiring the automaticity required to move beyond the phonological route. They are like cars stuck on a muddy road, futilely spinning their tires. Diagnosis and remediation can be the traction they need to get going.

It is important for ESL teachers to note that a number of researchers (Lundberg 2002, Gang and Siegel 2002, Ganschow, Sparks and Javorsky 1998) have also stressed that a relationship - either positive or negative - exists between the student's first language and their second. Ganschow (et al. 1998) have proposed the Linguistic Coding Differences Hypothesis (LCDH) as a way of understanding why some students have great difficulties learning foreign languages. Essentially, Ganschow et al. contend that, "…skills in the native language components - phonological/orthographic, syntactic, and semantic - provide the basic foundation for FL learning" (p.249). Therefore, a student whose dyslexic trouble with his first language was not remediated will certainly have the same problems with his second language.

It can be expected, then, that among the many ESL students that cross our paths, a significant number of them will show great difficulty learning to read and write in English. Although not all of them will be dyslexic, they all need help. Our next important question is:

How can I recognize dyslexia in my students?

It is clearly beyond the scope of most ESL teachers to actually diagnose dyslexia in her students. However, she is the one most likely to notice a problem and can provide screening, initial assessment, and act as the student's advocate in obtaining the help he needs. This is an important role for teachers of "Beginner" English and, in particular, new immigrants.

While dyslexia is widely acknowledged in our country, it is poorly understood. In many other countries in the world dyslexia is not acknowledged at all. It is possible that children who have been struggling in their home countries with learning their L1 may have been labeled as "stupid" or "lazy" and they have brought this emotional baggage with them. However, through observation and dialogue, the ESL teacher can build a case for requesting professional assessment or, at least, remedial help.

The important first step is to be a teacher who "notices". Most likely, if you are reading this article, you are a teacher who has suspected dyslexia or other learning problems in some of your students. You may be one of the few people to work with those students in an academic setting. Therefore, it is important to begin a sort of "action research", making daily notes on the students you are concerned about.

In the appendix of this article, you will find a "Reading Assessment" form which will help you to organize your observations. Although I retain the copyright for the form, it is intended to be of practical use to teachers so please feel free to change it in any way that makes it more practical for your own use.

Altogether, a portfolio containing the student's history and your observation of his skills as well as examples of the student's written work should help you to decide whether or not he should be recommended for more extensive testing and remediation. The warning signs of dyslexia and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder can be found at: http://www.dys-add.com. It is not uncommon for these disorders to occur together in many students. It will be helpful to go through this checklist and note which symptoms apply to your student. This process should work well for students of any age, although young students may have little experience with reading and writing in their native language.

It goes without saying that a teacher should avoid "pigeon-holing" a student based on limited information. Apparent trouble with learning English could be due to linguistic factors. Deponio et. al. (2000) state, "…difficulties many bilingual learners have with articulating espe-

cially English vowels and final consonantal morphemes may impede recognition and production of these sounds." (p. 57) The student's sociocultural background, emotional factors, and lack of instruction could also affect their difficulty with English. These issues should be explored and noted in your assessment.

It is important for teachers of adult ESL learners to note that children do not "grow out" of dyslexia. Dyslexia can be remediated at any age but if the problem has not been acknowledged and the student helped to compensate for it, the problem will still persist into adulthood. It is entirely possible that an immigrant has not experienced significant problems with his L1 and cannot understand why he is having problems learning English. It may be difficult for him to accept that his brain works a little differently and that he will need special help to learn English well. For many reasons, some immigrants cannot read and write in their L1 at all. This may be due to social or political factors and, alone, will not overly disadvantage them in learning to read and write in English.

Once the assessment is finished, a plan must be made to help the student in the classroom whether or not further (professional) assessment is necessary.

How can I help my dyslexic students?

The first important step in helping your student was noticing that he had a problem. You then took the time to assess his abilities and background. A clear picture is emerging and you need to develop a remediation plan. It is helpful to be aware of the many different strategies used to help dyslexics compensate. However, first of all, we need to consider how language is learned.

Goswami (2001) notes, "…there is a causal connection between a child's phonological awareness and his or her reading and spelling development." (p.141). Many studies have been done which show a language-universal sequence in the development of phonological awareness (Cicero and Royer, 1995; Durgunoglu and Oney, 1999; Goswami and East 2000 cited in Goswami 2001).

Children first develop an awareness of syllables. Then they become aware of initial consonant (onset) and the vowel sound plus any following consonants (rime) - for example: tr - ee, s - eat. Children must be able to separate the words they speak into separate sounds - or pho-

nemes - prior to learning to read an alphabetic or syllabic orthography. In this way the sounds the child is already aware of can be matched to letters or groups of letters. Naturally, languages which have a direct and simple sound-symbol relationship, such as Italian, Finnish, Greek and Spanish, are the easiest to learn. English, by contrast, has a very complicated system of sound-symbol correspondence. This "orthographic depth" makes it very difficult for dyslexic students to master the basic building blocks of English - which letters go with which sounds.

This would be a good time to consider the word presented at the beginning of this paper: ghoughphtheightteeau. You already know the sound-symbol correspondences of most of these groups of letters. What you don't know, perhaps, is where one group ends and another begins. If I gave you the word "hiccough" you would tell me that "gh" says "p". However, "ough" also says "o" as in dough. Phth says "t" as in phthisis (this one is a little tricky but you know it now!), "eigh" says "a" as in neighbor, "tte" says "t" as in gazette, and "eau" says "o" as in plateau. With some confusion, you now know that the word says "potato". Now consider the English learner who must figure out that "meat", "great" and "threat" are all pronounced differently. "Great" and "straight" have the same rime. "Sure" and "shot" have the same onset. When the relationship between sound and symbol is not straightforward and difficult to remember, learning is a daunting challenge.

Lundberg (2002) explained why spoken English - the language of the playground and the supermarket - is easier to learn than written English. Everyday spoken English is comprised mainly of Anglo-Saxon words which are high frequency and one to two syllables in length. Written English, by contrast, contains a large proportion (60%) of words derived from Greek or Latin sources. These words are multi-syllabic and low frequency. Vocabulary is seen here as the key to reading ability. As with infants, listening and speaking must precede reading and writing.

This is an important point for all foreign language teachers to consider. Reading and writing may help a non-dyslexic adult to learn a foreign language because their strong literacy skills will transfer from their L1 and their mature metacognitive skills will help them to develop the new sound-symbol correspondences. However, a dyslexic adult will have problems connecting the sounds he hears with the written language. Even if he has learned to compensate in his L1, he can still experience trouble learning the new sound-symbol relationships of the L2. If at all possible, spoken language and vocabulary building should precede instruction in reading and

writing.

(For a detailed discussion of various remedial methods, the complete bibliography and a list of relevant websites, please request a copy of the unabridged article at shannon-lu23@shaw.ca)

Dyslexia is a significant disadvantage to native English-speaking Canadians. It is a double disadvantage to our immigrant population. Many come to this country with technical training or professional credentials but they face stiff opposition when they seek to have these credentials validated within Canada. If they face the additional barrier of difficulty in learning English, they may resign themselves to a life of poorly paid and unfulfilling work. Immigrant children who experience year after year of failure (despite being promoted through the system) will also face a bleak future. It is imperative that our educational institutions begin to take the problem of dyslexia seriously, providing inservice training for their ESL teachers and emphasizing to all staff that struggling students need to be identified, assessed, and provided with an opportunity to succeed.

Reading Assessment Form
Prepared by Shannon Lu: shannonlu23@shaw.ca

Date:

Student's name and birth date:

Initial impressions:
What do you notice about the student's demeanor?

What is the student's overall perception of his reading and writing abilities and attitude toward receiving help?

What does the student say about his/her own work?
Positive   Negative   Neutral

Student's developmental history: (family members with reading trouble, delayed speech, lots of allergies or severe childhood illnesses, trouble at birth etc.) What is your general perception

of the student's intelligence?

Student's learning history: (level of education reached, attitude towards school experience, relationship with teachers, country, political and family situation at the time)

Phonemic awareness: (if wrong, note answer given)

1) Phoneme segmentation – What sounds do you hear in the word 'hot'?
   What is that last sound in the word 'map'?
2) Phoneme deletion – What word would be left if the /k/ sound were taken away from 'cat'?
3) Phoneme matching – Do 'pen' and 'pipe' start with the same sound?
4) Phoneme counting – How many sounds do you hear in 'cake'?
5) Phoneme substitution – What word do you have if you changed the/h/ in 'hot' to /p/?
6) Phoneme blending – What word would you have if you put these sounds together? /s/ /a/ /t/?
7) Rhyming – Tell me as many words as you can that rhyme with 'eat'.

(From Reilly, R. (2001). Dyslexia: some background, some technology tools. *Multimedia Schools.* 8/6 (70-72).

Observation of reading and writing tasks: (Can be based on previous classroom observations.) Make note of which errors occur in reading or in writing.

Is reading slow, labored, inaccurate, or choppy?

Does reading or writing tire the student to an unusual extent?

Does the student:
Reverse (ie bog or god for dog)
Invert (ie.we for me or pun for bun)
Transpose (ie. on for no, gril for girl)
Substitute a. (ie house for horse or white for while)
            b. (ie. truck for car, fast for speed)
Omit function words: (a, an, from, the, to, were, are, of)
Change suffixes: (need for needed)
Spell poorly:
Ignore punctuation?

Is listening comprehension significantly better than reading comprehension?

Are spoken skills significantly better than reading skills? Can you account for this?

How many symptoms of dyslexia can you identify based on the symptoms chart?

World Englishes in the ESL Context, eh

Terence McLean

"How's she goin', bye? Judas, that Jarome Iginla's on fire…buddy godda Gordie Howe hat trick last night…dja see im' deke Brewer out a his jock?"

And so went the telephone conversation (when the NHL was alive) with my hockey-loving father, a native of Cape Breton, who lives in Regina (temporarily for 27 years). I responded with an Alberta blurb, "*Yeah, he can dipsy-doodle. I guess we'll hafta root for the Flames cuz the Oilers choked big time.*"

Sure, we speak English, but just whose English do we speak? If Singapore and India can have their own hybrids of so-called *World Englishes*, how about my father? Can Russell from Glace Bay be the spokesperson for *Cape Breton English*? As an ESL instructor in Canada, should I teach my students more than *standard Canadian English*? Better yet, should I acknowledge that my many of advanced-level students *already* speak one kind of English--a *World English*? The world is changing - my job is changing - again.

The importance of recognizing World Englishes is increasing throughout language learning research and related EFL literature; however, is this trend being reflected in ESL contexts? Is there even a need for raising the issue of World Englishes in ESL course curricula, materials development, and pedagogy? In my experience using ESL resources, I have found that the topic of global English, is quite prevalent. However, the issue of the spread of English and the accompanying effects on communication throughout the world is hardly surprising to ESL learners who, more often than not, have already had firsthand experience in an

environment in which English is creeping, or stomping.

Although having students discuss the worldwide *spread* of English can be done relatively easily, perhaps we ESL instructors could make better use of our time by introducing the varieties of English *within* our own country (e.g., Canadian dialects and slang as described in the video, *Talking Canadian*) This could be followed by encouraging the students to explain how English is *used* in their native countries, thereby addressing the topic of separate *World Englishes* rather than a singular *global* English. ESL instructors must be careful; looking at a language as an unstoppable entity demonstrates a simplistic view of the dynamic change that is taking place in the world: English is no longer owned by anyone.

While Graddol (1997) argues that, in this century, those who speak English alongside other languages will outnumber first-language speakers and, increasingly, will decide the global future of the language, Kachru and Nelson (2001) stress the importance of raising teacher awareness of the status and functions of Englishes in the world today. The circles model of the global situation of English (Kachru & Nelson, 2001) has become the standard framework of World Englishes studies. This model divides English speakers into three groups: the *inner circle*, where they speak English as a first (native) language (ENL); the *outer circle* where they speak it as a second or additional language (ESL); and the *expanding circle*, where they use it as a foreign language (EFL) (Yano, 2001). Although the circles appear to attach well to the ENL, ESL and EFL labels, Kachru (1992) emphasizes that all speakers of World Englishes be recognized according to the concept of *WE-ness* and not be trapped in the dichotomy of *us* (ENL) and *them* (ESL/EFL).

Students should be encouraged to consider themselves within the concept of WE-ness as speakers of English--giving them a sense of identification with a personalized variety of Eng-

lish. Incorporating World Englishes into lessons will undoubtedly add to the responsibilities of already busy educators; nevertheless, English language teachers, as lifelong learners, can benefit from listening to presentations and reading essays about how English is used as both an international and an intranational means of communication. Indeed, in many countries English is used mostly as a means of communication between speakers of different mother tongues, none of which is English. By validating students' linguistic repertoires, we can all develop deeper knowledge, appreciation, and understanding of World Englishes. Furthermore, if we can instill a deeper sense of confidence in learners, especially young international students, then perhaps they will be better able to actively communicate in a second language that, until now, they have probably believed to be a *thing* owned by others. English is something *we* speak; it is not something *they* own.

In response to my opening questions: Yes, I should teach my students more than *standard Canadian English*—a little regional slang and a few more Canadian idioms can spice things up a bit; and, yes, I should acknowledge that many of my advanced-level students *already* speak one kind of English: a World English. I think I'll call my father back and ask him to get off his chesterfield, grab his toque and come out for a visit. He knows it's a dry cold, and at least we're close enough to Calgary to imagine a chinook coming. I'll tell him I've got a few Big Rocks in the fridge, to boot. If my students think that they speak unique versions of World Englishes, Lord Thunderin' Jesus, wait'll they get a load of Russ from Cape Breton (and Regina), eh.

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Terence (Terry) McLean - bio

I graduated from the University of Alberta with an MEd-TESL and a BEd. I also have a BAd-min and a BA from the University of Regina. I taught English in Japan for nine years, and at present I live in Edmonton where I teach ESL at MacEwan College and do online EAP instruction for the University of Alberta.

Teaching-related publications:

McLean, T. (in print). "Why no tip?" Student-generated DCTs in the ESL Classroom. *Pragmatics in Language Learning, Theory and Practice* (JALT).

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Connecting Communities:
Honouring Voices
November 4-5, 2005

Alberta Teachers of English as a Second Language

A Joint ATESL and ESLC Conference
At the University of Calgary

CALL FOR PRESENTATION PROPOSALS

The theme of the conference is "Connecting Communities: Honouring Voices". The program planning committee invites individuals and groups to submit presentation proposals on a wide range of topics relevant to second language teaching and learning. Please, send your completed application to:

electronic: atesl.eslc@ucalgary.ca
hard copy: Presenters Committee
c/o Jeannie Locatelli, LEAP Program
1430 Education Tower
Faculty of Education, University of Calgary
2500 University Drive N.W.
Calgary, AB, Canada. T2N 1N4
All presentation proposals must be received no later than June 30, 2005.

TYPES OF PRESENTATIONS

- A **PAPER** describes or discusses work the presenter is doing or has done in relation to either theory or practice.
  The abstract should include a summarized version of the paper: a central idea, supporting evidence, and a conclusion.

- A **DEMONSTRATION** shows, rather than describes or discusses, a technique for teaching or testing. The presenter should describe briefly the theory underlying the technique as well as provide handouts.
  The abstract should include a statement of the presenter's objective, a summary of the theoretical framework, and a description of the technique(s) being demonstrated.

- A **PANEL** provides a forum for a group of individuals to discuss a particular topic. The discussion is led by a moderator and may begin with a presentation or a list of questions followed by responses by each panel member. Typically, time is allotted for questions/comments from the audience.

  The proposal should state the topic of discussion and its relevance to TESL, along with a description of why each member has been chosen to be on the panel.

- A **WORKSHOP** features one or more facilitators working with a group, helping them either to solve a problem or to develop a specific teaching or research technique.

  The abstract should include a statement of the workshop's goal, a summary of the theoretical framework, and a description of the tasks included in the workshop.

APPLICATION FOR PRESENTATION

CORRESPONDENCE
(-will be directed to the mailing address of contact person)

Name: _____
      (Surname)   (Given Name)

Institution: _____

Position: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ E-mail: _____

Co-presenters   Names of co-presenters and their affiliation, in the order to be listed

_____

_____

Presentation Title:
_____

Presentation Abstract   *Please include the following information on* <u>*separate*</u> *pages:*

Page 1:
- Presentation Title (maximum 10 words)
- Presentation Abstract (maximum 250 words, double-spaced) The abstract should be anonymous. Please, do not include your name(s).

Page 2:
- Presentation Summary (maximum 75 words – to be included in registration materials and the final program)
- Biographical Information (maximum 25 words/presenter of background information or experience that is related to the presentation.)

<u>**Type of Presentation**</u>
___ **Paper**   ___ **Demonstration**   ___ **Panel**   ___ **Workshop**

<u>**Length of Time Required**</u>
___ **60 min.**   ___ **90 min.**   ___ **120 min.**

<u>**Maximum Audience Size**</u>
___ **20**   ___ **40**   ___ **60**   ___ **70+**

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Targeted Learners: check all that apply

Elementary   Secondary   Adult   All

Required Equipment
❑ Overhead Projector/screen

❑ Flip Chart

❑ LCD Projector/Screen

❑ Slide Projector/Screen

❑ VCR/TV Monitor

❑ Audiocassette/CD Player

Topic Areas
Check the most applicable category.

❑ Assessment/Evaluation/Testing

❑ Cultural Competency

❑ Curriculum Development

❑ English for Academic Purposes

❑ ESL / Special Education

❑ ESL through the Arts

❑ Innovative Programming

❑ International Programming

❑ Language and Content

❑ Literacy

❑ Materials Development

❑ Methodology

❑ Program Administration

❑ Research

❑ Settlement – Parents/ Agencies

❑ Teacher Education

❑ Technology

❑ Workplace ESL

❑ Other _____

Room Set-up
Seating for all sessions will be theatre style. If a different seating arrangement is required please specify:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

Scheduling
Please, indicate the time(s) you are **NOT** available to present.

I cannot present on Friday, November 4

❑ Morning

❑ Afternoon

I cannot present on Saturday, November 5

❑ Morning

❑ Afternoon

I would be willing to present twice if requested

❑

Please return completed application forms by June 30, 2005 to:

atesl.eslc@ucalgary.ca

or

Presenters Committee

C/O Jeannie Locatelli, LEAP Program

1430 Education Tower

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