



Alberta Teachers of English  
as a Second Language

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June 2015

www.atesl.ca

## President's Message

Dear ATESL Members,

I hope you're all enjoying the spring.

The ATESL Board has been busy this year with many matters related to ESL in Alberta and Canada. As many of you will have seen, TESL Ontario and BC TEAL have chosen to dissolve their Memorandums of Understanding with TESL Canada and will no longer be part of the TESL Canada Federation later this year. This does not have any immediate impact on ATESL. The Board and I have good relationships with BC TEAL, TESL Ontario, as well as TESL Canada. I will keep you informed as to any new information as it becomes available.

The change in government in Alberta is an interesting and exciting development for all Albertans. On behalf of ATESL, I have written a letter of congratulations to Premier Notley, and I look forward to working with the New Democratic Party on all matters related to ESL in Alberta.

The Local Chapters for ATESL continue to be very busy providing Professional Development activities for members across the province. Thank you very much to the local co-chairs in Central, Calgary, and Edmonton for their hard work in organizing and delivery such excellent programming and opportunities to our members. I encourage all members to attend the sessions in their area and to get involved at a local level. There are several positions available for the upcoming year. If you are interested, please contact me or your local co-chair for more information.

We have welcomed a new Board member, Nadia Khan, as a Member at Large for ATESL. Nadia will sit on the Rural Routes Stakeholder Engagement Committee as an ATESL representative. ATESL recently signed a one-year Memorandum of Agreement with Rural Routes to work cooperatively to strengthen the relationship between Rural Routes and ATESL, and also to provide more support to those working with ESL Learners in rural Alberta. We are very pleased to have formed this new relationship, and we look forward to working with Nadia and the other Rural Routes members.

Registration for the TESL Canada 2015 Conference is now open. Please see the ATESL website for more information. My sincere thanks to the Conference Co-Chairs Glen Cochrane and Chris Wharton for their incredible hard work, and all the conference planning committee members for their dedication and outstanding work on the conference thus far. I look forward to seeing you all in Lake Louise at the conference in October.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions, concerns or comments.

Respectfully, Maureen Stewart ([president@atesl.ca](mailto:president@atesl.ca); 403.410.3410)

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2014 – 2015

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## TESL CANADA REPORT

Just like the spring weather, change and renewal continue happening at TESL Canada this year. Of course, the biggest change will be the relationships between TESL Canada and TESL Ontario, and TESL Canada and BC TEAL. TESL Canada conducted exploratory discussions with the two provincial organizations in an attempt to identify problems and develop solutions to significantly improve their relationships. Unfortunately both TESL Ontario and BC TEAL have subsequently decided to pull out of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with TESL Canada, meaning that members in Ontario and B.C. will not automatically become members of the national organization. These members will need to apply for TESL Canada membership separately. Because of this change in the MOA between two of the member provinces, TESL Canada will now have to renegotiate its MOA with each of the remaining provinces. TESL Canada remains open to continued dialogue with BC TEAL and TESL Ontario around restructuring the MOA in terms that are mutually agreeable and that reflect the wishes of members.

In an effort to reach out directly to the members and in keeping with the spirit of more openness with the organization, TESL Canada recently conducted a poll across Canada regarding membership. The results were impressive. There were more than 800 responses, around half of them from Ontario. About 75% of the responses to a simple question of whether members valued keeping automatic dual membership were positive. Members overwhelmingly want to retain automatic dual membership. Several more polls are being sent out asking the membership for ideas and suggestions of what TESL Canada can do for its members. We encourage everyone to take the time to take the surveys and participate in making TESL Canada a valuable support to English as an Additional Language teachers across Canada.

Besides the changes in membership and MOA, the 2014-2015 TESL Canada board is continuing its mission of renewal by engaging various external consultants to aid its Strategic Planning. Many of the committees, including the Finance Committee, are having consultants review and overhaul procedures, resulting in a more effective organization.

Planning for the Lake Louise conference is picking up speed. The Call for Proposals closed on May 19 with over 200 high quality responses. It promises to be a vibrant event.

Respectfully submitted,

Celia Logan, Alberta representative to TESL Canada

## BURSARY REPORT

ATESL received seven bursary applications prior to the deadline of March 15, 2015. The bursary committee reviewed the applications and recommended Board approval as follows:

- Application from a TESL student for applied for registration and travel to attend the 2015 TESL Canada Conference in Lake Louise. The bursary committee recommended approval for a bursary of \$500.00 (CDN).
- Request from a member for \$500 to offset the cost of ACE TESOL registration. The bursary committee recommended approval for a bursary of \$500 (CDN).
- Application from a contract teacher for funding to attend the 2015 TESL Canada Conference in Lake Louise. The bursary committee recommended approval for a bursary of \$285 to cover the cost of registration.
- In addition, one member applied for registration and travel to attend the 2015 TESL Canada Conference in Lake Louise. She submitted an incomplete application, failing to provide a cover letter. The bursary committee offered her the opportunity to submit a cover letter, which she did. However, given the lack of effort shown, evidenced by grammar, capitalization and punctuation mistakes, in addition to not providing any further clarity in terms of the reasons for her application, the bursary committee decided against providing a bursary at this time. It was felt that her application lacked professionalism and effort.
- Three additional bursaries were received, none of which was considered to be eligible in terms of ability to show financial need. Two requested travel and registration for the 2015 TESL Canada Conference. One requested travel and accommodation for the TESOL Convention in Toronto; convention registration was paid for by the employer.

As per the requirements of the bursary application, each approved applicant is expected to submit all receipts for tuition/registration expenses, in addition to a 250-word summary/evaluation of the event or course they have attended.

Submitted by  
Cindy Messaros

## TESL CANADA CONFERENCE REPORT

The conference committee met on June 4, and conference planning seems to be right on schedule. Registration opened on June 4, and a few of the initial bugs have been worked out. Many of these issues involved not having the necessary information (e.g., pricing, transportation, accommodations, etc.) on the website when registration went live. Lesson learned.

The proposal review process continues, and emails to accepted presenters will be sent out around June 20. We anticipate being able to accept 140 presenters for sessions of various formats and lengths. As such, we are finalizing our room / time schedule for the conference.

Gala preparations, hospitality activities, exhibitor set-up, and other on-site details are all underway.

The AV committee is still stalled, although Peggy Jubian is now filling in for Tom Kozma. We've also enlisted the help of Trish Quillen to deal with original contract agreements with regard to AV pricing.

As well, the food for the event and the gala has yet to be decided on. However, the menus have been sent out to committee members, and we have received some useful suggestions.

Our next on-site visit will take place on June 29. Six committee members will take part in the trip.

Glen Cochrane & Chris Wharton, Conference Co-chairs.

## CALGARY LOCAL ATESL REPORT

What do an eye tracker, EEG equipment and sound-attenuated booths have in common? They are all examples of the high-tech equipment available at the University of Calgary's Language Research Centre (LRC). On June 24, Calgary ATESL members will get a close-up at our final meeting of the year before we break for summer. Mary O'Brien, Director of the LRC, will give us a tour of the lab where this equipment is housed and provide examples of the types of language research it is being used in.

Following the tour, Roswita Dressler (University of Calgary's Werklund School of Education) will guide us in an exploration of action research – a methodology used by instructors to reflect on their practice for continuous quality improvement of learning. Sound serious? On the contrary, the exploration will take place through a fun card game developed by Roswita and her colleagues Barb Brown, Sarah Eaton, and Michele Jacobsen.

On May 21, the Calgary local membership enjoyed a double feature: Marcia Kim (University of Calgary) presented on task-based listening lessons, and Dora Di Lullo-Patten (Chinook Learning Services) tackled listening assessment with a focus on task-based listening. Approximately 20 members were in attendance at the meeting, which was held at SAIT.

Looking ahead to the fall, we are recruiting speakers for our September, November, and December meetings. (The September meeting could be one way to have a trial run of your TESL Canada conference presentation!) There's nothing like planning ahead, so if you would like to present to a friendly crowd of colleagues, drop us a line at [atesl@calgary.ca](mailto:atesl@calgary.ca). We are happy to talk through a semi-formed idea with you and support you all the way, so feel free to get in touch!

Silvia Rossi  
Calgary Co-Chair



Alberta Teachers of English  
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### Newsletter Information

*The ATESL Newsletter is published quarterly.*

**Deadlines: February 15, May 15, August 15, November 15**

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

Contact: Irene Wood  
at [services@atesl.ca](mailto:services@atesl.ca)

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

### Professional Development Bursaries

Apply for an ATESL Professional Development Bursary

Deadline: September 15

<http://www.atesl.ca/bursary>

### 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.

## CENTRAL ALBERTA LOCAL ATESL REPORT

On May 20, 2015 CA-ATESL met at the Snell Auditorium of the Downtown Library for our final local meeting of the year. Everyone enjoyed the movie, “The Big Lie” about the Lost Boys of Somalia, as well as the conversation and potluck afterwards. Thanks to the Downtown Library for setting up the TV and allowing us to use the space free of charge.

There were 7 members in attendance. The next meeting is planned for September 16, 2015 when new co-chair, secretary, and treasurer will be elected.

Report submitted by Lisa Ramsay (CA-ATESL Co-Chair)

## EDMONTON LOCAL ATESL REPORT

Sometimes endings are just new beginnings. Take this year, for example. Although June is typically the end of a term, the 27<sup>th</sup> of June marks the first CLB Mini-Conference offered by the Edmonton Local Chapter. Lisa Herrera and Claire Pinkett will present a 3-hour session on *Demystifying CLB Lesson Planning*. This workshop will show participants how to plan successful CLB lessons as well as how to address any problems. Although Lisa has done 60- to 90-minute presentations on this topic in the past, this is the first time that a three-hour session has been made available in Alberta! Lisa is a gifted presenter and participants will benefit greatly from her expertise in this thorough workshop. The afternoon session will have more in store for CLB practitioners. The Mini-Conference runs from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and will take place at NorQuest College, 10215 – 108 Street NW, Rooms A808 and A809. Make sure to reserve your spot by registering at <http://goo.gl/forms/uZHCXAXOhx> Registration is \$45 for ATESL members, \$60 for non-members, and includes lunch.

While June heralds a new initiative, it is also appropriate to thank all of the speakers who presented from September, 2014 to the end of May, 2015: Kerry Louw talked about *Intercultural Perspectives in Canadian Job Interviews* in September; Justine Light and Leila Ranta presented on *Exploring Edmonton’s Linguistic Landscape* in January; in February, Wendy Chambers explored *Building Community with Online Discussion Boards*; and in March ATESL hosted its first Director’s Forum, with presentations by MacEwan University, One World ... One Centre, CCI-LEX, Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, Edmonton Public Library, NAIT, NorQuest College, Solomon College, and University of Alberta Extension. In April, ATESL members were treated to three University of Alberta MEd capping presentations: Ridha Atioui on *Fluency-Enhancing Activities in EFL Textbooks*, Achshah Lionel on *Teaching Culture in the Academic English Classroom* and Maria Rombalskaya on *Teaching Comprehension of Implied Meaning*. In May, three additional Master’s students presented their projects: Agnieszka Ansel on *Integrating Grammar into a CLB Lesson*, Janet Kwong on *Using Video Excerpts to Teach Pragmatics in ESL Classrooms*, and Huong Nguyen on *Alternatives to the Product-Oriented Approach to L2 Listening Instruction: A Survey of Textbooks*.<sup>1</sup> We are indebted to these presenters and are inspired by them.

Remember to book Friday, September 25<sup>th</sup> in your calendars: it’s the Edmonton Local Annual General Meeting, and it’s a great opportunity to reconnect with members after the summer and meet your new Edmonton Local Executive. Would you like to find out what goes on behind the scenes and join the Local Executive? We’d love to have you! Please send an email to [edmonton@atesl.ca](mailto:edmonton@atesl.ca) and let us know which position you might be interested in being nominated for: Co-Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, Hospitality Committee, or Communications Committee. We look forward to seeing you at the end of June and at the end of September, and hope that both occasions

offer you new insights and new connections.

Sincerely,

Sabine Ricioppo and Evelyn Neame, Co-Chairs

<sup>1</sup>see pp. 13ff of this newsletter for descriptions of these capping projects



## Focus on Research

Marian Rossiter

Over the past year, in an attempt to bridge the gap between second language research and practice, Marilyn Abbott and I have invited individuals to contribute research-based articles to our *Focus on Research* column. In earlier issues of the *ATESL Newsletter*, we've featured articles on professional reading groups (March 2014), computer-assisted language learning (May 2014), vocabulary resources for teaching and learning (September 2014), pronunciation (December 2014), and grammar (March, 2014). In the current issue, the focus is on reading skills, and I've asked Marilyn to share her expertise in this area. In her article, which is a follow-up to her presentation at the ATESL 2014 Conference, she outlines practical, evidence-based reading strategies and provides a list of references for readers who would like further information on this key, complex skill. I'm sure you will find her article very informative.

## Strategies for Developing Skilled Readers

Marilyn Abbott

Reading is a core component of second language (L2) competence that facilitates learning about the L2 and supports the acquisition of other L2 skills. For these reasons, the development of effective reading skills is a fundamental goal of most English as a second language (ESL) programs. Researchers who have examined what good readers do when they read (e.g., Block, Gambrell, & Pressley, 2002; Block & Pressley, 2002, 2007) have found that reading comprehension relies on the automatic activation and orchestration of a complex set of skills and strategies. A skills-/strategy-based approach to reading instruction can assist students in developing the skills and strategies vital to successful reading comprehension (Anderson, 1999; Grabe, 2009, 2010; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). In this article, I define reading, skills, and strategies; describe key components of an effective reading curriculum; present four typical learner reading profiles; and discuss several research-informed activities that do not take a lot of class time and are easy to incorporate into most lessons. The activities can be used with learners who have varying reading profiles to improve their reading skills and strategies, and to foster their learner autonomy.

### Definitions

Reading is typically defined in terms of (a) decoding, which refers to a reader's ability to recognize words and recall their meanings; and (b) comprehension, which results from the reader using his/her prior knowledge and experience to interact with and interpret the text (Grabe, 2009; Hoover & Gough, 1990; Kinsche, 1998). Efficient (i.e., accurate and fast) comprehension relies on fluent word recognition skills and effective reading strategies (Grabe, 2009, 2010). Reading strategies are deliberate actions that a reader uses to make sense of a text. A reading skill is a strategy that through effortful and deliberate usage and extensive practice has become automatic (Afflerbach, Pearson, & Paris, 2008). Research (e.g., Abbott, 2010; Anderson, 2009; Block, 1992) shows that skilled readers use reading strategies more effectively than their less-skilled counterparts, and ESL students benefit from explicit instruction that aims to develop skilled, motivated,



confident, strategic readers (Anderson, 2014; Grabe, 2009; Grabe & Stoller, 2011).

### **Key Reading Curriculum Components**

A comprehensive reading curriculum designed to meet the instructional needs of all students should involve more than simply assigning textbook readings and the accompanying questions, and then checking the students' answers. ESL learners need both extensive reading practice and explicit reading instruction. Extensive fluency practice is required because skilled readers need to be able to read quickly and accurately. Explicit instruction in a wide variety of reading strategies and discussions of how to select and apply appropriate strategies in order to achieve comprehension is also an important element of an effective reading curriculum (Grabe 2009). When ESL learners know how to identify the requirements of a reading task, employ strategies to complete the task, and evaluate the success of their approach, they understand the process of reading for successful comprehension. Strategic control is a prerequisite for the development of learner autonomy (Ushioda, 2011). Autonomous learners accept the responsibility for their learning and control their own learning processes. The abilities to read fluently and deploy strategies to assist with reading to learn provide the foundation for autonomous learning.

### **Four Typical Learner Reading Profiles**

When designing lessons that involve reading, it is important to consider the students' instructional needs, as ESL learners in the same class often vary greatly in terms of their reading comprehension and fluency skills. Based upon their patterns of strengths and needs, students can be classified into four distinct reader profiles (Anderson, 2014):

- 1) Some students read slowly and do not comprehend what they read; these students require instruction in both fluency and comprehension.
- 2) Others read rapidly, but do not understand what they read; these students need instruction to improve their comprehension.
- 3) Many higher proficiency level ESL learners understand what they read, but read slowly and, therefore, require fluency interventions.
- 4) Even those students who read with adequate comprehension at reasonable rates can benefit from fluency practice and instruction in reading comprehension strategies that can be used when they encounter difficult texts.

Reading strategy instruction and rate-building activities can assist readers with these diverse profiles in improving their reading comprehension and fluency skills.

### **Reading Instruction**

At the beginning of each course, it is essential to assess ESL learners' reading rates and comprehension skills in order to assist in planning for, monitoring, and evaluating the effectiveness of reading instruction (Anderson, 2014; Grabe, 2009; Grabe & Stoller, 2011). The next step is to have students set reasonable reading goals for improving both their fluency and comprehension skills. Then provide explicit instruction to develop students' reading skills and strategies. Strategy instruction should include "the development of students' awareness of their strategies, teacher modeling of strategic thinking, identifying the strategies by name, and providing opportunities for practice and self-evaluation" (Chamot, 2011, p. 35). For example, when approaching new texts where the instructional focus is on comprehension or careful/ intensive reading, it is important to encourage students to use the following strategic reading practices and discuss how, why, and when these strategies should be used:

- identify a purpose for reading;
- preview and form questions about the text, then answer these questions while reading;
- monitor comprehension to identify difficulties encountered in the text;
- take steps, such as rereading, to repair faulty comprehension;
- identify the main ideas by taking notes, underlining, or highlighting;
- summarize the text using notes made while reading.

Ideas for developing each of these strategic reading practices are described below.

**Identifying a purpose for reading.** The purpose for reading will determine the type and rate of reading required (e.g., scanning for details, skimming for gist, everyday reading, reading to learn or reading to memorize – in order from fastest to slowest: Carver, 1992) and the way in which students use strategies to approach associated reading tasks. Knowing the purpose will help students determine what information they need to attend to and, therefore, which strategies to use. For example, if the task is to read to learn, then the strategic reading practices outlined above should be used; however, if the task is to read for some specific information, the students need to understand that when scanning for details, they do not have to try to understand every word. As a result, their reading speed is much faster than when reading to learn.

**Previewing and forming questions about the text, then answering the questions while reading.** One way to promote comprehension while also creating a purpose for reading is to have students preview a text and then pose questions about what the text is likely about. In this case, the purpose for reading is to seek answers to the questions raised. If the text is divided into subheadings, students could be asked to develop a question related to each heading. A similar activity that is also supported by the reading comprehension strategy instruction literature (see review in Trabasso & Bouchard, 2002) is the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA: Stauffer, 1976). DRTA directs students to activate their background knowledge which assists in text comprehension.

#### DRTA Steps

1. Preview the text and predict what it will be about (i.e., generate a list of possibilities).
2. Read the first section.
3. Confirm/reject prediction(s). This is the purpose for reading, which is referred to as the thinking step in DRTA.
4. Write the location (page number/paragraph/line) of the textual evidence.
5. Repeat the cycle for each section until finished. (adapted from Stauffer, 1976)

**Monitoring and evaluating progress.** The provision of opportunities for students to chart their own progress and judge how well their comprehension and fluency goals are being met throughout the term can increase both language proficiency and learner autonomy. An excellent resource developed by Quinn, Nation, and Millett (2007) that can be used to build and track students' comprehension and fluency skills is available at <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/about/staff/publications/paul-nation/Speed-reading-whole.pdf>. This publication includes 20 passages with comprehension tests at the 1000 word level. It also contains many ideas for progress monitoring and references to other resources that could be used for improving ESL learners' comprehension and increasing their reading speed.

Repeated reading is also a valuable activity that is supported by the research literature for improving reading rate, accuracy, and comprehension (Cohen, 2011; Taguchi & Gorsuch, 2002; Taguchi, Takayasu-Maass, & Gorsuch, 2004). Any materials that have been previously read in class can be used for repeated reading. Two repeated reading activities adapted from Iwano (2004) are outlined below:

#### Repeated Reading Activity 1

Have students

1. read as much as they can in 60 seconds,
2. mark the last word read,
3. re-read from the beginning of the text for another 60 seconds and mark the last word,
4. repeat the drill a third and fourth time.

The goal is to advance further into the text each time.

#### Repeated Reading Activity 2

Have students

1. reread the same text for exactly one minute, once a week,
2. mark the last word read and count how many words read,
3. keep a record of their weekly one-minute readings to chart their improvement over time.

Nation (2009) recommends that teachers also have students keep weekly records of what they've been reading and the



number of pages they've read outside of class each week along with their performance on repeated reading and other rate building activities. Systematic progress monitoring to track student progress allows teachers to identify student difficulties and modify their instruction when needed to ensure that students are meeting their comprehension and fluency goals.

**Repairing/improving comprehension and developing fluency.** Research (Hwang & Newbern, 2012; Pressley, 2000; Seng, 2007) indicates that when teachers model how to use reading strategies and teach students how to consciously use them in combination for different purposes, this will heighten students' awareness of how fluent readers use strategies to comprehend text and facilitate students' reading comprehension. Instruction in thinking aloud has been demonstrated to improve students' understanding of effective strategy use (Pressley, 2000; Seng, 2007). To teach students how to think aloud, begin by selecting a short, interesting text that contains some ambiguity, abstraction, or terminology that the students may have difficulty understanding (Campbell, 2009). Then read the text out loud and describe what you are thinking when you come across portions of the text that allow you to describe the reading strategies you are using. For an example narrative text with think aloud comments that could be used to introduce students to thinking aloud see Campbell (2009, pp. 30-31). Instructor and individual think alouds that include whole class or small group discussions about the reading strategies that can be used to overcome comprehension difficulties can increase students' knowledge of the variety of strategies available to them. The following table includes example strategies with sentence stems that instructors and students can use when thinking aloud. I encourage you and your students to extend this table by adding additional reading strategies and sentence stems/frames to it.

<b>Example Reading Strategies</b>	<b>Sentence Stems/Frames</b>
1. Activate background knowledge	I predict that... I remember....
2. Visualize	I can picture... I imagine...
3. Ask questions	A question I have is (who, what, when, where, why or how)...
4. Make connections	This reminds me of...
5. Identify the main ideas	The big idea here is... This is important because...
6. Make inferences	I think this... because... I believe... because...
7. Use vocabulary strategies	I think this means... because... This is like...
8. Monitor comprehension	I am confused about...
9. Summarize	The author is saying...

Instruction that incorporates extensive reading is also imperative for increasing students' language awareness and consolidating their reading skills (Elley, 1991; Nation, 1997, 2013). Extensive reading refers to the reading of large quantities of reading materials for pleasure without the need of a dictionary or the threat of evaluation (Day & Bamford, 2002). Tips for establishing an extensive reading program can be found in Day and Bamford, (2004), Hill (1997), Nation (2013), and Al-Homoud and Schmitt (2009).

**Identifying main ideas.** Being able to identify the main idea in a passage is one of the most important reading skills students can develop (Winograd & Hare, 1988). The main idea or thesis is the message the author is trying to convey about a specific topic. Main idea identification is particularly important for understanding complex expository texts, as comprehension is facilitated when learners are able to differentiate main ideas from supporting details. Some effective strategies for determining the main idea of a passage include reading the first and last paragraphs of a text and the first sentence of each paragraph. If students have difficulty identifying the thesis, it may be helpful to have them highlight or underline the topic or subject of each paragraph and then discuss their answers to the following questions: What idea is common to most of the text? What is the idea that relates the parts to the whole? What opinion do all the parts support? What idea do the parts all explain or describe?

**Summarizing the text.** Summary tasks provide students with practice in reducing a text to its bare essentials (i.e.,

the main ideas and crucial details that capture the overall gist). Effective summaries “demonstrate that a reader sees the differences [between the main ideas and supporting details]...and can place emphasis at the proper level” (Anderson, 2009, p. 127). Example summary tasks include asking students to

1. read a paragraph or section, then look away and recall the key ideas;
2. write a one-sentence summary for each paragraph or section after reading; and
3. write a phrase in the margins that captures the main idea of each paragraph or section.

A cooperative reading activity that improves students’ summary skills through peer collaboration is the Directed Reading Sequence (adapted from Irvin, Buehl, & Klemp, 2007). Students are given the following reading roles that they rotate through as they read each paragraph or section of a text:

- a. the *paraphraser* summarizes what was in passage;
- b. the *verifier/illustrator* clarifies and fills in any details that the paraphraser missed – if the verifier doesn't have anything to add, s/he can create an illustration that represents the gist of the selection;
- c. the *squeezer* takes the summary and puts it into one sentence; and
- d. the *writer* writes the sentence onto a piece of paper.

### Directed Reading Sequence Steps

- 1) Choose a text and divide it into sections.
- 2) Group students into groups of 4 and assign the above reading roles.
- 3) Have students read the first section and then complete their duties.
- 4) Have students change roles and repeat steps 2 and 3 until the reading is complete.

Depending on the students’ skill levels, they could read the passages silently on their own, the instructor could read all or some of the sections aloud, or the group members could alternate reading each of the sections aloud.

Cooperative reading activities such as the Directed Reading Sequence can provide students with opportunities to improve their summary skills while also engaging and motivating them to read.

### Conclusion

L2 reading is a complex skill that is best developed through explicit intensive instruction in reading strategies in conjunction with considerable amounts of extensive reading and fluency practice. Assigning readings with comprehension questions that merely test students’ comprehension does not foster skilled, strategic readers. A combination of modelling, explaining, and guiding students through the comprehension process not only provides students with the knowledge of how to successfully complete a reading task, but this type of instruction along with fluency building and collaborative reading activities can promote confident, skilled, autonomous readers.

**Marilyn Abbott** is an associate professor in the TESL program in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Alberta. Her research interests include second language reading strategies, assessment, and teacher education. This article is a summary of a presentation on strategies for developing skilled readers that she gave at the ATESL conference in Edmonton in October 2014.

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## UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA TESL MEd

### CAPPING PROJECT SUMMARIES

#### Fluency-Enhancing Activities in EFL Textbooks (Ridha Atioui, MEd)

In this study, five integrated skills student textbooks used to teach English as a foreign language (EFL) in the Middle East were examined for activities that develop learners' oral fluency. Textbooks in the Middle East are crucial to the instruction process because they are in many cases the primary, if not the only, source of language input for learners and are even considered by many teachers to constitute the syllabus. Thus, having textbooks that incorporate an adequate number of activities to develop the learners' oral fluency is of primary importance to teachers, learners, and other stakeholders.

The texts are of intermediate level and were published between 1998 and 2008. The textbooks were analyzed to determine the extent to which they included research-informed activities that purported to develop learners' oral fluency. Previous research on fluency (Bygate, 1996, 2001; Bygate, Skehan & Swain, 2000; De Jong & Perfetti, 2011; Ellis, 2003; Onada, 2012; Skehan & Foster, 1997; Yuan & Ellis, 2003) indicated that some activities, such as role plays, task repetition, formulaic sequences, free production, and pre-planning, can be used to develop learners' oral fluency.

I examined each textbook to determine the number of oral fluency-enhancing activities. The activities were coded RP for role plays, TR for task repetitions, FS for formulaic sequences, FP for free productions, and PP for pre-planning. Activities had to have clear instructions to be coded. Many activities were Not Coded (NC) because of the absence of instructions, or because the instructions were not clear, although some of them had the potential to be exploited for enhancing oral fluency. This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent are role plays, task repetitions, formulaic sequences, free production, and pre-planning activities represented in the textbooks examined?
2. What are the implications of the results of this study for EFL teachers and learners in the Middle East?

The percentage of oral fluency enhancing activities in the five textbooks ranged between 27% and 37%, which means that oral fluency is well represented in the five integrated skills textbooks surveyed in this project. The results indicated that free production communicative activities ranked highest in three of the textbooks surveyed and second highest in the other two texts. These results are congruent with the results in Rossiter et al. (2010), which pointed to the over-reliance of some textbooks on one type of fluency-enhancing activity.

Task repetition was the second most common type of fluency-enhancing activity identified in three books and was the highest in two texts. Formulaic sequences were not well represented in the five textbooks, which is in contrast with the results of Diepenbroek and Derwing (2013), who reported a higher number of FS activities. Pre-planning activities were of the lowest frequency in three textbooks and were non-existent in the other two texts. This study also provided five

examples that illustrated how to supplement the free production activities by utilizing additional techniques to help EFL teachers facilitate their learners' oral fluency.



### **Teaching Culture in the Academic English Classroom (Achsah Lionel, MEd)**

According to Byram (1997), “teaching for linguistic competence cannot be separated from teaching for intercultural competence” (p. 22). This paper introduces intercultural communicative competence (ICC) as a necessary skill for learners to develop in the Canadian English for academic purposes (EAP) classroom. ICC refers to “the knowledge, motivation and skills needed to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures” (Wiseman, 2003, p. 192). An extensive review of the research literature on ICC and the approaches that have been used to develop students' ICC in the ESL classroom was conducted. One of the characteristics of learners developing ICC is that they should be active rather than passive participants in learning about the target culture (in this case, Canadian culture) (Liddicoat, 2002). They also need to develop the skills of decentring from their own cultures (Byram, 1989; Kramsch, 1993) and comparing their own cultures to the target culture (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002). Learners who are developing ICC are also able to find their “third place” (Kramsch, 1993), which is a space where they are able to observe and reflect on their own culture and the target culture. Several approaches have been used to develop ICC in the ESL classroom. These include the use of role plays (Archer, 1986; Kodotchigova, 2002; Shapiro & Leopold, 2012); culture capsules (Peterson & Coltrane, 2003); ethnographic interviews (Robinson, 1985; Bateman, 2004); and technology such as blogs (Ducate & Lomicka, 2008), and podcasting (Lee, 2009; Dema & Moeller, 2012). The ICC strands presented in the *ATESL Adult ESL Curriculum Framework* form the basis of my examination of ICC. ICC is defined in the *ATESL Adult ESL Curriculum Framework* as language learners’ “ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in English within a culturally diverse society, such as Canada” (Chambers, Gnida, Ilott, Messaros, & Dawson, 2011, p. S7-4). In this framework, ICC is seen as having relevance and applicability across language proficiency levels and contexts. Additionally, the seven strands of this framework are viewed as equally important and interconnected facets of ICC that are organized as a circular model with no hierarchical order of skill development. An EAP-related task for each of these seven ICC strands was developed in this project. These strands require learners to: analyze everyday behaviours in Canadian cultures and compare and contrast these with their own; compare and contrast differences and similarities in values and beliefs in their own cultures and in Canadian cultures; recognize cultural stereotypes-favourable and discriminatory and describe how they impact their own and others' behaviour; identify culturally-determined behaviour patterns; analyze and describe diversity in Canadian cultures; identify and describe the significance of cultural images and symbols in Canadian cultures and their own and examine their own cultural adjustment process and the personal balance that must be struck between acculturation and preserving their own cultures (Chambers et al., 2011, p. S7-10).



### **Using Video Excerpts to Teach Pragmatics in ESL Classrooms (Janet Kwong, MEd)**

English as a second language (ESL) learners may have some difficulties integrating into society due to a lack of knowledge and inappropriate use of pragmatics. Leech (1983) subdivides pragmatic competence into two categories, language-focused pragmalinguistics and culture-focused sociopragmatics, which can be determined by the appropriateness of speech acts such as apologizing, giving suggestions, expressing disagreement, or making requests. “Pragmalinguistics refers to the resources for conveying communicative acts and relational or interpersonal meanings...such as directness and indirectness, routines, and a large range of linguistic forms which can intensify or soften communicative acts” (Kasper and Rose, 2001, p. 2). On the other hand, sociopragmatics involves determining “how best to say it in a way that conforms with patterns for the target language and culture, given the respective ages, social status, and roles of the speaker and listener in that situation” (Cohen, 2010, p. 7). In order for ESL learners to successfully integrate into the target culture, they need to have a good understanding of how to use pragmatic competence in various daily contexts, particularly in employment and academic settings and in social interactions. Therefore, the inclusion of pragmatics instruction is critical for ESL learners, but there are many challenges for teaching pragmatics and learning pragmatics.



The objective of the present study was to explore effective ways in which ESL instructors can use video excerpts from television situational comedies to teach pragmatics to adult learners with intermediate English proficiency. The sitcom used in my study was entitled *How I Met Your Mother (HIMYM)*. One of the main reasons for choosing this particular sitcom was that, to my knowledge, there are no published lesson plans on teaching speech acts using video excerpts from *HIMYM*. I chose video excerpts for teaching pragmatics from a number of season one episodes and evaluated them using a sitcom selection checklist I developed for this study. This sitcom selection checklist incorporated several different factors suggested by numerous researchers (Abrams, 2014; Al-Surmi, 2012; Arcario, 1992; Sherman, 2003; Tomlinson, 2013a). I have also provided an example of how to assign a Canadian Language Benchmark level to a video excerpt using a benchmarking table. The time frames and transcripts for the chosen video excerpts are included in this study as well. In addition, I used suggestions based on Tomlinson's (2011, 2013b) principles for materials development to create pre-viewing, viewing, and post-viewing activities and a sample lesson plan. Finally, I discussed the challenges and implications for ESL instructors planning to use video excerpts as pragmatics teaching resources. I hope the informational tools I created will encourage instructors to work towards developing their own materials to teach pragmatics using *HIMYM* and other visual media.



### **Product versus Process Approaches to Listening Instruction (Huong Nguyen, MEd)**

Second language (L2) acquisition research indicates that listening is a challenging skill for teachers to teach and for learners to acquire. Listening is the skill over which learners often feel they have the least control, and this may therefore trigger high levels of anxiety. For the teacher, unfamiliarity with the intricacies of listening and with a range of activities that could potentially foster competent listening typically results in heavy reliance on the use of comprehension questions and the adoption of a “listen, answer, check” pattern. This product-oriented could be beneficial in that it provides learners with necessary experience and exposure and enables them to pass exams. However, it does little to help learners develop their listening competence because it could promote learner anxiety and favour more able listeners over those who most need help. Most importantly, when teachers use this approach, they are testing listening rather than actually teaching it. To address this issue, researchers have suggested various alternative approaches and techniques to teaching listening that are more process-oriented, which either provide further instructions on how comprehension can be reached, or guide learners through the process towards comprehension. Examples of these approaches include bottom-up activities, the diagnostic approach, the dual focus on listening-for-comprehension and listening-for-learning, the metacognitive approach, and teacher modelling.

I examined the listening content in six popular intermediate adult ESL textbooks to determine to what extent the listening activities in these books were product-oriented, to what extent they were process-oriented, and which specific approaches were most and least common. A coding schema was developed to categorize the listening activities into 10 activity types: testing listening comprehension or decoding skills, segmental bottom-up activities, suprasegmental bottom-up activities, planning/prediction, monitoring comprehension, solving comprehension problems, evaluating approach and outcomes, “other” approaches, speaking/reading/writing follow-up activities, and grammar/vocabulary/pronunciation follow-up activities. These activity types represented the product-oriented approach, process-oriented approaches, or follow-up activities.

I found high frequencies of the product-oriented approach in every textbook and much lower frequencies of the process-oriented approaches. Among the process-oriented approaches, planning/prediction was the most common activity type, while bottom-up activities, such as those that helped learners identify a word in a recorded passage through understanding word parts, occurred minimally in the textbooks. It was also apparent in the textbooks surveyed that much more attention is paid to follow-up activities that expand the topic discussed in the recording through speaking, reading, or writing exercises, compared with follow-up activities that promote the learning of relevant grammatical features.

To authors of future textbooks, I recommend (a) that there be more integration of process-oriented approaches and (b)



that comprehension questions that test learners' ability to comprehend or to decode a text be used only sparingly or as necessary. It is also recommended that instructional material developers and teachers spend more time and resources encouraging learners to monitor their comprehension, solve comprehension problems, and evaluate the approaches they adopt, as well as the outcomes of using such approaches.



### **Integrating Grammar into a CLB Lesson (Agnieszka Ansel, MEd)**

Implementing grammar into a task-based lesson can be challenging for Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) instructors. The Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB), mandatory in all LINC programs, use a task-based approach to language instruction in which students demonstrate their proficiency by carrying out specific language tasks. Research has demonstrated the importance of integrating a focus on form into L2 instruction; however, also according to the research, some teachers are unsure how to implement grammar instruction into task-based language teaching (TBLT) in LINC, and this is one of the reasons for which instructors are sceptical about TBLT. However, as Ellis (2009) stated, mixed feelings towards using TBLT have their source in teachers' resistance to accepting the fact that there is more than one approach to TBLT and, consistently, more than one approach to grammar teaching in TBLT. This paper presented a literature review outlining options for teaching grammar both implicitly and explicitly in task-based LINC programs. It described three approaches to TBLT that could be used in a LINC classroom: Ellis' (2009), Nunan's (2004), and Willis and Willis' (2007). Examples of how a focus on form can be achieved within each of these approaches were provided in real lesson plans designed for various CLB levels, skills, and competencies; special attention was given to options for grammar sequencing within different tasks. Finally, six sample lesson plans were developed based on real-world tasks created by LINC instructors in a community college in western Canada. Each lesson focused on form in a different way to demonstrate existing options from which LINC instructors could choose. The authentic tasks (developed by LINC instructors and used in a LINC classroom) can be used either as assessment tasks in Portfolio Based Language Assessment or as classroom practice, for example as follow-up tasks. They can be used to practise various language skills (listening, speaking, reading, or writing) at various CLB levels.

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### **Teaching Comprehension of Implied Meaning (Maria Rombalskaya, MEd)**

The objective of this capping project was to examine how the comprehension of implied meaning can be taught through audio and visual media. Grice's model of implicature (based on the maxims of quantity, quality, relation, and manner) is used in the project, with the specific focus on violating the maxim of quality. The maxim of quality is not observed when the speaker says something he believes is not true, or something for which the speaker does not have evidence (Grice, 1975). Flouting the maxim of quality results in irony, metaphor, hyperbole, and understatement. *Irony* is saying the opposite of what is meant (Wilson, 2013). *Metaphor* is a "figure of speech that implies comparison between two unlike entities" (Encyclopaedia Britannica online, 2013). *Hyperbole* is "a figure of speech that is an intentional exaggeration for emphasis or comic effect" (Encyclopaedia Britannica online, 2015). According to the *New Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics* (1993), *understatement* is employed to communicate that something is less in importance or size.

In this paper, I explored how irony, metaphor, hyperbole, and understatement are conveyed in natural conversations; identified research-based teaching strategies for improving students' comprehension of irony, metaphor, hyperbole, and understatement; recommended resources to exemplify irony, metaphor, hyperbole, and understatement, and developed lesson plans that show how the resources could be used. The audio and video resources were selected with the help of a

matrix, adapted from Krasnikova (2014). The matrix included themes, context, cultural components, CLB level, implicature exemplification, and vocabulary focus of the resources. The selected audio resources include *Peterson's TOEIC Business Idioms from Silicon Valley* by Hans (2000) and *Phrasal Verbs in Context* by Dainty (1991). The video resources include two TED Ed videos: one about irony by Warner (2014) and one about metaphor by Hirshfield (n.d.); one video covering both hyperbole and understatement by Day (2009); and a comedy drama, *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006). In addition to fulfilling the matrix criteria, these resources have meaningful content and a minimal number of controversial issues. They are also likely to be motivating for most learners.

A good way to begin teaching students how to comprehend irony, metaphor, hyperbole, and understatement is by watching the TED Ed documentaries. I recommend starting with an explanation of metaphors, as they occur in speech most frequently, according to Sert (2008). Then, explain irony as an umbrella term. Finally, introduce hyperbole and understatement together because they can be easily contrasted. Hyperbole might seem the easiest to understand; however, if instructors start with irony, they could provide a broader framework into which hyperbole will fit. The second step could be working on the *Phrasal Verbs in Context* audiobook. A further step would be watching and analyzing *The Devil Wears Prada* movie. Although the resources analyzed in this project are at CLB 6+ level, deeper processing of the information in the audio and video resources would be possible at CLB 7-8 levels. This project is intended to increase instructors' understanding of the benefits of explicit instruction for improving students' comprehension of irony, metaphor, hyperbole, and understatement.

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