

# DAKOTA TESL

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- From the President*—2
- Youth Panel follow-up*—3
- Youth Panel follow-up*—4
- Youth Panel follow-up*—5
- Youth Panel follow-up*—6
- Conference highlights*—6
- Vocabulary Instruction*—7
- Learner-Generated Text*—8
- Dakota Diversity*—9
- Running Dictation*—10
- In Their Shoes*—10
- Advocate for ELs*—11
- Helping Hands*—13
- Content Instruction*—14
- Juicy Text*—15
- Teaching One Another*—  
18
- Emotions and ESL Students*—19



## DAKOTA TESL MISSION STATEMENT



*Dakota TESL's mission is to provide professional development and networking opportunities for ESL/ELL professionals so they, in turn, can better meet the needs of those they serve.*

## SAVE THE DATE!

2016 Dakota TESL Fall Conference  
November 9-10, 2016  
Fargo, ND

For information, please visit  
[www.ndseec.com/ell](http://www.ndseec.com/ell)

## From the President

*Emily Koo*

Sitting on my patio, this warm late summer (must not say fall, as we all know what comes after fall) afternoon, reflecting on my tenure as President, I am overwhelmed with my gratitude for such an opportunity to meet and work with very wonderful, caring people who are dedicated to the field of ELL and bringing professional development across the Dakotas. I've truly enjoyed being in the presence of such great people at the 2016 Closer Connections/Dakota TESL conference this past November.

In weeks leading up to the 2015 conference, I was hurriedly finalizing last-minute preparations, ensuring that every detail was the best that I could do for conference participants. I took to heart many of your kind and constructive remarks and wanted to take this opportunity to respond to your comments. It comes as no surprise the resounding comment about having access to all-day coffee. We were unable to have coffee all day due to budgetary constraints, however, I passed this request along to our conference chair, Kerri, and she is ensuring that there will be coffee all day at the 2016 Dakota TESL conference in Fargo later this year! You can also expect it at all future Dakota TESL conferences, should money allow. Speaking of money, you can likely expect a very small conference fee hike for future conferences (to cover things like all-day coffee). Many of you expressed that this conference is very cost-efficient considering the breadth of sessions available. I promise continued quality in years to come! We were fortunate to have a couple shy of 300 participants. We only had 250 register and had an extra 50 show up day of the conference! Many of you suggested a larger venue for the conference, especially for high demand sessions. We will try to be more diligent in choosing appropriate

***Kids don't remember what you try to teach them. They remember what you are.***

**Jim Henson**

## Did you know?

Dakota TESL is online! Visit us at

[www.dakotatesl.com](http://www.dakotatesl.com)

You can also like us on Facebook!

rooms or consider repeating high demand sessions for the next conference.

Thank you for taking the time to fill out such thoughtful comments! All remarks for conference session were all very positive. These positive words and the great conference didn't come from me alone. I owe all of the conference success to the following people who served on the conference planning committee:

- Cathy McCollister
- Diana Calvetti-Streleck
- Heather Glidewell
- Kristin Grinager
- Lindsey Olson
- Laura Smith-Hill
- Missy Slaathaug
- Silke Hansen
- Stef Sage

As long as I'm thanking people, a special thanks to Ruthie Wienk for helping me with the layout of this publication. As Dakota TESL secretary, she has been very helpful in working with me to produce this year's newsletter, another responsibility of the President.

Looking back over my two-year tenure as President-Elect, and now as President, I admit that I was a little nervous about the gargantuan task of chairing the conference and putting together the newsletter, but the experience has been such a positive one for me. But getting involved in Dakota TESL has given me the chance to branch out and meet people from all corners of our two states, share lessons and stories, and learn from the best in the business. You are all my inspiration!

**Youth Panel Follow-Up**  
*Graciously compiled by Stef Sage*



One of the more popular sessions at the 2015 Closer Connections Conference--“Dakota Diversity”--is the Youth Panel. It featured 6 area youth who shared their experiences transitioning from life in their home country or refugee camp to life in the US. Their commentary focuses on their experiences with the public school system. Although all six came from very different places, they all share some of the same first experiences with life in the United States. Please enjoy the following interviews with Ei Mar, Fidele, Bora, Hans, Natalie, and Sale.

---

Name: Ei Mar  
Age: 18

*What country did you live in before coming to the US?*  
Thailand

*Did you go to school before coming to the US?* Yes

*What subjects did you study at school?* We had seven subjects. We learned English a little bit; Myanmar (language), Karenni, math, science, history and world geography.

*What is the biggest difference in schools here in US and the ones you attended?* Everything is very different. Especially technology and we have enough books supply here more than back there.

*What is good about schools in US?* The teachers are very educated, very gentle and very helpful in so many different ways.

*What did it feel like to be on the panel at the conference?*  
It was such an honor to be able to stand and share my experienced with others. I was very amazed by how each one of us went through our problems in our lives in very

similar ways.

*Did you feel like you were able to share what you wanted?*  
Yes, I felt very relief after sharing my story.

*What surprised you the most about the panel?* I couldn't believe there are some people who are willing to hear my story.

*What are your future hopes and plans?* I am going to College for Phlebotomy. I hope to become a phlebotomist someday.

*What are your hopes for the future of other students who come to the US?* I really hope they will take the education as serious they should take because we have a lot of opportunity to study here compare to where we came from. I really would encourage them to study and become someone who can help their country, family or friends in any other way they can in their future.

*Do you have anything else you want to add?* I am glad I was one of the youth who can stand up and shared my feelings with others.

---

Name: Fidele Ndadaye Nimbona  
Age: 25

*What country did you live in before coming to the US?* I was in Tanzania refugee camp called, Mtabila.

*What age were you when came to the US?*  
16 years old

*What surprised you the most about the United States?*  
Coming from Tanzania straight up to South Dakota, the thing that surprised me the most was snow.

*What was school like in your home country/refugee camp?* School was ok. We didn't have much school materials as we needed but I learned how to read and write in a refugee camp.

*What is good about schools in US?* Students have all school materials is one of the good things that I liked. Freedom to choose what you want to become is also one of good things in the US schools system.

*What do you wish could be different about schools in the US?* The ways kids dress. I'm not saying they should have uniforms but they should wear something



appropriate. I have seen high school kids wearing yoga pants and the school administrations are ok with it. In my point of view I think that is wrong.

*What did it feel like to be on the panel at the conference?* It felt good. I always wanted to share my story with other different people and the youth panel conference was one of the ways I needed to share my story.

*What surprised you the most about the panel?* I was so surprised to see some of my ELL teachers I felt so happy when I saw them.

*What are your future hopes and plans?* My future hopes are to finish with my master's degree program, and my plans are to become first general of the United Nations.

*What are your hopes for the future of other students coming new to the US?* I hope they understand English quickly and go to college.

---

Name: Bora Lyongola  
Age: 18

*What country did you live in before coming to the US?* Congo Uvira and then in Tanzania for few months. After that, I went to Malawi where I lived in a camp for two years.

*What surprised you the most about the United States?* Cold weather and snow. I was surprised at how plain and simply many of the people in the United States live. I expected large expensive elegant homes with big yards, beautiful patios, and swimming pools. I was surprised by the number of people that live in very small apartments.

*What was school like in your home country/refugee camp?* The classrooms were small and crowded with about 40 students in a class with the same teacher all day. Students sat at homemade tables on crowded benches without back rests. Teachers were allowed to strike and hit students. When students didn't complete their assignments, they were physically punished. We had to share books. We did not have calculators.

*What is the biggest difference in schools here in US and the ones you learned in?* No physical punishment. Students have the opportunity to enroll in elective courses. Classes are smaller and students have access to modern computer technology.

*What is good about schools in US?* The incredible

respect for student dignity. The availability of breakfast and lunch which is provided in public schools.

*What do you wish could be different about schools in the US?* The students could show greater respect toward all of the school staff members and show more appreciation for what these people do for them.

*What do you wish teachers knew about you that would have helped?* I would like teachers to have a greater understanding about how difficult it is for students arriving from other countries to adjust to new cultural expectations and rules as well as a new language. In addition climate conditions add extra challenges. Other considerations include differences in family roles, religious influences, etc.

*What else do you wish you could have shared?* I wished that I would have mentioned that all students had to walk to school; there were no buses or cars. In addition, I wished that I had shared some of my responses to the previous questions included in this survey.

*What surprised you the most about the panel?* The surprised reactions of some of the participants when I talked to them about the physical punishments that the teachers in Congo and the camp were able to give to the students.

*What are your future hopes and plans?* My hope is to continue my studies at Southeast Technical Institute. I want to complete the requirements to become a nurse.

*What are your hopes for the future of other students coming new to the US?* To work as hard as possible, appreciate every opportunity that comes your way. Be serious, focus, and take your education seriously.

*What are your hopes for the school system?* Continue the good work with the Immersion Program for English Language Learners. Continue working with the multicultural center on projects that help the English Language Learning community by building greater appreciation and understanding among all citizens.

---

Name: Hans Aguirre  
Age: 19

*What country did you live in before coming to the US?* Guatemala.

*What age were you when came to the US?* 16 years old.

*What city and state did you come to first?* Sioux Falls, SD.

*Did you go to school before coming to the US?* Yes

*What was school like in your home country/refugee camp?* The school wasn't as big as the school's at the US. My school was in a house. We got our classes inside little rooms, There was not a lot of kid's inside of my school. Some schools are for free at my country but the ones that you can go without paying money but they are prone to have gang members inside the school.

*Did you study English?* I studied English in Guatemala. I studied English for 3 months in a private school.

*What is the biggest difference in schools here in US and the ones you attended?* Besides the language and the amount of people, we got Chrome books where we can do our homework. There is not such a big difference between school's in my country and the schools here.

*What is good about schools in US?* The teacher's help you a lot more, and you have more confidence to make new friends, the people are friendlier.

*What do you wish teachers knew about you that would have helped?* About my culture, if someone knows your culture they are more perceptible to know what you like or what kind of problems you have.

*What did it feel like to be on the panel at the conference?* It feels good, I feel more confident because I talked to a lot of people about my culture and about my experiences and about how is different from my country to the US.

*What else do you wish you could have shared?* About the kind of government that we have in my country, the tyranny is bad. The president steal the money that goes for the resources that we need like schools, public hospitals, streets, etc...

*What surprised you the most about the panel?* The confidence of me and the other guys that were with me, about how we share our stories.

*What are your future hopes and plans?* I'm hoping to set up my own business and study either psychology or nursing.

*What are your hopes for the school system?* A better

education and more classes with people who speak English that way every ELL student will need to talk more English. It will be a good way to practice.

*Do you have any additional thoughts?* Every ELL student has this fear of talking English with other people. The fear is about not being accepted with other people. If we have classes with another American students being ELL, we are not only improving our English, but we also get more confidence talking another language. It might not be the most perfect English but people will try to communicate through their new friendship.

---

Name: Natalie Silva Rodriguez

Age: 15

*What country did you live in before coming to the US?* Puerto Rico

*What age were you when came to the US?* 10

*What city and state did you come to first?* South Dakota

*What surprised you the most about the United States?* Some people are nice to me and funny.

*Did you go to school before coming to the US?* Yes

*What was school like in your home country/refugee camp?* Big and the gym was outside.

*What language did you speak at school?* Spanish and half English

*What is the biggest difference in schools here in US and the ones you learned in?* Teachers are nice and respectful here.

*What is good about schools in US?* That some students are really awesome and respectful.

*What do you wish could be different about schools in the US?* Teacher need to understand some students.

*What are your future hopes and plans?* To graduate and go to college.

*What are your hopes for the future of other students coming new to the US?* I hope they take the education seriously and be respectful.

*Do you have any additional thoughts?* Never give up just

think positive and anything we'll be alright. Even though we are from another state, country, or island we want to be treated equal we are people thank you.

---

Name: Sale Mamud

Age: 15

*What country did you live in before coming to the US?* I was born in Eritrea on September 1st 2000. Two weeks after I was born we moved to Ethiopia because of the third war. In American it was a civil war but in our way they called it the third war. Most of my family members were separated. Some went to somewhere else in Eritrea and the people with kids escaped with the soldiers on our side which was Eritreans. The war was between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

*What age were you when came to the US?* Ten years old

*What city and state did you come to first?* Sioux Falls, SD

*What surprised you the most about the United States?*

The snow, At first I thought it was flower and when I first stepped on the ground, more than half of my leg was inside the frigid snow.

*Did you go to school before coming to the US?* Yes.

*What was school like in your home country/refugee camp?* School was different back then and many kids ended up helping their parents at home and not having the chances of a better opportunity in life. Some went to school in the afternoon and some went in the morning. Eritreans and Ethiopians were isolated and if they get closer there would eventually be a conflict.

*Did you study English?* English is a popular language so many people try to learn it in school and out of school. They usually start with the basics, such as how are you. What's your name and good evening--most of the phrases that people would use for greetings.

*What is the biggest difference in schools here in US and the ones you attended?* The most unusual in school back

then and now is that teachers would hit you or punish you for not understanding their expectations, so most kids refuse to ask questions or answer questions because they think that they'll make a mistake and get punish. The biggest challenge that kids face in school is fear and being bullied by teachers and kids. But in the U.S things are much simpler and more easily understood. You learn English really fast since there are many people speaking English on TV and outside in the real world. Your parents even have enough money here in the U.S than back in the past to give their kids a better chance of success in the future.

*What is good about schools in US?* The thing that I appreciate the most about education here is that you aren't alone. You have friends and teachers that have your back and lead you to the right path of success.

*What do you wish could be different about schools in the US?* I wished that you could get a little time of sleep instead of waking up too early to get to school.

*What do you wish teachers knew about you that would have helped?* I don't have anything to hide from my teachers and everything that is needed to be a better person is all clear so I'm okay and I believe that my teachers are doing a great job of teaching than my old mean teachers.

*What are your future hopes and plans?* At first I planned at becoming a doctor after college and that's what my parents wanted. But then things changed for me and I decided that I wanted to become a professional soccer star.

*What are your hopes for the future of other students coming new to the US?* I know that kids and adults that make to the U.S means the end of their misery. Unless they've gotten family members and cultural connections that they'll miss back at home. I doubt about anyone having an unfortunate matter of coming here.

*What are your hopes for the school system?* I do not have any hopes or expectations for anybody in this school. And I know that I'm on the right track to success.

## **“I Understand You, but I am Unable to Respond”: A Call to Action for Vocabulary Instruction**

Laura Smith-Hill, Education Program Coordinator, Lutheran Social Services Center for New Americans and Diana Calvetti-Streleck, Education Program Assistant, Lutheran Social Services Center for New Americans



Every year at the LSS Center for New Americans we facilitate a student body meeting. Our adult English learners have the opportunity to share feedback with Laura as the head of the Education Program. The students sit in groups according to their first language to discuss a few key questions about their learning experience with us.

This year some new feedback stood out to us. When asked to share how we, as instructors, are doing with our language grading in the classroom, “Do you understand what is presented to you in the classes?” The Nepali-speaking students from Bhutan, with the use of an interpreter shared, “Our teachers speak in language we understand, but we can’t answer.” The Kunama-speakers from Eritrea shared, “The teachers do their best, but we are unable to respond.” In order to provide comprehensible input through graded language, research suggests that the teacher must slow down and repeat the sentence or phrase exactly, giving the student an opportunity to process the vocabulary and build comprehension. Although a majority of our learners report good comprehension of our classroom “teacher talk” (something we all strive for), the students’ feedback about production continues to challenge us as we discuss strategies to address this need.

Through our collective years as teachers of English learners, the request resounds year after year – students want and need more opportunities to practice speaking English. Our program goal is to provide “student talk time” for 60 – 80% of each oral-focused lesson. English language instruction needs to include communicative practice. However, our instruction also needs to include direct, explicit instruction in the elements required for that communicative practice. One of those elements is the acquisition of vocabulary. We and three other instructors from our program participated in a book group on Keith Folse’s, *Vocabulary Myths: Applying Second Language Research to Classroom Teaching* through a LINCS professional development opportunity (LINCS is the Literacy Information and

Communication System).

Folse clearly establishes the importance of explicit vocabulary instruction. He cites Wilkins (1972), “While without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed.” Folse shares that when ESL students in recent studies were asked how their ESL programs could improve they ranked “more vocabulary development” second only to “more opportunities to speak in class.”

Here are five of the strategies we can glean from Folse’s research.

### **1. High Frequency Words**

Begin by selecting high frequency words and words that are personally relevant to your learners.

### **2. Interactive Learning**

Vocabulary learning needs to be interactive to be effective. Elicit creative and critical thinking about new words (For example: identifying word parts and eliciting their meanings).

### **3. Thematic Sets**

Organize and present vocabulary in thematic sets; trying to incorporate themes that will naturally require the target vocabulary. (Students have 50% more difficulty learning new words presented in semantic clusters compared with thematic sets.)

### **4. Word Lists**

Use word lists including:

- translation pairs, synonyms, simple definitions, and pictures
- 5. First Language Use**
- Encourage students who are literate in another language to jot down translations of new English words.
- Allow students who are more proficient and speak the same language, to help less proficient student get clarification for the meaning of the new vocabulary.
- Teach learners how to use dictionaries.

These are the efforts our teaching team has been making so far using the strategies provided by Folse.

- Introduce new vocabulary with clear pictures for beginning learners.
- Build lessons throughout the class session which allow the students to retrieve and respond with previously learned vocabulary.
- Use a thematic set, which combines color, food, clothes, time and days of the week vocabulary, to create a story about a shopping trip.
- Develop and teach units to train students to use Google translate effectively.
- Allow times during instruction for students to translate new vocabulary into L1.
- Have students create a bilingual dictionary.



- Ask students to highlight unknown words in a text, raising awareness of new vocabulary.
- Collect translations of key vocabulary used throughout the class.

contextually (Liden, Poulos, Vinogradov 2008).

Our teaching team as a professional learning community will continue to put this research into practice as we strive to support our learners' needs and goals. Our goal for next year's survey is to hear our Kunama- speakers, Nepali- speakers and all the other student groups report: "I understand you and I can respond to you, too!"

## Using Learner-Generated Texts in the Emergent Readers Classroom

*Emily Koo*

Learner-generated texts have their roots deep within LEA, or the Language Experience Approach. Coined in 1963 by Ashton-Warner and brought mainstream by Krashen and Terrell in 1983, LEA texts must interest the student and be comprehensible to the student. We use our state competency topics such as health and medical needs, house and apartments, English for school, shopping for food, and transportation as topics for text generation. We have used pictures from our yearly field trip to Pierre, pictures of different ethnic groups going to the market in their countries, and favorite pastimes to draw vocabulary from our learners. Here is one of the pictures and stories we used, showing a family checking in for an appointment.



From this picture, the class generated a story. The focus of LEA and learner-generated texts is not to correct grammatical mistakes, but to make learners comfortable with the vocabulary and the point of the story. Later, after the learners (with the teacher) developed comfort through repeated exposure with the vocabulary, phonics can be introduced

Here is the story the learners generated:

1. in hospital
2. three family
3. son, father, mother
4. baby check up
5. doctor paper
6. looking

This story is very basic, but provides vocabulary that all of the learners understood. From this story, we received plenty of ideas for contextualized, standards-based instruction. We had students sort words, do sequencing activities, discuss other words for family, practice days of the week and time, and look at appointment cards. After each activity, we always re-read the story.

Learner-generated texts can provide teachers with contextualized opportunities that draw on and validate the language our students know and their life experiences. It is very powerful for learners when they see their spoken words written in English on the board. Learners have made steadier progress through extended practice with oral comprehension. Through using learner-generated texts, students were not confused by de-contextualized vocabulary, and could focus on sound/letter recognition, pronunciation, and sequencing. The evidential effectiveness of learner-generated texts and instructor collaboration is an encouragement to learner and teacher alike.

## SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

Dakota TESL provides an opportunity to all members to apply for professional development funds to attend the yearly Dakota TESL conference or other conferences. If you are interested in applying for a scholarship, please contact the Dakota TESL President-Elect.



## Dakota Diversity and Indigenous Values: The Metaphor of *Abomi Sénu Féná*

Mejai B.M. Avoseh



Diversity has become a global phenomenon that connects to globalization at all levels. Diversity has thus become ubiquitous in line with the nature of globalization in the U.S. Hence, educators, administrators, policy makers, politicians, education institutions, Centers, and related social frameworks are all scrambling to showcase diversity.

Whereas diversity is easily managed and subject to manipulation by most of the stakeholders mentioned above (by creating token diversity), it is increasingly becoming a delicate balancing act for educators in classrooms and related learning environments.

The 2015 *Closer Connections Conference* entitled “Dakota Diversity: Educating Tomorrow’s Leaders” elicited several questions in my mind as an individual for who English is a third language. I was for instance, interested in what the conference organizers meant by “Dakota Diversity”. Could Dakota be a reference to a sub-tribe of the Sioux, or their language? I concluded it must mean more than a sub-tribe and their language. Dakota in the conference theme must mean the Dakotas, a reference term for the good people and blessings of the states of North and South Dakota. Dakota diversity is then about the people, about the strength of their common values and the beauty of their differences.

The landscape of the Dakotas has been transformed and continues to be transformed in terms of expanded common values and enriched and attractive difference of peoples and cultures of the world. One of the keynote speakers at the conference- Terry Nebelsick, Superintendent of Huron School District – puts it in colorful language in respect of South Dakota. According to him, “we are going to be a South Dakota (and North Dakota) of many colors and languages.” Available facts and figures indicate that Nebelsick’s Huron School District is a good example and promise of a colorful Dakotas. According to Emily Koo (2015), the following are true of Huron School District:

- 46% of students are minorities

- Students come from 10 countries and nine native languages; and
- About 750 of Huron’s 2,500 students qualify for ESL

What is true of Huron is possibly also true of Sioux Falls, Fargo, Bismarck, and several other districts across the Dakotas. The implication of the reality and promise of diversity is that more people from diverse cultures and values are attracted to the Dakotas. Among this group belong thousands of indigenous people from across the globe in addition to our own American Indian nation and people. The Dakotas are therefore more of globalized communities that embrace “insider” and “outsider” values. The idea of colorful Dakotas compels what I call ‘cultural buffet or potluck’ that requires refining our educational system and practice to be culturally diffuse and sensitive. It requires that we create learning spaces and opportunities that connect to the meaning-making schemes of individuals from indigenous backgrounds. Most of our indigenous population comes from oral traditions where learning is a holistic process that relies heavily on Orality. Dr. Jill Watson (2015) acknowledged this fact in her erudite keynote address at the 2015 conference. According to her, “people who come from Orality...tend to have transfixed listening, oration, and memorization.” She went on to argue that we can give such people (from indigenous mindsets) “a better future if we give them educational opportunities that mean something to them.” Giving students from indigenous world views educational opportunities that connect to their essence requires a delicate balance of western and indigenous worldviews in learning environments in the Dakotas. It is especially a challenging balance for teachers. I use the metaphor of *Abomi Sénu Féná* (to retain water in one’s mouth and blow air at the same time without spilling the water) to paint the picture of the complexity of diversity for teachers and educators especially in the Dakotas. The challenge for teachers and educators is a juxtaposition of the linear world view of the West with the holistic/circular mindset of the indigenous world without diluting their essence. I have argued in several other forums that the two worlds are not necessarily mutually exclusive (Avoseh 2013, 2011, & 2008). I have and I here argue for a universal framework for establishing symmetry between the linear and the holistic in such a way that all learners find something attractive in the intellectual buffet that follows. I envisage a humanistic learning space that uses the wheels of language, culture, character, applied education, and quality content that help students and teachers to recognize, affirm, and take pride in their historical and cultural distinctiveness. The universal framework envisaged above puts teachers in *Abomi Sénu Féná* situations. They (teachers) should be supported and equipped with unique, authentic, and empowering professional development experiences. This is, in my view, a way of enriching Dakota diversity and creating closer connections between peoples and cultures.

## Running Dictations: An Adaptable Activity for the Language Classroom

Tara Arntsen



Last year, I had the opportunity to present a session titled *Versatile ESL Activities – Learning English Should be fun!* at the Dakota TESL Closer Connections Conference in Sioux Falls and as I considered what to write about for the newsletter, I realized that a very adaptable, multi-skill, low-resource, no-tech activity from that session would be perfect for those of you who could not attend the conference, attended a different session during that time slot, or simply forgot about it after all this time. Running Dictations is all that, an exceptionally versatile activity appropriate for just about every age or skill level.

To prepare for Running Dictations, simply find two appropriate reading passages. For low level students, this

might mean short sentences with high frequency words, whereas for high level students, short academic paragraphs with complex grammar structures and advanced vocabulary might be more suitable. Print out one copy of each in a regular size font, 8-12 perhaps, and plan to display them in the classroom somehow once the activity gets underway. I usually just tape them to the board.

In class, put students into pairs with a Student A and a Student B and explain the activity. Student A is the runner; Student B the writer. Student A's job is to run to wherever you have displayed the first passage, read it, run back to where Student B is sitting, and dictate it. Student B's job is to listen to Student A and write down what he or she says. Student A can run back and forth as many times as is necessary for Student B to complete the passage accurately. It is a race, so the first students to finish 'win' and should submit their work for approval. Then, the roles are reversed, the second passage posted, and the whole thing repeated.

A word of caution, in an effort to finish more quickly, students might try a variety of tactics including taking a picture of the passage or loudly dictating from wherever the passage is located. Neither these nor other 'cheating' strategies are

allowed. This is also why a regular font size is required so students cannot simply read the passage from their seats.

Depending on your class, you might want to change this format slightly. You could do three rounds and include a checker or editor as an additional role. You could focus on sequencing sentences by cutting the passages up and posting sentences randomly throughout the room so that students have to dictate and also order the material. Another option is to have comprehension questions posted with the passage and ask runners to dictate just the answers which could lead to a bit more jockeying for space near where the reading is posted and greater secrecy of answers.

However you choose to do this with your students, Running Dictations is an engaging, high-energy activity that works well in all sorts of classrooms and requires very little in terms of preparation time and materials. In the different roles, students practice reading, writing, listening, and speaking and have the opportunity to collaborate in their teams while also competing with others in their class. Try it out with your students and see what they think!

## In Their Shoes: Helping Teacher Candidates Understand ELs

Karen J Kindle, EDD

The University of South Dakota



The number of students classified as English Learners (ELs) continues to grow in the Dakotas and surrounding states, and the need for teachers qualified to support

these students continues to grow as well. The changing demographics present a challenge to teacher educators at universities in the region as they prepare candidates to be effective teachers in increasingly diverse classrooms. Many teacher candidates grew up in small, rural towns and have had little exposure to cultural and linguistic diversity. They may have misconceptions about the challenges faced by ELs as they enter our schools. Students in my *Teaching English as New Language* class begin to think more deeply about these challenges by spending an hour in their shoes.

To create an activity that would position our teacher candidates as ELLs, I enlisted the aid of one of our international graduate students, Yi-Ching Liang. The

lesson was designed with two goals in mind: 1) to develop understanding and empathy for what ELs experience, and 2) to demonstrate how a few simple instructional strategies can increase comprehension.

The lesson was structured in two parts with debriefing occurring after each segment. In the first part, Yi-Ching communicated with the students only in Chinese and deliberately avoided using strategies that would aid in comprehension. She taught the students the words to a traditional Chinese children's song, *Rock, Paper, Scissors*. The text was on displayed on a power point and flashcards were prepared. Yi-Ching pointed to the words and read them to the class, motioning for them to echo her. She

then took each word or phrase individually and called on students to “read” the words after her. She was very exacting on pronunciation, causing some nervous laughter, embarrassment, and ultimately frustration, as candidates struggled to match her pronunciation and intonation. Although only 10 minutes in length, candidates later reported that the lesson felt much longer!

During the debriefing, we talked with the candidates about how they felt during the lesson. Words such as *embarrassed*, *frustrated*, *uncomfortable*, *stupid*, and even *angry* were used to describe their emotions. We talked about how they felt when trying to pronounce the words and Yi-Ching constantly corrected their pronunciation. Candidates reported being frustrated, as they couldn’t hear differences between what they were saying and the model. Some indicated that they felt anxious as Yi-Ching would approach them, fearing she would call on them. They looked down, trying to avoid eye contact.

In the second segment of the lesson, Yi-Ching taught the same song again, but this time she made simple changes that aided comprehension. She created slides on the power point with pictures for *rock*, *paper*, *scissors*, *win*, and *lose*. She had the

students bow and shake hands as they said the appropriate words. She had them make gestures for rock, paper, and scissors and they practiced these while saying the words. Yi-Ching showed a video in which children were singing the song and playing the rock, paper, scissors game. Finally, they all stood up and played the game, which included singing the song multiple times. Although she did use a little bit of English (mostly by mistake), she relied on pictures, gestures, and demonstration to make content comprehensible. She did not correct pronunciation or single individuals out. After this segment, we asked the candidates to compare the two lessons in terms of both learning and affect. Candidates reported having fun, and feeling like they were learning something. They felt much more positive toward the experience and felt the teacher cared about their learning.

This activity has proven to be very powerful for the candidates. They are able to experience for themselves, albeit in an artificial environment, a little bit of the emotional strain and cognitive effort associated with being an EL. They were also able to see first-hand how much of a difference a few instructional strategies can make for ELs in the classroom. They will carry this experience with them as they enter the profession, and hopefully will remember how it felt when they spent an hour in their shoes.

***A good teacher can inspire hope, ignite the imagination, and instill a love of learning.***

Brad Henry

### **Opportunities to Advocate for ELs in North and South Dakota**

*Kerri Whipple*



As I write this article, the committee for rulemaking for the Every Student

Succeeds Act has just been chosen from nominations from across the country <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/nonfed-negotiators-20160304.pdf>.

These individuals represent state and local boards of education, tribal leadership, parents and students, teachers and principals, paraprofessionals as well as members from the civil rights and business communities. This committee will help the Department of Education draft and negotiate regulations as we transition from our current Elementary and Secondary Education Act to the new ESSA. These regulations are anticipated

to be published between May and August so that states can start implementing the new law next fall.

In preparation for the new law, you may have some information come across your email from the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction or the South Dakota Department of Education relating to workgroups or stakeholder groups that are starting to meet to shape our new state policies. South Dakota has established at least four groups that will help inform the state on the issues of accountability, school improvement, educator effectiveness and English Learners. North Dakota is



holding regional ESSA workshops in April in West Fargo, Minot and Mandan. These are opportunities to learn more and to provide important feedback about how to create accountability systems for ELs that are meaningful and more fairly hold school accountable for EL achievement and language development.

In the past, EL achievement has been somewhat of an afterthought in accountability systems. Teachers of ELs know that language development does not develop in a linear model – lower is faster, higher is slower. And yet, all of our accountability has been all or nothing with no attention to where a student started on their learning path. It is time that we use our voices and share our knowledge of language development growth and it's relation to academic achievement to ensure that the accountability systems that are created for ELs are fairer for our students and our schools.

One of the changes in ESSA will allow for ELs who have exited to be counted in the EL subgroup for up to four years (currently they are allowed to be counted for up to two years). This could very positively impact our subgroup since we know that students who are more proficient in English are more likely to score proficiently on the state academic achievement assessment. You may want to study your local school data to see what kind of impact this would make on your EL subgroup. Newly arrived ELs can still be excluded from the administration of the Reading/Language Arts Smarter Balanced assessment. However, states can also choose to administer the Reading/Language Arts Smarter Balanced assessment during the student's first year in US schools, then in the second year, they can use the student's growth in the determinations. This may help schools with newly arrived ELs to get more credit for the awesome gains that ELs make in their academic achievement knowledge during their first two years in school. Again, you may want to sit down and study your local data to see how this

change might impact accountability for your EL subgroup.

ESSA will require that states determine long-term goals and interim measures of progress for increases in the percentage of ELs who make progress in achieving English proficiency. Some of you may remember that as members of the ASSETS project, which led to the creation of ACCESS 2.0, we agreed to find a common entry and exit criteria across our consortium. As WIDA works to help us understand our new assessment, we will need to work within our states to determine how changing the entry and exit criteria will affect this requirement to set "long-term goals" and "interim measures of progress." This requirement is similar to AMAOs 1 and 2 from the former law that measured the percentage of students growing in their language proficiency and attaining proficiency in English. States will need to define "progress" using the ACCESS 2.0 assessment results for at least ELs in grades 3-8 and once in high school. The Council of Chief State School Officers has put together an excellent resource explaining these changes and posing questions for states to consider:

<http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2016/ESSA/CCSSOResourceonESSAELLso2.23.2016.pdf>

Oh, one last thing to celebrate in the new law and maybe you've already noticed. Our acronym lost an "L" and we are finally free of the word "Limited" in our federal EL definition. You will soon start to see publications phasing out the Limited English Proficient (LEP) acronym and trading it for the new "EL" for English Learner. As you can see by the acronym used in this article, some of us have already begun.

I encourage you to find out more about how your state will provide opportunities for input regarding ELs in the roll out of ESSA, especially those related to accountability. Please get involved! Put together a team to look at how these changes may impact your school, schedule a call with your

professional network to discuss these changes, apply to serve on statewide committees and provide feedback during public comment periods to show that the EL professional community wants to be involved in shaping this new set of regulations from the beginning of the process, rather than brought in to consult on the changes an afterthought.

## DAKOTA TESL LEADERSHIP

President: Emily Koo, Lincoln High School, Sioux Falls School District

President-Elect: Kerri Whipple, South East Education Cooperative

Secretary: Ruthie Wienk, South Dakota State University

Treasurer: Tara Arntsen, Northern State University

Elementary Ed. Rep: Dr. Karen Kindle, University of South Dakota

Secondary Ed. Rep: Deb Harrison, Moorcraft High School, Moorcraft WY

Hutterite Rep: Donna Duba, Platte-Geddes School District

Native American Rep: *vacant*

Migrant Ed. Rep: Brenda Palsma-Teske, Watertown School District

Adult Ed. Rep: Amy Franz, Fargo Adult Learning Center

Higher Ed. Rep: Dr. Nathan Ziegler, South Dakota State University

## Helping Hands

Rebecca Andvik



With the increasing growth in the English Language Learner population in the past three years, alternate avenues were sought to support these students in the classroom. Dickinson Public Schools English Language Learner program decided to synergize and build a mentoring plan between secondary school's upper class students and the ELL children district wide. Still in its infancy stage, a pilot program started October, 2014. The major goal of the high school ELL/Bilingual Aide program is to provide high school junior and seniors in foreign language courses and bilingual students the opportunity to give direct tutoring assistance to elementary, middle, and high school ELL students across the district under a supervising and coordinating teacher. Aides focus on tutoring students in speaking, reading, and writing. They also serve as role models, helping and encouraging students on their work.

This tutoring program serves dual purposes as it gives high school students the ability to serve Dickinson Public School's English Language Learner population, and gives ELL students one on one language support. The junior and senior students at Dickinson High School have the opportunity to receive one elective credit per quarter as an ELL/Bilingual Aide.

This year, the ELL tutoring program started with two bilingual aides. The aides chose to assist our elementary students. They both were eager to help translate and mentor Spanish speaking students. One student, an ELL student herself, shared some of her experiences. She states, "During almost two months I was student aide, I helped Mrs. Andvik in two schools Prairie Rose and Lincoln during the fourth hour. I helped a lot of kids, at the beginning it was hard because, some students don't speak Spanish and it was pretty hard to explain the meaning of some words in English, when they didn't have an idea about the word. I helped a lot kids to learn English in an easy way and they taught me a lot things too! Reading books, playing games, talking about their culture, was an easy way for them to learn the language." This experience has impacted her also as she helps her younger sister with English at home. She adds, "The experience was challenging and enjoyable, but at the same time it was educational. As much as I taught the students they taught me more things, I never imagined."

An ELL/Bilingual volunteer program is also budding from this program. Two third year Spanish students served as volunteers in the elementary schools. Both students wished to maintain and practice what was learned in their foreign language class. One student shared the important skills he has learned. "Patience, foreign language, and people skills... I will apply all three to both colleges and my future." This student also responded to what he liked best about the program was, "The ability to see the progress of the student I have helped." Both volunteers found it rewarding when students succeeded in completing tasks and assignments in English with their assistance.

The ELL program for Dickinson Public Schools is determined to continue building off the experiences of these students in order to mold a strong mentoring group. Plans for next year's program intend to coordinate with the foreign language department to grow the student aide/volunteer team.

One final inspiration from a student, "In the United States the majority of the Latin people don't speak English and helping them was one of the best things I did ever." Providing individualized attention and identifying cultural and social challenges validates that these young adults are an integral in the process of learning the English language. Hand in hand, Dickinson High School students will equip young minds with language acquisition skills and confidence thus building language proficiency.

***The task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles, but to irrigate deserts.***

C.S. Lewis

## Content Writing Instruction for Emergent English Learners

Andraya Peterson

New cultural expectations and language barriers pose a challenge for English learners. Students need to be engaged in appropriate grade level academic activities--reading, writing, science, social studies, and math while using current technology. They need to be actively using the language and processes outlined in content area standards through purposeful content. "Information that is embedded in context allows ELs to understand and complete more cognitively demanding tasks". However, significant scaffolds need to be in place for students to begin to connect, apply, and use content knowledge and English speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills.

Writing should begin as soon as ELLs enter the classroom. For the newest of students, writing might be as simple as copying labels onto a picture or simple sentences generated by the teacher or other students. Students with a bit more experience in writing might be using a labeled picture and a sentence frame to construct sentences about a topic. Other students might choose to use the sentence frames as well as compose unique sentences of their own. Regardless of writing proficiency, all students benefit from prewriting activities that build background on their topic, give academic vocabulary words accompanied by visuals, and develop language structures.

### Importance of Prewriting

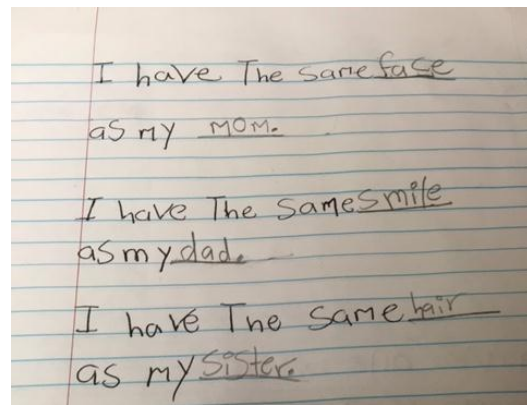
The most valuable activities build background knowledge about a specific topic, introduce English vocabulary words, and expose the language structures students can use to write about the topic. One popular prewriting activity is reading a picture book. Picture books have visuals students can connect to without language. Another common prewriting activity is creating word lists. Giving students words to use in their writing, especially content specific words, allows them to start thinking how to use those words in their writing. A word list, especially with accompanying visuals, eases the anxiety of spelling important words correctly.



An adaptation of the word list is using an interactive, shared picture that contains many vocabulary words students might want to use in their writing. A picture like this could be found in a text read by the class or one that encompasses the concepts of the content being taught. The picture allows students to see the

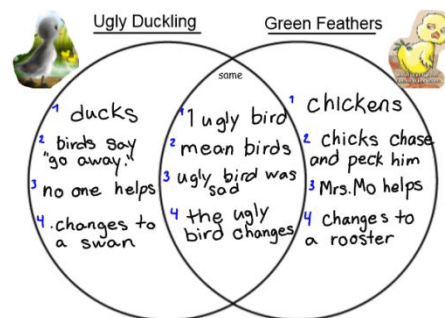
interaction of the vocabulary words. The concrete and common stimuli of the picture allows the teacher specific and common examples to use in discussions about writing informative sentences and paragraphs, and gives ample opportunities for metacognitive activates on forming and shaping ideas.

For some of the most beginning writers, a sentence frame can also be helpful in building writing success. The sentence frame allows students to use vocabulary words from the word lists or shared picture with labels. It also exposes students to common sight words, and builds concepts of print. Most students in need of a sentence frame only verbally communicate with single words. The sentence frame teaches students the English syntax that accompanies their idea. With a bit a practice and support from a teacher, students can also begin to read their writing and practice using sentences as a form of communication.



### Graphic Organizers

The graphic organizer could be filled out as a whole group, small group, or independently. Graphic organizers need to use content vocabulary and be organized so students can compose sentences from it. Students need instruction on how to transfer ideas from a graphic organizer into complete sentences as well as modeled examples from the teacher.



All of these prewriting exercises can be effective scaffolds for ELLs but they must also fit into a well-executed teaching and learning cycle. "Using an instructional framework that includes explicit teaching, modeling, practice opportunities with others, and expectations for independent application".

Teachers need to give instruction, whether it is through a



discussion, reading a text, an experiment, or shared experience, about the topic or content to build students background and teach the vocabulary. During instruction is where you might see the group labeling a shared picture. Next, they need to see or experience a model. A model could be the teacher writing her own thinking, the thinking of other students, or showing how to use a sentence frame. Students then need the opportunity to practice with some support. This might be when the group fills out a graphic organizer together or writes some sentences together. Last, students are given the opportunity to apply what they have learned, seen, and practiced independently. They still use the scaffolds generated during the prewriting phase, such as word lists, pictures, graphic organizers and sentence frames. When done well, each of these phases in the teaching and learning cycle will flow together allowing students to become more and more confident in their writing and ideas in English over the course of the lesson.

\*Abridged from original source. For a complete list of references and original citations, please contact author.

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**2017 TESOL International Convention  
and English Language Expo**

**March 21-27 2017**

**Seattle, WA**

For more information, please visit  
<http://www.tesol.org>

**Juicy Text! Digging into Academic Language with our ELLs**



*Missy Slaathaug  
ELL Instructor, Pierre SD  
Instructor, UND Master's in  
ELL Education Online  
Program*

I studied in France my junior year in college, as a French major, and towards the end of my time there I remember trying to read a sign in a restaurant window and being appalled that I could not

understand it. Even worse, I understood most of the words, at least their literal meaning, but I had no idea at all what message this sign was trying to convey. Why was the meaning so inaccessible to me? Was it idioms? Was it different usage in this context for these words? Was it complicated syntax? Or all of the above? I will never know, but I do know that it made me question my proficiency in French. I was starting to feel pretty good about my blossoming mastery of this beautiful language; this gave me pause and make me think again.

Now, years later, working with several ELLs here in my small SD

town, I have seen something similar happen with these learners. When we look at a longer sentence in their content texts, they may know all the words separately, (or at least most of them) but the overall meaning is lost on them. The complicated academic language is their undoing.

Let's review a bit. You no doubt remember BICS and CALP – the

two kinds of proficiencies in a second language. BICS is Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills - social, relaxed, informal language that develops for the most part in a year or two. Playground language, one elementary school teacher acquaintance called it. (My proficiency in French was probably just a good solid than BICS.) CALP is Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency, and it takes longer to develop, sometimes as long as 5 – 7 years. This is the more formal language of school texts, school projects, formal presentations, and for the most part, post-secondary study. This is much, much harder.

Here's a quick look at some of the features of academic language:

- longer sentences with complex grammar
- More noun clauses, sometimes quite long, and in different places (as subjects, descriptive phrases interjected into the middle of sentences, objects, at the ends of sentences)
- More adjective and adverb clauses
- Passive voice
- Vocabulary that may be more abstract, more content specific, more technical, and/or more formal
- Use of idioms, inferential language, reliance on background readings and shared cultural knowledge and deeper less common meanings of common words
- Transition words showing complex relationship between abstract ideas (more complex rhetorical patterns)
- Dense complex sentences that are often packed with information – the long sentences themselves sometimes give much of the background and context needed to comprehend. It is a lot to process.
- Low level of contextualization. You may not know exactly where the next idea is going, unlike informal communication that relies on context clues and body language and negotiated meaning.

Many of these features and structures are ONLY found in informational texts. They are simply not found in spoken everyday language. There are stories of minority students at big Ivy League schools who spend the first semester wondering what language everyone is speaking in their classes, and why can't they understand it.

Academic language is the language of power and the language of success in our schools and our society. The socio-linguist in me likes to remember that concept when I am reflecting on this. It's all about power and money . . . and our ELLs need access to this language in our society and we need to provide it.

There is a great webinar on Common Core and ELLS done in 2013 by Judy Elliott, former Chief Academic Officer, Los Angeles Unified School District, Lily Wong Fillmore, University of California, Berkeley, and Margarita Calderón, Professor Emerita, Johns Hopkins University. You can find it on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2yvpSDulofc>

Wong-Fillmore's section from around minute 44 to 67 was of particular interest to me. She states that academic language

[. . .] is sufficiently different from ordinary spoken language – grammatically, lexically and in how information is packaged up and conveyed – that it is virtually non-interpretable to anyone who knows only the spoken variety of English. It's found mostly in complex written texts, it's learned through literacy and only by interacting with it.

So – I had to do some self-examination. Was I really teaching it? Were we interacting with academic language? All my high school ELLs are functioning in regular content area classes, with adaptation and support. They slog through their texts to the best of their ability. I suspect they mostly rely on teacher PowerPoints to access meaning, to tell you the truth. In my ELD class I work on vocabulary development and reading skills and advanced grammar, which is all reflective of some aspects of academic language, but I wasn't really studying complex sentence structure as well.

In the above webinar, Wong-Fillmore recommends this instructional activity:

- Each day teachers select a sentence or two from the text students are reading to feature in an instructional conversation they conduct with the students.
- Language is the primary focus of the conversation which begins with a read-aloud of the focal sentences.
- Teacher focuses attention on the parts of the sentence, asking questions to invite students to figure out the meaning conveyed by each part. Thus, kids discover how meaning maps onto structure.

You can find further information in this PDF/slide show of a presentation on her ideas:

[http://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/25/ELA\\_retreat-Wong%20Fillmorepart2.pdf](http://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/25/ELA_retreat-Wong%20Fillmorepart2.pdf)

The entire PDF is amazing, but look at slide 27 for some truly inspiring examples. (By the way, a big thank-you to Kerri Whipple for connecting me with these resources from Wong-Fillmore).

OK, I am game. I love grammar and complex sentences; let's do this (just like those commercials where lots of remodeling gets done by those energetic homeowners.) A juicy sentence a day. I decided to dissect a long complex academic sentence each class period. I started leafing through some of their content area texts to pull sentences to work on, and I didn't have to look hard. These are pulled from freshman physical science, biology and health /wellness texts.

I will admit that at first I fell into the trap of just explaining the complex meaning and how I got there. I wasn't allowing enough response time and I was too eager to just explain. I had a sort of "isn't this so much fun" kind of thing going, as I got on a bit of a grammar high and dug into the rules to explain how this sentence could even exist. This was not the right approach, and even though I was having fun, I knew we were not going in the right direction.

Wong-Fillmore again, from slide 11 of the PDF:

**Instructional conversations work only if the conversations really are conversations.**

**They do NOT if teachers just tell student how language works.**

Hmmmm – that was directed squarely at me. OK - So what do teachers do? How do they prepare for this "conversation" about the juicy text?

In slide 22 she explains:

**They decide in advance how to break the sentence up for discussion, copy it onto chart paper.**

**They prepare conversational starters to focus the children's attention on each part in turn.**

OK, once again, I can do that. Here are some juicy sentences and the starters I prepared:

*A condition in which lactase, an enzyme that breaks down the milk sugar present in the cells of the small intestine, is missing is called lactase deficiency.*

- The main sentence is **A condition is called lactase deficiency.**
- What is lactase?
- Where do you find the milk sugar?
- What is it called when this lactase is missing?

*The oxygen needed for cellular respiration is in the air or water that is surrounding the organism.*

- The main subject and verb are: **The oxygen is**
- Where is the oxygen?
- Where is the air or water?
- What do you need this oxygen for?
- How would you complete the sentence if you started it with:

In the air or water that is surrounding the organism, you will find \_\_\_\_\_

This next example contains two sentences, with some interesting pronoun reference:

*Although the compass allowed a sailor to maintain an accurate course, it did nothing to tell him where he actually was. For this, a frame of reference was needed, and the one adopted was the system of latitude and longitude.*

- What was good about the compass? What could a sailor do with a compass?
- What information didn't the compass tell him?
- What does *this* mean in the phrase *For this*?
- What does *the one* refer to in the phrase *the one adopted*?
- Who adopted this system of latitude? Do we know exactly? Is it important that we know? (we had just finished studying passive voice in the ELD class, so I wanted to point this out.)
- If you took out **Although** and used but – how would you re-write it the first sentence?

*An eating disorder in which a person starves his or her body and weighs 15% or more below the healthful weight for his or her age or gender is called anorexia nervosa.*

- The main sentence is: **An eating disorder is called anorexia nervosa.**
- What does the person do?
- What is the result of that action?
- What two verbs are used with person as a subject? (OK, this one might be too grammar heavy.)
- How much does the person weigh?
- Why do they say both *his* and *her*?

*A chloroplast, shown in Figure 5, captures energy from sunlight and changes it to a form of energy cells can use in making food.*

- The main sentence is: **The chloroplast captures energy and changes it.**
- Where does the chloroplast capture the energy from?
- What does it change this energy into?
- What do the cells use this new form of energy for?

Juicy sentence unpacking has been an extremely useful classroom activity. Sometimes I write the juicy sentence on my laptop in huge font and then when we dissect it, I use highlighting in different colors to show the connection between the meaning we write out and the original text. Often the first thing I will do is to ask them to read the sentence and then tell me what percent they feel they understand – on a scale of 0 – 100%. Usually they

answer about 60 or so. After we explain unfamiliar vocabulary and unpack it, they are at 100%.

Occasionally I still get carried away and excited when grammar patterns we have been studying in the ELD class – passive voice, noun clauses, double comparatives – show up in the text and I get going on the grammar and their eyes glaze over . . . but I am getting better at sticking to the plan at hand. And you know what? They are getting better – slowly but surely – at academic language. Juicy text! It's the way to go.

## GET INVOLVED WITH DAKOTA TESL

One of the biggest benefits of being a member of Dakota TESL is the opportunity to expand your network and make a difference in the community of ELL professionals and community stakeholders. There are several opportunities to get involved:

- Attend the annual Dakota TESL board meeting following sessions on Wednesday, November 9<sup>th</sup> at the 2016 Dakota TESL conference. Bonus: there's always yummy hors d'oeuvres. Can't make it to Fargo? Contact Emily Koo for teleconferencing options.
- Participate in the conference planning committees. Conference chair to day-of conference helper, there are plenty of roles available!
- Join the Dakota TESL leadership board. We're always looking for officers from a variety of interest areas, (elementary, secondary, adult ed, higher ed, migrant ed, Hutterite ed, Native American ed, and TESOL rep.)
- Help with the newsletter! It's big undertaking and help is always welcome.
- Donate! Enough said.

Please direct questions to Emily Koo at [Emily.Koo@k12.sd.us](mailto:Emily.Koo@k12.sd.us) or visit [www.dakotatesl.com](http://www.dakotatesl.com)



## **Teaching One Another: Pairing ESL University Students and Pre-Service Teachers**

*Heidi Sackreiter*



For years, I have assisted prospective teachers in learning valuable methods for teaching children and adolescents. An important topic in these methods courses was instruction for English Language Learners. These future educators needed to know how to provide appropriate and engaging instruction for children who could not read or speak fluently.

Recently, I have participated in a new field of education. I have been fortunate to teach ESL courses to International students hoping to eventually start general university coursework. While I have worked with young ESL students in the past, teaching adults to improve their literacy confidence and skills was a new and eye-opening endeavor. One goal I had was to help these students increase their comfort and enjoyment in university-level courses and around native-speaking students. I also was intrigued by the idea of bringing together my love of teacher education and my new interest in ESL instruction.

Encouraging my teacher education students to spend time with ESL students could be beneficial. Even though they all agreed that creating instruction to accommodate language and cultural needs was necessary in almost any learning environment, some of my teacher education students had little specific knowledge on how to do so. And very few of them had taught children or adolescents from other countries.

Last semester, I taught K-8 Social Science Methods to education students pursuing elementary certification through a cooperative program with two other universities. That same semester, I also taught an ESL course about American Culture. My ESL students were interested to know much more about American values, diversity, and history. My teacher education students were preparing to implement formal lessons and activities focused on South Dakota content standards. This was a great time to bring these students together. Typically my teacher education students present their social studies instruction plans (or mini-lessons) to their fellow classmates. This fall, my ESL students were also in the audience for these mini-lessons. The topics ranged from South Dakota history and culture to American holidays, forms of government, and civic ideals, and my ESL students were able to gain some new ideas and understandings as a result of their participation in the mini-lessons. They also seemed to enjoy talking with the teacher education students as they worked

together in small groups.

My teacher education students were strongly encouraged to consider diversity strategies and accommodations as they planned their instruction. In particular, they were required to consider how they might support ESL students. This was an important learning opportunity because many of the teacher education students were concerned about teaching ESL students in the future, worried about how they will make ESL students feel comfortable and how to best support them and teach in a way that is not too difficult or frustrating. The chance to really think about strategies for ESL students and being able to apply those strategies with a real audience of learners was quite helpful and interesting to many of the teacher education students.

Perhaps one of the best outcomes of this collaboration was the inspiration it provided to both groups of students. Even though the teacher education students were nervous about teaching ESL students, a few were surprised that it was not as challenging as they anticipated. It increased their awareness of ways to help diverse students in their future classrooms. And for the ESL students, their time spent with the teacher education students increased their motivation to improve their English speaking abilities. As one ESL student commented following the experience, "I liked this a lot. It "passioned" me to want to speak like them (the teacher education students) in front of people". And because both groups of students are usually in classes with the same classmates, learning with new people was refreshing. Hopefully more cooperative activities for ESL students and general university students will continue in the future so all students can learn more about the diversity that surrounds them. This experience showed that students can teach one another other, and themselves, important ideas through collaborative events.

***The teacher who is indeed wise does not bid you to enter the house of his wisdom but rather leads you to the threshold of your mind.***

**Khalil Gibram**

## Emotions and ESL students

*Joseph Slick*



The students in our ESL classes are complex and extraordinary human beings with rich and diverse emotions. Their human emotions embody their ESL classroom experiences on a daily basis. Although they may have different sounding names, their relationships and emotions to ESL, to their classmates, and to the teachers generate their classroom emotional climate. Some students respond positively. These students embody the human experience to have positive emotions in spite of the difficulties they may be facing. Other students are more cautious. They prefer to let others speak or ask questions. Finally, other students embody the human experience to have negative emotions because of the difficulties they may be facing. The range of these emotions in class creates the emotional climate that is particular to every group of students in their classroom.

English as a Second Language encompasses and embodies the great range and multiplicity of human emotions. Teachers and students, as human beings, carry their personal emotions in unique ways, shaped by their personal experiences of prosperity, poverty, peace, war, abuse, peace and love. These emotions are performed/enacted/hidden and result in an emotional classroom climate. As human beings participating in complex relationships, ESL students, and their teachers, recognize that emotions affect learning in all classroom moments. Yet, to be human is to move our way through the power of emotions to have the possibility to create classrooms that emphasize and respect human relationships.

However, students are people who can respond emotionally in multiple ways. Many times, students navigate their emotions in response to their classmates' emotions. Although some may think that grades are the principal recognition for students, students may understand that grades are secondary to their own human and cultural desire to be part of a group or community. In my research in Saudi Arabia, ESL students may emphasize that being part of a group, acting in emotional resonance with the group, and maintaining the emotional balance necessary for group harmony is more important than good grades. Furthermore, their relationships can be based on performing in and with the emotional climate of the group.

I would like to offer three different examples of this type of group emotional resonance. In my experience, there is generally a student who the other learners look up to; I call this learner a comedian. The comedian is the leader of the classroom. Following this, there are three possible variations in which the comedian can affect the emotional climate of the classroom. The

first example is when the comedian has a positive emotional resonance. This class has possibility to be a good learning classroom, because the comedian acts and becomes as the emotional barometer for the class. Additionally, the spotlight is on the comedian, thus making the class safe for the other students who don't want the spotlight. Then, it is important that the teacher flow in and with this student emotional climate.

The second example is when the comedian has a negative emotional resonance. This comedian is not interested in following the lesson plans, but wants the spotlight to use language and content for popularity purposes not connected to achievement. This class has possibility to be a poor learning classroom, because the comedian, as the emotional barometer, is not interested in a "good grade". As a result, the other students in the class, including the students who get A's in other classes, "dumb down" to the comedian's grade level to have emotional affiliation. In this case, it is important for the teacher to understand this type of emotional climate, and exercise patience with this comedian and class. The teacher will have to accept the possibility that each lesson may not receive the practice and attention the language and content merit.

The third example is when there are several comedians in one group. This creates competitive sub-groups, with several comedians. This can be a negative emotional climate in which competition for the spotlight overrides everything else. There are many class leaders, and each sub-group emotionally connects to a single leader, in competition against the other groups, which can create emotional dissonance. In this case, the teacher will have to carefully navigate these differing emotions. The teacher will also need to be very flexible in following lesson plans, because the negative emotions may create unwanted classroom management issues.

These three comedian classrooms can help teachers make sense of their students. Looking at students as people can enable teachers to share and understand the complexity of the emotional climates in classrooms. As teachers, we must be aware that not all students feel the same way about learning. In fact, it is possible that some students are more interested in good relationships with their classmates than in receiving good grades. For this reason, it is important for teachers to honor these emotions and to respect ESL students as human beings. This may help to build trust and generate rich teaching and learning opportunities.

***Education is the most powerful  
weapon you can use to change the  
world.***

Nelson Mandela