



# HAWAI'I TEACHERS OF ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

## THE WORD - VOLUME 21 ISSUE 2

### Inside this issue:

Mentoring adds New Life to a Veteran Teacher	1,2,3
Teaching Academic ESL Writing Online Based on the Moodle and the ETS's Criterion	1,10,11,12,13
O-NET Examination in Thailand	2,5,6
Taking it to the Streets: Strategies to Encourage English Use Out of Class	3,4,8,9
How Can We Design an Ideal Language Class Based on Teaching Meth-	4,7,16
Practical Workshop of the 2011-2012 Hawai'i TESOL Year	6,12
Retrograde Recalibration	8
Chinese Students Need to Break Down the Language Wall	9,10,11
Apps for Language Learners	14,15,18
Beyond CDs: Learning another Language with Gusto!	16,19
"This Worst Class EVER taken!!!": Preparing Students for Critical Evaluations	17,20,21
K-12 News: To Care or Not to Care? One Educator's Look at the DOE's Teacher Evaluation Tool Under Current Considera-	17,22,24
Background Knowledge: Essence of Understand-	19,23,25,26
HITESOL Executive Committee	20
HITESOL Travel Grants	23
Technology: Friend of Foe?	24,25,27
Sister Affiliate: TESOL Ukraine	26
Not a Member of HITE-SOL?	28
Article Submission Guidelines: <i>The Word</i>	28

### Mentoring adds New Life to a Veteran Teacher By Lisa Kawai

My heart is beating fast, and my hands are sweaty. I thought this would go away after a while. But no, every term it's the same. It doesn't matter how many years I have been teaching; I always get nervous before a new class starts, but it has gotten easier as I have become more experienced. In about two weeks or so, I begin to settle down, and the students start to feel comfortable with the class as well. We are getting into full swing. Many experienced teachers that I have spoken with tell me they feel the same way.

Having taught a class before does help to settle me faster, but it still leaves me with the thoughts of how to make the class better than last time, and how to engage the students more this time. Perusing various textbooks, speak-

ing with colleagues, and going to workshops and conferences, are certainly good ways of getting new ideas. However, another source of fresh ideas and one that surprised me at first, has been working with student teachers.

I know, I know. "A student teacher—ugh, extra work." Well, yes and no. Yes, you do have to read their lesson plans and assessments ahead of time, and yes, you do have to spend time with them giving them feedback. And once in a while, you do have to help repair lessons that have not worked as well as planned, but you do get to sit back, relax for a little while and let someone else take the class for you. You get the chance to view the students interacting with each other and the teacher from a new perspective. Most impor-

(Continued on page 2.)



### Teaching Academic ESL Writing Online Based on the Moodle and the ETS's Criterion By Moonyoung Park & Aysel Saricaoglu

Advances in computer technology have provided English as a Second Language writing instructors with a set of tools aimed at improving and expediting essay grading. Automated writing evaluation (AWE) programs, one of which is the ETS's Criterion, have been heralded as potential applications that would permit instructors to focus on higher level writing instruction, while providing automatic feedback for the errors of grammar, usage, mechanics,

and style (Chen & Cheng, 2008). The underlying theory for the use of AWE programs in writing classes is formative assessment in which students can get feedback through each step of their writing process (Tuttle, 2010).

As seen, the reason why we have decided to integrate the Criterion into our web-based unit is the formative assessment feature. Founded on a web-based learning environment (Moodle), we created an online writing class to

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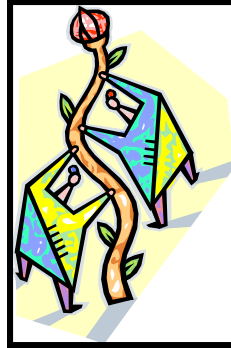
## Mentoring . . . (cont.)

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tantly, you get to see someone else in action over a long period of time. It is truly amazing how informative that can be and helpful to your own teaching.

I have worked with student teachers now for about seven years, and I find that it helps me be a better teacher. For one thing, having a student teacher helps me to focus on my own teaching. I cannot very well tell someone else how to plan group work, prepare for technology failures, or lessen teacher talk when I do not do it myself. As I watch how the students interact with the student teacher, I become more aware of what I do and the techniques and strategies I use. I try to model the best behavior I know. I pay more attention to my own teaching and to what I say and how I say it. I try to recall all of the lessons learned at university while studying to be an EFL/ESL instructor.

I have been out of school for a while, so having a student teacher is one way I can stay current with the field. Since the student teachers have just gone through many classes on theory and methodology, they have interesting techniques and activities fresh in mind. I invite them to



use my classroom as a place to test those techniques, particularly the ones that they are most enthusiastic about. Over the years, they have had some very interesting ideas, many of which I still use today. They have brought new life to me and my teaching.

Between my improved self-monitoring and the new ideas I have learned, having a student teacher has been a rewarding experience. I know that I will continue to mentor student teachers and encourage others to do the same. After all, where would we all be if someone had not accepted us into their classroom when we were novice teachers? Being able to have a motivating and understanding mentor teacher is the best learning experience any new teacher could have. We encourage our students to work cooperatively in the classroom with each other. Shouldn't we be willing to do the same with other teachers? I have always found that when I share my ideas with others and build on the ideas they have given me, the ideas only get better. I know that when asked, I am always willing to give my two cents worth of knowledge, and it helps

(Continued on page 3.)

## O-NET Examination in Thailand By Denduang Boutonglang

In Thailand, the Ordinary National Education Test (O-NET) is used to evaluate K-12 students' academic achievement (3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders). This paper examines some of the test items used for 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in English from five selected schools. The results were compared between schools, and with national results from the academic year 2010. The reliability of the test was determined using the Kuder-Richardson formula 21 (K-R21).

**O-NET Test Background:** The O-NET is a K-12 test created in 2005 by experts who were selected by the National Institute of Educational Testing Service (NIETS) in Thailand. Its aim is to evaluate students' achievement at the end of the academic year as a whole (NIETS, 2010, p.9), including Thai language, Social Studies, Mathematics, English language, Science, Physical Education (PE), Art, and Occupation.

**Contents of O-NET Test (English Subject): Test Items & Response Formats:** According to NIETS, the O-NET (English) 2010 test contained 70 items, with five levels of the difficulty: very easy –10%, somewhat easy –15%, intermediate –60%, difficult –10%, and very difficult –5% (NIETS, 2010). The content of the test included both receptive (true/false, multiple-choice) and productive response items (fill-in). Figure 1 (see p 6) shows one example of the types of test items used. To gain 2 points, students must answer both parts of the items; to find the mistakes, and choose the item.

**Scoring Procedures:** The O-NET test is a criterion-referenced

test (CRT). It is scored based on the analytic approach. Recently, the Minister of Basic Education Department announced that the O-NET scores will be used to apply to all Thai public universities beginning in the 2011 academic year. There are two sets of the O-NET report: overall school scores and individual student scores. The results of the test are announced through the NIETS website every April (NIETS, 2011).

**The O-NET (English) test analysis:** In order to estimate the internal-consistency reliability of the O-NET test, I used the results of English scores of 12<sup>th</sup> graders from five schools in Thailand and calculated the reliability of the test using the Kuder-Richardson formula 21 (K-R21). The results of each school were compared with the national results from the 2009 and 2010 academic years in order to figure out whether the English test is suitable for use in evaluating students in rural schools.



Table 1 (see p 5) is the report of the reliability of the O-NET (English) test of selected schools. Schools 1-4 are located in northeast Thailand, whereas School 5 is located in the capital city of Bangkok. All four rural schools have limitations in the

(Continued on page 5.)

## Taking it to the Streets: Strategies to Encourage English Use Out of Class

### By Jim Mansfield



#### Introduction

The Internet's influence on international communication has meant that the common medium (or lingua franca) is fast becoming some form of English. Learning a

new language, except in a home environment, is daunting, especially for ESL learners. Japanese learners usually study English for 3-6 years, mainly focusing on preparing for entrance examinations through direct translation, long vocabulary lists, and grammar rules. However, even after these many years of study, English learners at the secondary level and above often become frustrated by difficulties in comprehending simple conversations with native English speakers. Thus educators have recognized the need to motivate learners to become proficient English users, but limited weekly class-time does not provide the instruction and practice

necessary to develop the skills at a suitable pace for both educators and learners. Logically, learners need to engage in out-of-class learning (i.e., homework) to expand their learning. Ironically, although they often spend their own resources in a genuine interest in self-improvement by learning English, willing class participants often do not complete homework or perform assignments superficially. Further, learner attitudes, often criticized by educators, fall into either intrinsic motivation or extrinsic motivation either for gratification or promotion but not for knowledge itself. Neither is a motivation by itself, but learners should rather experience both.

#### Problems Affecting Homework Goals

Homework can help learner become aware of their own importance in the learning process. However, instruction should also encourage participation by offering increased opportunities for developing a self-sufficiency to become good learners, capable of assuming managerial roles, and by providing access to new learning models. Preferred learning styles differ, but homework can provide the learner with additional opportunities and freedom to leverage these differences. In addition,

(Continued on page 4.)

## Mentoring . . . (cont.)

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the other teachers to make their classroom experiences better as well.

If anyone is interested in mentoring a student teacher, there are many opportunities available. Students in the several programs on O'ahu need places for both short term and long term projects. Some can be as short as two weeks and others last the whole term. Hawai'i Pacific University needs mentor teachers for student observations and for student teacher placement for both the undergraduate and graduate level students. The University of Hawai'i, Kapi'olani Community College, and Brigham Young University also offer programs in TESOL and need mentor teachers to help offer classrooms for student teachers to work in. The opportunities are endless and as unique as you want to make them. Your help would be appreciated by both the professors and the students alike. I think you will be happy with the experience. I know I have been.

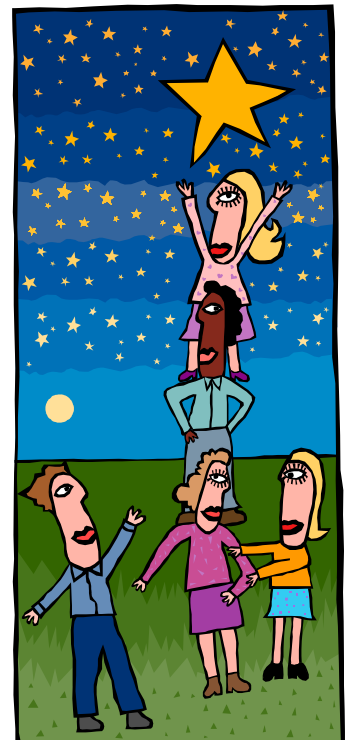
If you are interested in allowing a student teacher into your class, please contact any of the following program coordinators:

- Hawai'i Pacific University: Jean Kirschenmann, Practicum Coordinator, [jkirschen-](mailto:jkirschenmann@hawaii.edu)

[mann@hpu.edu](mailto:mann@hpu.edu)

- University of Hawai'i, Manoa: Priscilla Chen Faucette, Associate Director, English Language Institute (ELI), [faucet@hawaii.edu](mailto:faucet@hawaii.edu)
- Kapi'olani Community College: Shawn Ford, SLT Program Coordinator, [sford@hawaii.edu](mailto:sford@hawaii.edu) / 808-734-9327
- Brigham Young University: Mark James, [mark.james@byuh.edu](mailto:mark.james@byuh.edu)

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## How Can We Design an Ideal Language Class Based on Teaching Methods and Strategies?

By Jihye Kim (Kelly)

Larsen-Freeman (2000) pointed out that “it is important to recognize that methods link thoughts and actions because teaching is not entirely about one or the other” (p. 1). In other words, based on my own beliefs about language teaching, it is important for me as an English teacher to connect my teaching principles with what I do and how I do it in order to help my students in a language classroom. Thus, a teaching method represents a set of “thought-in-action link” (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 3) which implies a teacher’s own philosophy and value. Beyond my own experience of language learning and teaching, as well as, my own teaching beliefs, I will describe teaching methods and strategies that I will pursue for my future ideal class.

Above all, I value Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Content-Based Instruction (CBI) as my teaching philosophy. The most distinctive character of them is that they ultimately aim to develop language learners’ communicative skills in a target lan-

guage through active interaction. I believe that the goal of language learning is communication, and that language teachers should play the role of a facilitator in order to help students communicate in the target



language they are learning, utilizing it successfully to perform various functions. It is true that active conversation with peers livens up the language classroom environment.

In order to help students develop communication skills in a CLT and CBI classroom, I firmly believe that introducing enjoyable activities can accelerate students’ interest in the class, and at the same time, elicit self-motivated language learning. Learn-

ers’ intrinsic motivation is a crucial key which leads the learners into achieving a successful outcome. Therefore, when the students enjoy interesting classroom activities, they will be able to acquire language skills effectively in a joyful classroom environment. Especially, I believe that cooperative and communicative activities can maintain language learners’ attention in a CLT and CBI class by reducing stress.

According to Sloan (1992), “cooperative learning is a set of teaching strategies that puts the learner in the center of the learning process” (p. 1). Thus, cooperative and communicative activities such as role-play, pair interview, dictation, jigsaw, and strip stories can promote a learner-centered class which is the ultimate goal of a CLT and CBI lesson. Learners will be able to reach a satisfactory outcome of their learning as they have fun and interact with peers socially while performing tasks in pairs, as small groups or as a whole class.

What I remember the most about my language learning experience in ESL

(Continued on page 7.)

## Taking it to the Streets . . . (cont.)

(Continued from page 3.)

homework should motivate learners, as motivation (i.e., interest level) helps the development of self-sufficient language users, essential in a world where people continue to communicate, express views, and develop after leaving class. To remove classroom dependency, it is logical to use educator-independent homework, with interesting, compelling activities that motivate learners to achieve their goals. After examining the contradictions and the restrictions of homework typically used in Japanese university English classes, I have found that many text/workbooks commonly focus on surface grammatical structures using primarily fill-in-the-blank exercises with few listening tasks. Learners quickly tire of this deductive work because it requires mere material compliance with no room for the reasoning and testing essential for learning. The educator is still the sole respondent because learners view the educator as the only acceptable and accessible L2 model. Students are unlikely to view other learners or themselves as qualified targets, and this is further compounded by the educators’ tendency of taking homework out of the class for correction, which learners view as a disconnect from their learning center making homework seem subsidiary or pointless. The educator’s authority also raises a problem of evaluation because on enrollment, learners relinquish that responsibility to the educator, depriving themselves of the knowledge of progress, encouragement on performance, and response from more communicative audiences. All of which are necessary for self-reliance. Educators are judges rather than readers of learners’ compositions. Further, many educators consider reading and writing as natural homework choices as they can be performed in isolation, enabling them to place emphasis on speaking and listening during valuable class time. Many learners have other extra-



## O-NET Examination . . . (cont.)

(Continued from page 2)

Statistics	Schools						
	1	2	3	4	5*	6**	7***
N	80	328	10	113	170	354,531	352,805
k	70	70	70	70	70	70	70
Mean	13.85	14.3	14.4	13.9	20.9	19.2	23.98
Mode	16	13.0	14.0	13.0	16	13.0	20.00
Median	14	14.0	15.0	13.0	18	16.0	21.43
Min	6	5	8	5	8	0	0
Max	27	34	18	26	82	100.0	100.0
Range	22	30	11	22	75	101	100.0
S (population)	4.53	4.32	2.94	4.32	10.71	12.0	11.31
S2 (population)	20.52	18.66	8.64	18.66	114.70	144.24	127.92
K-R21 Reliability	0.47	0.40	0.00	0.41	0.88	0.92	0.89

school 1 - 4 = located in the province of northeast Thailand

\* = school located in Bangkok (capital city)

\*\* = national results (Academic year 2010)

\*\*\* = national results (Academic year 2009)



learning environment such as accessible technology, different teaching methods, and no extra tutoring services. In addition, the rural schools use the school 2002 curriculum, whereas the urban school uses the most recent 2008 curriculum.

**Findings:** The results of K-R21 show that the test is suitable for measuring students throughout the country (national rate of 2010=.92). Comparing the results of test consistency between the 2009 and 2010 academic

years, it can be seen that the rate of the 2010 academic year is higher than the 2009 academic year ( $K-R21=.92$ ,  $.89$ , respectively). It can be assumed that the year 2010 English O-NET test is more reliable than the 2009 test. Among the five schools, the reliability rate of School 5 ( $K-R21=.88$ ) is the highest whereas the rate of School 3 ( $K-R21=.00$ ) is the lowest. Schools 1, 2 and 4 also have reliability rates lower than  $.50$ . According to the result, it can be concluded that the test is more reliable for use with students in School 5 than those in School 3.

**Discussion:** There appears to be several problems with the O-NET test which need to be addressed. For instance, there are too many choices for one test item—16 choices each for the items (See figure 1). In the past, the format of each item had only four or five choices. According to Dr. Uthumporn Jamornmarn (Woody Kerd Ma Kuy, 2010), there were widespread complaints by students about the for-

mat of the unfamiliar test items. Further, Dr. Praiwal Pitaksaree, the Executive Director of NIETS, mentioned that the format of the test distracted students while they are taking the test. There are too many unfamiliarly formatted items (Kom Chut Luek, 2011). *Inappropriate Curriculum Use and Lack of Preparation:* The experts created the test following the blueprint of the 2008 curriculum, which benefits those students in School 5, which used the curriculum of 2008 for teaching students. However, the rural schools use the 2002 curriculum. This is a cause for concern because using a different curriculum in classroom teaching does not provide a fair 'starting point' of learning for all students. Hence, the test should be considered as a negative washback for School 3 ( $K-R21=.00$ ).

**Recommendation and Conclusion:** This academic year, the O-NET test showed very low results compared with the previous academic year. None of the overall mean scores for each subject

## O-NET Examination . . . (cont.)

(Continued from page 5.)

reached 50%. Thus, the director of NIETS suggested that school teachers should change their teaching styles to support or improve students' critical thinking skills (Kom Chut Luek, 2011). This O-NET test is reliable for measuring students throughout Thailand, with the highest reliability rate of the test at  $K-R21=.92$ . Though the test is reliable for evaluating students throughout the country, it appears not to be suitable for evaluating students in the rural schools because it is considered too difficult a test in these schools. Other methods for evaluating students such as open-ended questions, interviews, and portfolios may be more suitable and therefore, should be employed.

**Figure 1:** Section 1 Part 2 (B) example:

No. 0 The girl standing with Jane or May returned from France yesterday.

A B C D

- A. 1. A girl stands 2. The girl who may have stood 3. A girl that can be standing 4. The girl to be standing  
 B. 1. among Jane and May 2. Between Jane and May 3. among Jane or May 4. Between Jane or May  
 C. 1. returning 2. to return 3. was returned 4. to be returning  
 D. 1. for 2. Into 3. back 4. In

(NIETS, 2010, p 21)

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## Practical Workshop of the 2011-2012 Hawai'i TESOL Year By Ivan Lui



A practical workshop entitled "Timers in the Classroom" was broadcast via Skype (a free voice over Internet Protocol) by Dr. Perry Christensen on December 1, 2011, from the Brigham Young University, Hawai'i, campus to Hawai'i TESOL members at locations at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, Honolulu Community College, Kapi'olani Community College and Hawai'i Pacific University. Dr. Christensen presented information on how timers could be used effectively in teaching learners of English.

The approximately one and a half hour presentation began with participants checking in, adjusting their headset levels, and writing and drawing on the online "chalkboard." The chalkboard feature was not part of the practical workshop; however, it offered the participants a tool with which to experiment while eating dinner and socializing prior to the presentation. The presentation included methods of using timers for reading and speaking exercises, the potential challenges of timers, and the rationale of using the devices. Participants shared their experiences with and opinions on using timers in a class setting.

Dr. Christensen provided links to free and downloadable timers, as well as pricing for handheld and tabletop timers. The

## Design an Ideal Language Class . . . (cont.)

(Continued from page 4.)

and EFL is that most of my English teachers used interesting activities such as ice-breakers for the first class. It is not easy for second language learners to produce a target language orally in the first lesson as they are not familiar with the classroom environment. This is especially true for some students who are too shy or timid in a lower level language class and who might be afraid of speaking in the target language.

I remember one simple and fun ice-breaker activity which may be helpful for the first class in my ideal CLT and CBI class. This activity provides language learners with opportunities to practice a target language through active interaction. In this activity the students arrange themselves in order by listening to teachers' instruction.

First of all, students were required to stand up and divide into two groups. Each student had his/her own name tag attached to his/her chest and gathered into one group. Then, the students were asked to stand in a line in order by answering the teacher's questions about such things as height, age, number of family members, number of countries that they had traveled to, or length of hair. The team that stood in a line fastest and responded to teacher's instruction accurately won. During the activity, everyone in the classroom laughed and spoke in English by actively interacting with each other even though it was the first meeting of the class. Moreover, the name tag attached on their chest encouraged the students to get to know each other by remembering their peers' names. Furthermore, the activity was great for the students because it decreased anxiety about using the target language for the first class since it did not require complicated linguistic knowledge.

All in all, the icebreaker activity was a communicative and cooperative way to warm up in the first lesson, but it also helped students participate in active conversation. In this sense, I believe that this activity would be beneficial for my future class which will be designed with a communicative basis toward CLT and CBI principles. In addition to is icebreaker

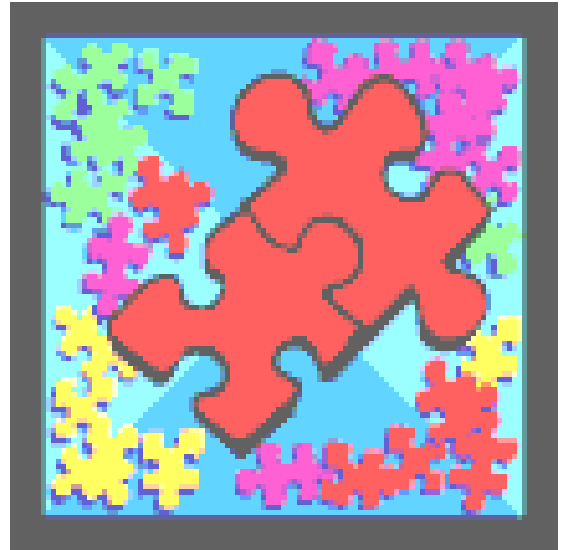
activity, a jigsaw activity with chain storytelling, that I implemented during my practicum teaching in ESL at Hawai'i Pacific University, involves the cooperative and communicative approach of language learning, and showed how effective interesting activities influence CLT and CBI class.

When I had a chance to teach an English grammar lesson on parallel structure, in order to organize my grammar lesson in creative and interesting ways, I implemented the jigsaw activity with a chain storytelling which is relevant to collaborative language learning.

Because I have realized that learning a linguistic rule itself without any interaction during the class would never help learners improve communication skills in a target language, I really want to change the kind of English grammar learning that I experienced as a language learner during my school days in Korea. This is one of the reasons why I pursue CLT and CBI classes as my teaching philosophy.

In the grammar lesson, I, first of all, divided the class into four groups of four, and told them the beginning of the story written on the handout. The story started with the sentence, "It was a dark and stormy night. I was driving along a country road. Suddenly I found a light and a man . . . ." There were four blanks that each student in each group was assigned in order to continue the rest of the story in sequence by including the parallel structure that they had already learned. The students were encouraged to use their imagination to compose a coherent story. After constructing the story, each student was given a number from 1 to 4. Afterward, I asked them to sit together with the same number, and talk about the story of their own group. Afterward, the students chose the best and funniest story.

Through the activity, I could see for myself active conversation from my students. Every student in the class



had chances to communicate not only with their original group members to complete the coherent story, but also with the new group to tell them what they talked about in their original group. In other words, each person had the responsibility to deliver information to the new group in a communicative way. Moreover, the students were able to utilize the grammar rule in a natural discourse while working on the cooperative and communicative activity. Shameem and Tickoo (1999) pointed out that "in learning skills in discourse, students are putting together the language they have acquired to form meaningful units" (p. ix). All in all, I believe that the jigsaw activity with a chain storytelling enabled my students to enjoy language learning through task-focused interaction which is effective for both meaningful language input and output.

In brief, I think learning a new language should be a joy to the language learners. Otherwise, it will be hard for them to achieve a positive outcome of language acquisition. Therefore, I will play a role as an effective facilitator in a language classroom so that, my students can regard their language learning as enjoyable work, not as just a study. In order for this to happen, using communicative and cooperative activities will be the best way for me to motivate my stu-

(Continued on page 16.)

## Retrograde Recalibration By Perry Christensen

As the new semester started, the faculty met to recalibrate ourselves before reading the new student placement essays. In our calibration meeting, we normally read six essays—starting with the lowest level and working our way up to the highest level. For years, we have used this method each new semester and were quiet comfortable with the routine. However, this past semester, on a whim, we decided to work backwards—from the best essay to the worst. This was a real eye-opener.

In the past, as we read from the worst to the best, we would often make the same comments: “Is this really a 3? It feels more like a 4.” Also the progression of the writing seemed a little more obscure. However, when we read these same six essays in reverse order, from best to worst, we were amazed how clear the separation became in our minds between a 6 and a 5, and so forth on down. Using this different perspective of the same six essays gave us a clearer vision, changed our discussion, and helped us recalibrate better.

I think the real lesson to learn is not to get stuck in a rut. Try a new approach and see what happens. You might like it. We sure did.



**About the Author:** Perry Christensen is the Hawai'i TESOL webmaster and teaches at Brigham Young University –Hawai'i.

## Taking it to the Streets . . . (cont.)

(Continued from page 4.)

mural obligations and might view these skills as inefficient use of their free time and become discouraged when their preferences are not considered. When instructors do not analyze the needs and choices of the students, learners have trouble with self-direction, motivation, and independence, and often stop studying. Homework often fails to boost analytical thinking by discouraging the testing of established theory. Although removing ambiguity, it fails to encourage self-reliance. Learners, naturally viewing the class as their learning center, feel that unintegrated homework still leaves the educator as the sole judge, limits the amount of time to practice skills, discourages oral-aural practice necessary for communicating properly, and leaves them unaware of their progress.

### Homework as a Means to Increase Motivation

Changing the focus and format of homework can overcome these seemingly intimidating problems. The gradual increase of learners being able to manage homework can improve awareness. Grammar should be considered a communication goal, not the primary reason for study. Integrating homework with class work links independent study with class goals and provides working examples of the importance of learners' work. Moving away from exclusive dependency on the educator as the only suitable L2 target encourages learners to become more motivated as there is a responsive audience not merely a judge. Widening the field of "conversation partners" creates a support network for language learning, as learners, class, outsiders, even the educator, now become suitable targets. As the learners' primary goal is spoken communication, educators should vary the type of skills focused on in homework to encourage interest in speaking-listening with learners recording CDs for class or homework. Learners should have a freer hand in selecting homework content with an outlet for voicing their opinions. Because homework is done in isolation, learners need more opportunity to include their interests.

If the goal is to encourage learner self-reliance, then education should encourage self-reflection and evaluation, allowing learners to record their feelings about a task and what motivates them as individuals. To evaluate tasks, use can be made of a simple, but effective scale such as :

Agree	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	Disagree
A. This was difficult	B. I did well	C. This was interesting	D. This was useful			

Placing the letter corresponding to each statement on the scale to record their reactions to the completed task allows learners to evaluate their performance and indicate how motivating they found the task, so the design of future homework



## Taking it to the Streets . . . (cont.)

(Continued from page 8.)

tasks can meet the needs of ESL students.

### Conclusion

Homework is viable for most curricula, enabling learners to become self-reliant by providing opportunities for reflection and development. Properly implemented homework can create opportunities to contribute content to the class, influence motivation, and promote learner attentiveness and awareness, resulting in learners who continue learning after the completion of the course. This scheme allows monitoring of task interest and difficulty, and a freer hand in task completion and content selection.

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## Chinese Students Need to Break Down the Language Wall By Lolita Celsi

University students in China have often had 8 to 12 years of English language study in their backgrounds, yet many of them hesitate to communicate orally in the target language. How can they break the great wall that prevents them from speaking English? What classroom practices and activities encourage these students to break through their language barriers?

During the 2011 fall semester at Shandong University of Science and Technology in Shandong Province, Northern China, I explored various speaking activities with advanced level students to assist them in moving from mainly academic to more spontaneous English production. These were two classes of 30 students each: one group majored in International Trade and Economics; the other majored in Information Management and Management Systems. Their classes were held four times weekly for 2 hours. Both groups used the same text and workbook for their course, supplemented with activities designed by the teacher to jump start their speaking skills.

In the last week of the term, the students gave opinions about how confident they felt in speaking English during certain classroom exercises. Through a written survey, they either agreed, neither agreed or disagreed, or disagreed with the following statements:

I felt confident in speaking English when I answered questions from the text.

- I felt confident in speaking English when the teacher asked a question I expected.
- I felt confident in speaking English when the teacher asked a question I didn't expect.
- I felt confident in speaking English when I had to "think on my feet."
- I felt confident in speaking English when I participated in

an interview in class.

- I felt confident in speaking English when I participated in a dialogue in class.
- I felt confident in speaking English when my partner and I did an activity together.
- I felt confident in speaking English when I looked at pictures and described them.
- I felt confident in speaking English when I wrote something on the blackboard.
- I felt confident in speaking English when I gave a prepared presentation.
- I felt confident in speaking English when I asked the teacher a question.
- I felt confident in speaking English when I talked informally to the teacher.
- I felt confident in speaking English when I helped make a video.

Results of the survey showed that in both groups, students felt most confident in speaking English when they engaged in an activity with a partner. In class, partnered activities included vocabulary card matching games, descriptions from picture prompts, reports about vacation travels and important persons in their lives, role playing dialogues such as ordering food in a restaurant, and the development of workshops in which students offered to teach each other skills such as calligraphy, computer programs, cooking or sports.

Partnered interaction was facilitated by the furniture arrangement in the classroom. Two persons shared a table; desk mates tended to be close friends, usually of the same gender. Since students chose their friends early in the term, they entered the class as twosomes and rarely varied from

## Teaching Academic ESL Writing . . . (cont.)

(Continued from page 1.)

lead the students through a writing process consisting of pre-writing tasks, drafting of multiple versions of argumentative writing, Criterion-generated feedback sessions, and postponement of editing until the final draft. The three-week lesson plan below focuses on writing an argumentative paper.

As this unit is centered on the text-based machine generated feedback, the adequate application of written corrective feedback (WCF) is a key issue for successful unit implementation. Although numerous studies have produced conflicting results, a growing body of evidence suggests that WCF can improve writing accuracy in limited contexts (Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, & Takashima, 2008; Hartshorn et al., 2010; Russell, & Spada, 2006; Sheen, 2007). However, the findings of the studies are based on the human feedback, and the effectiveness of machine generated WCF in its initial stage of implementation has not been fully verified yet. Considering the potential and the challenges of machine generated WCF, the instructor should pay extra attention to L2 learners' acceptance, adoption, and application of Criterion generated WCF, as well as, human generated feedback.

### Brief Introduction of the Course

**Course goals.** The goal of the course is to help international undergraduate students in three ways: to increase their writing skills, to develop a mature writing style, and to develop an ability to integrate ideas, personal experiences, and external sources (e.g., Criterion) into their own writing. The course will further emphasize writing as a process and will help students to learn to improve writing through revision and editing workshops.

**Length and Where in the course.** The unit will be covered in nine hours over a three week period (weeks 13-15 of the course). By the end of the 13th week, students will have accomplished the following: 1) completed all reading assignments; 2) discussed the processes of writing and essay organization; 3) learnt how to write a thesis statement; 4) developed written fluency through journal writing; 4) learned about and written two genres (a narrative essay, and a cause and effect essay) using main ideas and supporting details lessons learnt in the previous weeks.

(Continued on page 11.)

## Chinese Students . . . (cont.)

(Continued from page 9.)

their first seating pattern. These students were from families that followed the one child per family policy established in China in the 1970's. These "only child" students, ages 19 to 21, appeared to bond with each other, almost like siblings, by studying and recreating together in close alliances.

Information Management and Information Systems majors reported they felt very confident (90%) when answering questions they expected from the teacher. They felt reasonably confident (69%) answering oral questions following the readings in the text. In contrast, 35% of these students indicated a degree of anxiety when they disagreed that they felt confident in answering unexpected questions from the instructor.

International Economy and Trade majors felt confident (88%) when they spoke about topics they had researched, written, memorized and rehearsed. However, after such prepared reports, they had to "think on their feet" to answer questions from the teacher or other students. In this case, only 54% of speakers felt confident.

Students were interviewed by the teacher or fellow students about certain topics, such as talking about personal shopping habits or expressing their desire to study in foreign institutions. In the interview activity, 85% of the International Economy majors felt confident in expressing their thoughts orally. A group activity that also elicited 85% of them to feel confident was the writing, filming and videotaping of two 5-minute original videos: a drama and a "slice-of-life" mini-documentary of their own student life. The videotaping activity was very popular with both groups of majors and encouraged many of the more reluctant speakers to reveal their strengths as writers, directors, photographers, actors, and post-production technicians as well as English speakers.

International Economy students felt confident (81%) in their speaking skills when asking questions of the teacher. However, according to survey results, only 48% of Information Management class students felt confident asking questions of the teacher. Also, only 45% of the latter group was confident when they spoke informally with the teacher. Writing on the blackboard did not rate highly with either group. They felt confident only 46% and 41% time respectively.

Outside of formal classes with both Chinese and native English speaking teachers, the EFL second year students at this university had few opportunities to practice their English skills. The informal survey, taken late in the term, indicated that answering unexpected questions, "thinking on their feet" and speaking informally to the teacher were not high ranking



## Teaching Academic ESL Writing . . . (cont.)

(Continued from page 10.)

### Three-Weeks Lesson Plan on Argumentative Writing:

WEEK 1		
<b>Objectives:</b>	to understand the requirements of paper IV to learn the structure of an argumentative essay to be able to express a point of view on the given argumentative topics to be able to write an introduction paragraph for a given argumentative essay	
<b>Materials</b>	Video on respect for the elderly Assignment sheet for Paper IV PowerPoint lecture on the argumentative essay Reading "More about argumentative essays" Sample argumentative essay Anne's essay	
<b>Activities</b>	10 min	<b>Watch the introductory video:</b> Ask students to watch the video and pay attention to the argumenta-
	15 min	<b>Complete the forum about the video:</b> Ask students to explain what the argument in the video is about, whether or not they liked the video and why. Ask them to give any examples from the video
	5 min	<b>Read the assignment sheet for Paper IV</b>
	15 min	<b>Listen to the PowerPoint lecture</b>
	20 min	<b>Complete the weekly editorial forum:</b> Ask students to choose one of the given topics and express
	10 min	<b>Read the article "More about argumentative essays"</b>
	30 min	<b>Complete the different points of view exercise:</b> Ask students to think about the topics given, write one or two sentences describing each point of view and another sentence explaining the likely
	15 min	<b>Read the sample argumentative essay</b>
	15 min	<b>Analyze Anne's essay:</b> Ask students to find the topic sentences in the body paragraphs, highlight
	30 min	<b>Write an introduction for Anne's essay</b>
	5 min	<b>Submit the introduction into Criterion</b>
	5 min	<b>Fill in the activity checklist</b>

(Continued on page 12.)

## Chinese Students . . . (cont.)

(Continued from page 10.)

confidence choices and that only 5% of the students strongly agreed that they felt confident when speaking informally to the teacher in English outside of the academic context.

As a result of this study, I realize that in my teaching, I need to continue using the successful group and partnered activities such as interviews, role-playing dialogues and video-making, and to initiate conversation before and after class to help students become more comfortable with their conversational skills. More language practice is needed for Chinese university students to break the wall that deters them from speaking English with a high percentage of ease and confidence.

**About the Author:** Lolita Celsi graduated from the HPU MATESL program in December, 2010. In the summer of 2011, she hosted a student from Nanjing, China and taught English to 13 and 14-year-old Chinese students in the CompassUSA two-week summer program in Portland, Oregon.

In the fall of 2011, she taught English Language and Culture classes to Mandarin speaking university sophomores at Shandong University of Science and Technology in Jinan, Shandong Province, China through the COPAC program of Clark University, Worcester Massachusetts.

## Teaching Academic ESL Writing . . . (cont.)

(Continued from page 11.)

WEEK 2		
<b>Objectives:</b> to be able to develop <u>support</u> in argumentative essays to be able to use transition signals effectively in argumentative essays to be able to write body paragraphs for an essay based on its outline to write the first draft of an argumentative essay		
<b>Materials</b>	Video on examples of support in argumentative essays PowerPoint lecture on developing support in argumentative essays Reading on claims in argumentative essays Reading on transition signals in argumentative essays Outline of Mike's essay Mike's essay	
<b>Activities</b>	10 min	<b>Watch the introductory videos:</b> Ask students to watch the videos and pay attention to the examples of support in them.
	15 min	<b>Complete the forum about the videos:</b> Ask students to talk to their friends and discuss how the support in the videos is similar to or different from the <u>support</u> in persuasive essays. Ask them to discuss whether they are familiar to these examples from the last week's readings and activities, and whether they can think of any other ways to develop <u>support</u> for argumentative essays.
	15 min	<b>Listen to the PowerPoint lecture</b>
	10 min	<b>Read the article</b> "Claims in argumentative essays"
	10 min	<b>Read</b> "Transition signals in argumentative essays"
	15 min	<b>Complete the transition signals exercise:</b> Ask students to read the argumentative essay about teenagers and the jobs they work in. Ask students to fill in the blanks with appropriate transition signals.
	5 min	<b>Read Mike's outline</b>
	30 min	<b>Write three body paragraphs for Mike's essay</b>
	5 min	<b>Submit the body paragraphs into Criterion</b>
	1 h	<b>Complete the first draft of your argumentative essay</b>
	5 min	<b>Submit the first draft into Criterion</b>
5 min	<b>Fill in the activity checklist</b>	

(Continued on page 13.)

## Practical Workshop . . . (cont.)

(Continued from page 6.)

presentation concluded with a question and answer portion and a final evaluation.

The participants unanimously agreed that Dr. Christensen's PowerPoint format and transitions were clear and contained valuable information and many useful techniques. Participants also noted that they enjoyed this style of presentation, (i.e., broadcast via Skype), and that another workshop would be convenient, fun and could attract more participants.

**About the Author:** Ivan Lui was one of the participants in the workshop.





## Teaching Academic ESL Writing . . . (cont.)

(Continued from page 12.)

WEEK 3		
<b>Objectives:</b> To be able to manage the Track Change and Comments functions in MS-Word To understand steps for the peer response, To be able use the peer response comments To be able to provide feedback for peers' argumentative essay drafts in a constructive way using MS-Word		
<b>Materials</b>	Video on Track Change & Comment functions in MS-Word Reading on steps for peer response	
<b>Activities</b>	15 min	<b>Watch the video:</b> Ask students to watch the video and pay attention to how to use the Track Change and Comment functions of MS-Word
	10 min	<b>Read</b> "Steps for peer response"
	30 min	<b>Provide feedback for your peer's augmentative essay draft</b>
	20 min	<b>Receive feedback from the instructor through online video conferencing</b>
	1 h	<b>Complete the final draft of your argumentative essay</b>
	5 min	<b>Submit the final draft into Criterion</b>
	5 min	<b>Fill in the activity checklist</b>

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## Apps for Language Learners By Cristiane Vincentini

Nowadays, smart phones and tablets are ubiquitous, creating new ways and means to study languages. This annotated bibliography was compiled in order to give your students technologically advanced options for studying English on their own. The apps in this list address all four major language skills as well as pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. They include business English, comics, dictionaries, flashcards, games, idioms, learning communities (*Busuu*), music, picture search engines, story books, story archives (*StoryCorps*), TV shows and movies, TOEIC and TOEFL preparation, and tongue twisters. They are organized in alphabetical order to facilitate the inclusion of additional apps as you





find them. All are available on Itunes, and some might be available on the Android app market, too. At the time the list was compiled, most were lite (or free) versions with sample lessons or exercises making it easy for students to try them out. Further practice is generally available at a low cost.

This project grew out of a course assignment in the MA in TESOL program at HPU. I owe special thanks to Professor Jean Kirschenmann, for her support and guidance, Dr. Candis Lee, for the opportunity to work on this project, and my classmate Monica Smith, for suggesting several of the apps that have been included on this list.

	App name and Icon	Brief Description
1	ABC_Alphabet 	Practice vocabulary, listening, and spelling with 2 games: spelling, and <i>karuta</i> . ( <i>Karuta</i> is a Japanese word game.) Notes: 1) Free app – Itunes (Iphone, Ipod Touch, and Ipad); 2) Spelling game: listen to the word being spelled out, type it correctly and move on to next word; 3) <i>Karuta</i> : choose a level of difficulty, and play against the computer. As soon as you hear a word, tap on the correct picture. If you do it before the computer, you get points; 4) Suitable for beginner level students.
2	Aesop's Fables Collection 	This reading app includes 8 Aesop's Fables, such as <i>The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse</i> , <i>The Fox and the Grapes</i> and others. It can help you improve reading, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Notes: 1) Free app – Itunes (Iphone, Ipod Touch, and Ipad); 2) "Read to me" mode – listen and follow each story being read to you (American pronunciation); 3) "I will read" mode – read by yourself and turn the pages to continue the story; 4) "Record" mode – record your voice reading each page of the story. After you finish, play it back and record it again, if you don't like it; 5) Stories are not facilitated – native speaker level; 6) Suitable for intermediate to advanced students.
3	BookBox English 	This reading app presents a variety of simple, stories that connect images, text, and sound. Click on a story and the subtitles get highlighted as the words are read. Notes: 1) Free app – Itunes (Iphone, Ipod Touch, and Ipad); 2) 3 free stories; 2) American English pronunciation; 3) Quick – each story is about 6 minutes long; 4) Suitable for beginner level students; 5) 10 other stories available for purchase (\$1.99 each)

## Apps . . . (cont.)

(Continued from page 14.)

4	<p style="text-align: center;">Busuu</p> 	<p>This app helps you learn a number of languages, including English. It is the smart phone and tablet version of <a href="http://www.busuu.com">www.busuu.com</a>, an online community that offers several lessons for beginner and intermediate levels.</p> <p>Notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Free app – (Apple and Android Markets);</li> <li>2) Useful language and dialogs in British English;</li> <li>3) 5 free lessons;</li> <li>4) 30 additional learning units available for \$3.99.</li> </ol>
5	<p style="text-align: center;">101 Classic Novels</p> 	<p>This app contains 101 classic novels, such as War and Peace, Gulliver's Travels, Moby-Dick, The Count of Monte Cristo, A Christmas Carol, Pride and Prejudice, among many others.</p> <p>Notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Available on Itunes (Iphone, Ipod Touch, and Ipad) for \$0.99;</li> <li>2) You can bookmark pages and adjust settings for reading (line spacing, text alignment, etc.)</li> <li>3) The novels are not simplified;</li> <li>4) Suitable only for advanced learners.</li> </ol>
6	<p style="text-align: center;">Crackle</p> 	<p>This app offers free access to TV shows (Seinfeld, News Radio, The Three Stooges, etc), as well as movies (Cruel Intentions, Donnie Brasco, Desperado, etc).</p> <p>Notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Free app – Itunes (Iphone, Ipod Touch, and Ipad);</li> <li>2) Full-length movies and TV shows are a little old, but a variety of genres is available for watching;</li> <li>3) No subtitles;</li> <li>4) Best for high-intermediate to advanced learners.</li> </ol>
7	<p style="text-align: center;">DailyINK</p> 	<p>This reading app offers daily access to different comics, such as <i>Dennis</i>, <i>the Menace</i> and <i>Family Circus</i>, among others. You can improve your reading and vocabulary.</p> <p>Notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Free app – Itunes (Iphone, Ipod Touch, and Ipad);</li> <li>2) Daily comic available free of charge;</li> <li>3) These are actual comics that use idioms, puns, and some slang;</li> <li>4) Best for high-intermediate to advanced learners.</li> </ol>
8	<p style="text-align: center;">Dictionary.com</p> 	<p>This dictionary app lets you search for about 2,000,000 words <u>without the need for an internet connection</u>. You can look up words by typing them or through voice search.</p> <p>Notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Free app – (Apple and Android Markets);</li> <li>2) Contains both dictionary and thesaurus entries;</li> <li>3) IPA script and audio pronunciation available;</li> <li>4) Includes favorite words list, "Word of the Day", and trends tab;</li> <li>3) Best for intermediate to advanced level students.</li> </ol>

(Continued on page 18.)

## Design an Ideal Language Class . . . (cont.)

(Continued from page 7.)

dents to enjoy learning a new language experience, and at the same time, for me to realize my ideal CLT and CBI class. In other words, interesting activities raise students' intrinsic motivation to language learning, and the motivation, in turn, promotes students' interaction with peers while decreasing nervousness of using a target language, in the end, finally contributing to successful language acquisition. Overall, my future lesson will be designed with learner-centered learning based on my teaching principle of learning a language by playing or doing through communicative interaction.

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## Beyond CDs . . . Learning Another Language with Gusto! By Patti Robinson

If you've read any articles lately about keeping those dendrites and neuropath ways fired up, it's all about crossword puzzles and second-language learning. Okay, so maybe you won't be waxing eloquent in a literary café or debating in a political forum, but you CAN enjoy pleasurable interaction in a language other than your own—at any age.

Research does show that our ability to hear small sound differences and pick up on language cues becomes more difficult as we get older. According to Linda Davidson, Associate Professor of Linguistics at New York University, one significant factor between learning a foreign language as a child and as an adult is the interference from the learner's native tongue. "When you're a kid, all you're working at is acquiring a language, and you don't have anything to get in the way of that. When you're an adult and you already have a language, the one you already know filters sounds and you get substantial interference from it." (1)

However, recent scientific studies are now showing that the adult brain can be retrained and retuned with exposure and practice to identify and learn foreign sounds. Given the appropriate stimulus can achieve this according to Dr. Paul Iverson, from the University College London (UCL) Centre for Human Communication, who has contributed to the theory. Two joint studies by Dr. Iverson and Dr. Valerie Hazan, from UCL's Department of Phonetics and Linguistics, have explored how the brain processes speech sounds and if it can indeed be retrained in adulthood. In a training study for Japanese, results showed that the subjects improved their recognition of /l's and r's in the English language by 18% after a 10-session course where those sounds were specifically targeted. (2)

So, there it is! You need not plateau at your "*muchas gracias*" and "*parlez-vous anglais*". Give those dendrites a linguistic workout. Whether for travel, a friendly entree into someone else's world, or the sheer exhilaration of a successful communication in a language other than your own, no time like *ahora* to get started.

Motivation is the first order of business. Find your purpose. Is it an upcoming trip, a general desire to communicate even rudimentarily with another person, a deepening awareness of world culture through language? Identifying your end goal will keep you consistent and refreshed in your studies. Then practice, practice, practice.

Here are a few ideas which worked for me as I went from just toying with the idea of learning Spanish to actually making some headway in communicating.

**GO NATIVE:** Get an introduction to a native speaker who may want to exchange conversation lessons. Native speakers are phenomenal resources not only for language questions but for cultural how-to's. Or barter a skill (cooking / tutoring children / giving manicures / driving) for a language lesson. Get creative with those exchanges.

**E-PALS:** Google "Foreign Pen Pals" and you will come up with 2000+ hits for both the electronic and the actual pen version. "Pen" pals are not only excellent word weavers, they can also guide you to blogs, e-magazines, musical groups, etc. in your target language. Maybe a reciprocal visit will be in store.

**INTERNET SCAVENGER HUNTS:** Thanks to the wealth of information on the Internet, it is a virtual treasure trove for language learning. I found children's poetry (easy), international newspapers (for reading headlines), lyrics to my Zumba songs, lectures on YOUTUBE (understood 10%, oh



## “This Worst Class EVER taken!!!”

### Preparing Students for Critical Evaluations

By Matthew Nelson

Upon reading David Terada’s regrettable ordeal in the September 2011 issue of *The Word*, I could not help but reflect on my own trials and tribulations as a language teacher but also my own behavior when tasked with end-of-semester evaluations. There are sure to be those who are simply ready to “unleash the Kraken” and “tell it like is” in an attempt to basically write up the instructor’s pink slip. I can still recall some of the incisive remarks I wrote about my French Oral instructor, who came to class everyday with nothing more than herself and a bottle of icy Evian in hand.

It was a paperless semester free of worksheets or any written feedback; quiet students remained nameless furniture pieces challenged to appear engaged with their eyes shifting from one dominant speaker to another and then the teacher; and though one would ordinarily think that not having to pay for an exorbitantly priced textbook was a good thing, it proved disastrous for this aimless class. At least with a textbook there would have been some kind of linear progression.

I could have accepted the class structure were this, say, a community school or like a special interest class after

school or church, but this was a private American university where tuition at the time was about \$750 per credit hour. I was utterly dissatisfied and wanted to demand a refund! That is when I realized that there was always another legitimate agent besides the teacher – myself. Although I was highly motivated and self-driven regardless of the quality of instruction with concrete language proficiency goals in mind, it never occurred to me to act on my right to voice my concerns to the instructor, the department, or the school. Outlets or opportunities to do so were not broadcast or expressly welcomed. Furthermore, I was an undergraduate who was not yet mature enough nor willing to confront administration let alone the instructor face-to-face, lest I burn bridges in the department and negatively affect my grade.

This raises the question: Are students aware of any actions – ideally anonymous – they can take to set possible changes in motion? To attend to democratizing the classroom and empowering students to take responsibility of their own learning, I would like to suggest an idea that I believe has led to a heightened sense of student agency, learner-centeredness, and student-teacher equilibrium in my teach-

(Continued on page 20.)

## K-12 News

### To Care or Not to Care?

#### *One Educator’s Look at the D.O.E.’s Teacher Evaluation Tool Under Current Consideration*

By Susan Kay Anderson, M.A.

Could that possibly be the question with which teachers of Hawaii’s English Language Learners and all teachers, for that matter, will be evaluated if the State of Hawaii’s Department of Education leaders, in current negotiations with the teachers’ union (Hawaii State Teachers Association), affirm this

“framework” for evaluation? How would this affect ELL teachers? Answer: the same way it would affect any teacher in a classroom setting whether the teacher has her/his own classroom or provides monitoring for students who are mainstreamed in general education classes. At stake: pay raises/pay freeze, tenure, termination. Also in the works: student evaluation of



teacher performance with the same stakes. ELL teachers are subject to the same mandates under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, a federal law requiring elementary and secondary schools to demonstrate proficiency and progress according to accountability standards set by the state and approved by the U.S.

Department of Education.

The law requires states to implement an accountability system and report on performance measures related to Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in math and reading, participation and proficiency, graduation/retention rates, as well as other educational indicators, such as teacher qualifications and now, a more ex-





treme focus on teacher performance tied to pay, pay that is tied to test scores, and termination if a teacher is found lacking by enough evaluators. To meet reporting requirements set forth by the law, the DOE publishes comprehensive reports annually, reflecting performance at both the state and individual school level.

Teachers are being set up to be evaluated on classroom management by their level of “caring” for their students using a rubric designed by Charlotte Danielson. For example, in “Domain 2: The Classroom Environment, Component 2a: Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport, Elements: Teacher interaction with students/Student interaction with other students.” A “Distinguished”

(Continued on page 22.)

## Apps . . . (cont.)

(continued from page 16.)

<p>9</p>	<p>English Irregular Verbs for Learners</p> 	<p>This app helps you practice more than 100 English irregular verbs. Find the verb you want to practice, and listen to its three forms (base form, past, and past participle).</p> <p>Notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Free app – iTunes (Iphone, Ipod Touch, and Ipad);</li> <li>2) Includes “verb song” - a chant of all forms of the most common irregular verbs in English;</li> <li>3) The song might be a little bit difficult to understand if you are not familiar with some verbs;</li> <li>4) Some recordings are not complete, so they sound “cut short”;</li> <li>5) “Pro” version (\$0.99) contains 3 more songs and includes more irregular verbs.</li> </ol>
<p>10</p>	<p>EnglishPod</p> 	<p>This app gives you access to English lessons on different situations. Each lesson includes an introduction to the topic, a dialog (American English pronunciation), audio scripts and vocabulary explanations.</p> <p>Notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Free app – iTunes (Iphone, Ipod Touch, and Ipad);</li> <li>2) 3 free lessons;</li> <li>3) You can buy packages of lessons (Office English; English for the Weekend; Having fun in English; Everyday English) for \$4.99 each.</li> <li>4) Suitable for intermediate and advanced levels.</li> </ol>
<p>11</p>	<p>Fun English</p> 	<p>This is an app for interactive games to develop your basic vocabulary in English.</p> <p>Notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Free app – iTunes (Iphone, Ipod Touch, and Ipad);</li> <li>2) Only 1 topic (Colors) includes games free of charge;</li> <li>3) Other topics (numbers, animals) are sold for \$1.99 each;</li> <li>4) Suitable for children or true beginner level students.</li> </ol>
<p>12</p>	<p>gFlash+</p> 	<p>This flashcard app lets you create your own flashcard sets and download them to smart phones or tablets. You can use it in several modes (ex. multiple choice mode, one card mode, reverse questions and answers, etc.).</p> <p>Notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Free app – (Apple and Android Markets);</li> <li>2) You can “check” (✓) the flashcards you answer correctly. The app will re-introduce only the flashcards you made mistakes, until you get the correct answers.</li> <li>3) You must upload flashcards to Google Docs, then download them to gFlash to use them.</li> </ol>

**About the Author:** Cristiane Vicentini is pursuing her MATESOL degree at Hawai'i Pacific University and will graduate in December 2012. She has been an English teacher since 1995. Her experience includes teaching at a variety of language schools in Brazil and in the United States. She is currently teaching at ELS Language Centers Honolulu.

**Note from the Editor:** Cristiane Vincentini's list of apps is fairly extensive and therefore, **will be continued** in the next issue of *The Word* coming out in May. Stay tuned.

## Beyond CDs . . . (cont.)

(Continued from page 16.)

well), shopping catalogs for vocabulary building, recipes (practical), club information (i.e., Toastmasters, and Weight Watchers), or card crafting. Info on any of your interests or hobbies is probably available in the target language.

**CHILDREN'S BOOKS:** The ideal is English on one-side, target language on the other. However, if you get a super easy book, you can figure it out with the pictures. Amazon has children's books or links to finding them. Also try the library, used bookstores, or again, ask the natives. I also implore my travelling friends to pick up easy-readers for me.

**MUSIC:** The language of the heart. Choose a selection from the library to get a taste of performers you enjoy. Find CDs which contain the words to the songs in your target language. Believe me, when that favorite refrain hits, you'll be singing along . . . in another language. Ask natives or fluent friends for recommendations.

**MOVIES:** Rent foreign language films or watch your favorite American flicks along with the subtitles. Challenge yourself; the second time around try fifteen minutes without the subtitles. Guaranteed you'll pick up a few lively expressions.

**EAVESDROP:** Make a bee line to conversations in your target language whenever possible. Out of the box approach, but you may pick up a few turns of phrase. I did. Today at Walmart, I increased my colorful vocabulary by three expressions.

**LANGUAGE CLUBS:** Join one or start one. I was surprised to find that even in our small island community, there is a thriving Italian club which meets on a regular basis just to

converse. All levels. Some folks just want to listen; others go full throttle. It works.

**SKYPE:** Again, for payment or for exchange, find a like-minded lexophile for a language lesson. My American friend, while living in England, found a Swiss native living in North Carolina, to give her lessons in French. Small world.

**LANGUAGE CDs:** Some of us need the structure of traditional forms of instruction. That's okay. Just don't get lost in flashcards and grammar drills when there are more dynamic and fulfilling ways of getting linguistically connected.

A HUI HOU, LANGUAGE LEARNER . Until we meet again.

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**About the Author:** Patti Robinson is a certified teacher of English and French and a beginner student of Spanish.



## Background Knowledge: Essence of Understanding By Maliheh Rezaei

As an English instructor working with teenagers, adults and college students in Iran for years, I have witnessed students' difficulty with English academic materials due to many factors of which lack of background knowledge is probably the most noteworthy.

The terms 'background knowledge' and 'prior knowledge' are generally used interchangeably. Although these two terms are reworded differently by educators, they all include the same concepts. The definition of background knowledge in a free online dictionary is "information that is essential to understanding a situation or problem." Educators have also provided different explanation of the phenomenon. For Jonassen and Gabrowski (1993) prior knowledge is "the knowledge, skills, or ability that a student brings to [the] learning process" (p. 417). Biemons and Simon (1996) define background knowledge as "all knowl-

edge learners have when entering a learning environment that is potentially relevant for acquiring new knowledge" (p. 6). All these definitions, which are in line with more recent views of learning, emphasize that new knowledge is built on prior knowledge, and it enables us to make inferences. In other words, what we understand of something stems from our past experiences.

Prior knowledge guides our comprehension of not only events but also oral and written texts. Actually, understanding happens as a result of interaction between our prior knowledge and the content of the text because the text does not convey meaning by itself. In EFL/ESL classes, particularly reading classes, understanding of the English language is affected by various factors. One of these factors is background knowledge that according to Farrell (n.d.) may in-

## “This Worst Class . . . (cont.)

(Continued from page 17.)

ing. At the same time, I am able to better understand how my students see me and my teaching – the good, the bad, and the ugly.

### Consider Teaching a Lesson on Critical Evaluations

After a few terms of teaching at my current school, I had come to the realization that many of the students did not take the evaluations seriously. Some of them returned to class after only 5 minutes in spite of the allotted 20 minutes. Whenever I received the evaluations via e-mail, I would simply exhale a sigh of relief when the ratings were favorable accompanied with short but golden sound-bites like, “Great teacher!” or “Matthew is a good teacher for me!” Phew! However, it was obvious that even the positive statements did not say much. For instance, why did s/he consider my teaching good or great? What did I do specifically that worked for them? On the other hand, less than favorable comments like, “Class was so B00000ring!” or the ever-inscrutable, “Nothing” also say nothing specific about the class and do little to help the teacher to troubleshoot. The implication was that the evaluations were neither properly understood nor sufficiently valued as a means to effect positive changes. This is no more apparent than when irate students approach the evaluation as an outlet to vent and spew a venomous rant.

In response, I designed a lesson that seeks to shed in-



sight on evaluations and their various purposes. First, I had students edit, proofread, and correct a poorly written sample paragraph. I did tell them to be as “helpful” as possible and to give the student a grade. After this phase, we discussed our decisions. Some of the students had simply circled all the grammar mistakes, some had scrutinized awkward phrasings, and just about everyone wrote letter grades without any feedback in the margins or elsewhere. When I invited students to share their thoughts and opinions about the short writing, everyone dwelled on the negative: “It was bad!” or “So bad!” However, when I asked if they felt that the essay had thoroughly answered the prompt nearly all agreed that the student did, in fact, give a lot of information and adequately fulfilled the prompt.

So, why did no one write anything positive like, “Great job on topic development!”?

I then asked students how they would feel if they received one of their writing assignments back with only a grade of C at the top without qualifying remarks. Many students stated that they might feel discouraged or experience decreased motivation. One student even said that if the teacher gave her scant feedback, she would think “...the teacher didn't care.” Moving on, I finally perceived an opportune moment to relate the issue of teacher feedback to evaluations and how students often either focus on the negative points of the teacher or do not take the time to indicate the things that worked or the things they appreciated.

(Continued on page 21.)

## Hawai'i TESOL Executive Committee June 2011 - June 2012

### Elected Positions:

President	Jennifer Hickman
Vice President	Ivan Liu
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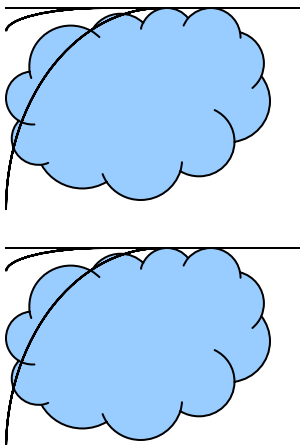


## “This Worst Class . . . (cont.)

(Continued from page 20.)

To wrap up the lesson, I divided students into small groups of the following stakeholders: teachers, students, and administrators. I passed out sheets with student comments from my previous evaluations and versions of critiques I had heard from other teachers. Students were asked to react from the point-of-view of their designated stakeholder and jot down some of their group's immediate thoughts in thought-clouds next to the evaluation comments. Finally, groups were instructed to consider the student comments by evaluating how “helpful” they were. A modified snapshot of the worksheet is shown below.

In sum, by challenging students to interpret comments from another angle helped them to critically think about and consider the weight of their words. For example, the administration stakeholder group mentioned that if they had read scathing remarks like, “bad teacher” or “change the teacher” they would consider doing exactly that. They even came up with a conditional probation period for the teacher: If s/he does not improve by next term, her/his employment will be terminated. Meanwhile the teacher stakeholder group expressed feelings of anxiety and confusion over the student comments that were outright negative with little qualification

Thought Clouds	Student Evaluation Comment	Analysis
	<div data-bbox="565 751 987 814" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">change the teacher</div> <div data-bbox="565 835 987 972" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Teacher should not have done certain stuffs! We are not American! So the teacher is did things that is inappropriate for us.</div> <div data-bbox="565 993 987 1213" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">I liked that the teacher give me feedback and he use in technology. That's what I was looking for. Sometimes students were kind of sleepy though and I wish he would take care of them because it was distraction.</div>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Write a (+) for positive comments. Write a (-) for negative comments.</li> <li>2. Which comments were helpful?</li> <li>3. Which were not helpful?</li> <li>4. How many helpful and unhelpful comments are there?</li> <li>5. What are some differences between helpful and unhelpful comments?</li> <li>6. How could the unhelpful comments be improved?</li> <li>7. What are advantages of more helpful comments?                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How might this improve teachers?</li> <li>• How might this improve the class?</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

versus comments that were fair and well-rounded such as the last comment in the sample. At least in the last comment, the student specifically tells the teacher that his/her incorporating technology was appreciated while his/her perceived leniency with lethargic behavior was not. From this comment, the teacher has some idea on how to improve. By articulating our reactions from the different stakeholders' perspectives, the class was afforded a more three-dimensional view of student evaluations and how powerful they can be in the learning context.

Upon teaching this lesson, I passed out the mid-term evaluation forms and asked my students to do me a favor. “Help me, your classmates, and this school; take your time with these evaluations,” I said. After collecting them the next day, I sat down with the stack excited to read what my students had to say. Indeed, it was evident that the lesson had resonated with the class as I was delighted to see more insightful and carefully composed comments. They were thorough, specific, and most importantly helpful in a way that did not merely place me on a pedestal or “sink my battleship.”

Here are a couple of post-lesson comments:

*Your class got more debates or discussions compared to other classes. This really helps me to improve English skill and to create basic knowledge about world wide issues. I would say we should learn to be able to handle more technical words for enjoying classes in college or university.*

*I enjoyed your class. Your visuals are interesting and helpful to understand. Also, I am satisfied with discussions because some students have lots of knowledge, interesting opinion etc... But, we have to write 3 current event sheets every week. 3 is little bit too much. It's difficult for me. I prefer at most 2.*

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## K-12 News To Care . . . (cont.)

(Continued from page 17.)

teacher qualifies with, “Teacher interactions with students reflect genuine respect and caring for individuals as well as groups of students. Students appear to trust the teacher with sensitive information.” An “Unsatisfactory” teacher would be, “Teacher interaction with at least some students is negative, demeaning, sarcastic, or inappropriate to the age or culture of the students. Students exhibit disrespect for the teacher.” (Danielson, 2007, pg. 66)

Other teachers designated as school level leaders and funded by Race to the Top and No Child Left Behind at the school use the Danielson rubric or “framework” for teacher evaluation by visiting classrooms. Danielson is an education consultant, presenter, and author of: *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*, *Enhancing Student Achievement: A Framework for School Improvement*, and, with Tom McGreal, *Teacher Evaluation to Enhance Professional Practice*.

*Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*, is currently being piloted at Pahoehoe High and Intermediate School as part of the restructuring process at the school. Of concern for teachers may be that there would not be enough support personnel directly in the classroom to help students who may be struggling with English as their L2. Students are typically mainstreamed for many classes during the day, depending on their level of proficiency, but may also remain for all their core classes in the ELL Resource Room with their ELL Resource Teacher and Educational Assistants who are also bi-lingual.

This teacher is disheartened. The art of teaching is once again being tossed into the wild world of pseudo-science, corporate jargon, and meaningless language. ELL teachers would also be affected because they are also evaluated according to the mandates of No Child Left Behind, a term still in place from the

Bush era presidency with promised funding from Race To The Top if schools perform well on standardized testing in math and English.

Disturbingly, the word “care” brings to mind a known weasel word such as “help” in the English language; weasel words are those that should usually be avoided at all costs because of their tendency to mislead, distort, deceive, inflate, circumvent and obfuscate (Lutz, 2009). In this case, “care” is being used as a term to describe the performance of a teacher in the classroom.

“Care” is such an abstract quality that it becomes meaningless and would fall

an oppressive, robotic, and often patronizing manner), level of engagement with the community at large, and service to extra-curricular activities at the school and community. In other words, forced “caring” and mandatory use of the Danielson rubric. Again, since all teachers are affected by this, it would be in teachers’ best interest to use the words “care” and “engagement” to maximum effect with students, parents, and other faculty and staff at the school.

All in all, ELL teachers are a worrying, neurotic, harried, yet focused lot of human beings. All K-12 teachers spend the day with other human beings. Many of those other humans are their students. They show they care by high expectations, persistence and fortitude, and even by their “tough love” which could be viewed by some as the opposite of caring and which could be the best possible demonstration of altruism, generosity, and morality for a particular student or group of students in a given place and time. Non-native English speaking students thrive with extra nurturing as they struggle towards English proficiency.

Teachers trained to move students from one level to the next when learning English focus on building confidence and promote risk-taking in students. They also show they care just by showing up to work in order to work with some of the most disadvantaged student populations in the country in terms of economic and social impoverishment in state designated hard-to-staff/hard-to-fill schools, such as Pahoehoe High and Intermediate School (Title One Schools). Rural isolation and a large student population qualifying for free and/or reduced lunch is one criteria of a school being designated as such.

Teachers will need to “care” or “worry” about any evaluation system or tool because their very careers hinge upon the



into the “doublespeak” category defined by George Orwell in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and taken on by William Lutz and the National Council of Teachers of English and Doublespeak Committee. The Danielson rubrics would definitely be my choice of nominees for the next Orwell Award. ELL teachers and staff are certainly a caring group of professionals. If caring can be equated with patience, they are already off the charts and off the rubric in terms of being “highly distinguished” in the caring department.

Other teacher characteristics under evaluation would be: teacher level of engagement with other teachers—presumably at mandatory meetings called Professional Learning Communities (these meetings are heavily facilitated by other teachers in

## Background Knowledge . . . (cont.)

(Continued from page 19.)

involve some or all of the following: 1. Some life experience, either vicarious or real, although this is, by no means a pre-requisite; 2. Previous works read in classes; 3. Previous concepts (or abstractions) learned in classes; 4. Previous experiences with the language (i.e., syntax, rhythms and diction); and 5. The first reading of the material.

Having prior knowledge on the topic is such a crucial factor that the absence of it impedes comprehension.

I remember my first year college students' confusion on the day when the topic of the text was rugby. Reading a text on rugby, a style of football popular in the UK and USA, the students wondered what type of game it was, and even reading the full description of the game did not help them to clearly understand and visualize the game in their mind. They did not show any interest in the reading, either.

However, when Iranian students read a sport text about soccer, their prior knowledge (including information about the number of players on each side, the type of clothing that the team wears, and different rules of the play such as penalties and off side) is activated since soccer is a popular game in Iran. They can envision the field and anything else they read in the text. Here, the soccer basics are considered as the students' background knowledge. Thus, it is concluded that having prior knowledge about the subject matter



under discussion is an important aspect to in-depth understanding.

When students already know something about the topic and it is meaningful to their culture, they learn more quickly and more effectively. According to Vygotsky (1986), the Russian psychologist, the primary resources for restructuring prior knowledge

come from culture. Having a background on cultural content is another key to comprehend a text and lack of it frequently causes misunderstanding in EFL/ESL classes. The culture-specific elements students confront in their English texts usually lack sufficient explanations as the author assumes that the reader already has the relevant background knowledge, but sometimes the background knowledge is missing or there is a mismatch between the text's and the reader's background knowledge.

To illustrate this mismatch, consider the following expert from a report that my students were to study in 'Reading the News' class: *Some people are "do it yourself" because it saves them a great deal of money.* The term *Do it yourself* implies



(Continued on page 25.)

## HITESOL Travel Grants

Travel grants are offered for members to attend the Hawai'i TESOL Conference and a TESOL conference outside of Hawai'i. The travel grants are funded entirely by membership fees, member donations, and proceeds from grant fundraising ventures, such as the Travel Grant Raffle. Travel grant winners are announced at the Hawai'i TESOL Conference.

New Travel Grant Applications become available starting in January prior to the conference every year.

This year HITESOL was able to award three neighbor island travel grants for attendance to the 2012 Conference: Bridging the Gap. HITESOL would like to congratulate the recipients and welcome them to O'ahu and the conference. We are looking forward to meeting each of you and are looking forward to reading your articles in the upcoming issues of *The Word*.

The recipients are:

- Carrie Mospens is an instructor at Hawai'i Community College, Hilo, Hawai'i.
- Misty Carmicheal is an instructor at Hawai'i Community College, Hilo, Hawai'i.
- Julie Mowrer is also an instructor at Hawai'i Community College, Hilo, Hawai'i. Julie is also presenting "Bringing Reading to Life" at this year's Hawai'i TESOL Conference.



## Technology: Friend or Foe? By Jennifer Hickman

I've often hear that what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. I would definitely agree when it comes to technology. Sometimes when I'm working with the computers at school, I feel like I could throw every single one of them out the window. Then I take a deep breath and remember the immense possibilities they bring to the classroom and to the students.

Over the past few months, I have been working in an organization that has decided to embrace technology as the teaching tool of the new century. Not only do we have computer labs, computers with projectors, but now we have ipads in the classroom several times a week. All of it is exciting and new, but more than a little overwhelming for almost all of us—even the most tech savvy.



Researcher Mark Prensky (2001) has divided the world into two groups, *digital immigrants* and *digital natives*. Digital natives are those who were born in the technology age and cannot comprehend life without it. In other words, they are *native speakers* when it comes to the endless gadgets and networks that dominate our lives. Digital immigrants are those who have had to adapt to the deluge of technology that has swept the world. They are *second-language learners* in our high-tech society. Digital immigrants in the ESL world

have much more in common with their students than they might care to admit. Perhaps that's one of the reasons that some of us feel so uncomfortable and try to push back against the technological tide.

In the middle, there are also those of (Continued on page 25.)

## K-12 News To Care . . . (cont.)

(Continued from page 22.)

outcome of evaluations. Their pay, license renewal, teaching lines, and basically, every aspect of their job depends upon receiving a satisfactory performance review. They will certainly wrinkle their brows a bit, screw up their eyes, grimace, and begin sweating, as with any other evaluation that ties teacher performance to pay and job retention.

Danielson touts that other professions such as, nurses, doctors, architects, and lawyers, participate in rigorous professional development in order to maintain their professional licenses. This is not only a false analogy when presented as an argument that the teaching profession be on par with these professionals paid at least three times as much as teachers, but is dangerously misleading because it purports that other professions are constantly being monitored by their peers and required to jump through endless trainings, meetings, and further trainings as their administrators jump on a trendy bandwagon that changes annually and even semi annually. Other professions are simply left to their own devices to carry out their jobs once licensure is granted. If they seek additional certification, specialization, or degrees, then yes, they must be evaluated before the

granting of such endorsements which enhance their professional reputation, salaries, and career longevity.

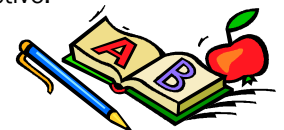
Danielson's premise is actually based upon a business model of professional enhancement or cycles of retraining that certainly other professions have fallen victim to, whether it is nurses working for huge hospitals or lawyers under a corporate umbrella; these professionals come under review in the profit and loss world.

Where does this leave K-12 ELL teachers? It leaves them plugging away with overwhelmingly abstract and vague criteria upon which they will be deemed in the range of low performing to high performing in their jobs as educators and in the end, they will cease to care about "caring" because that weasel word will become the bane of their day. Students need teachers who are experts in instructing pupils who are struggling with English. All the "care" teachers demonstrate would be shown in their teaching and commitment to the art and craft of the profession and not the amount of boxes of tissues they might go through in a year. Oops, sarcasm. Highly unsatisfactory.

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**About the Author:** Susan Kay Anderson teaches at Hawaii Community College and Pahoa High and Intermediate School. An award winning poet and journalist (2010 National Poetry Series Finalist, Jovanovich Award, Margaret Durrance Photojournalism Award, Ragdale Residency), Anderson's recent work can be found in online magazines such as: *Arthur*, *Caliban #6*, *Timothy McSweeney's Internet Tendency*, previous issues of *The Word*, and print publications such as *Beat Scene*, *Hawaii Island Journal*, *Honolulu Weekly*, *Rain Bird*, and *Square One*. She blogs at Hawaii Teacher Detective.





## Background Knowledge . . . (cont.)

(Continued from page 19.)

personal involvement in the use of skills or making something without the help of experts. "Do it yourself people," thus, refers to people who want to rely on themselves in building different things, from a tea table to a big house, which as a result, saves them much money. Consider that the above expression does not convey any of these concepts; yet native speakers of English can understand it from the background knowledge they have probably developed since childhood when "do it yourself boxes" were one of their major toys.

However, Iranian students cannot make sense of this expression, for their background knowledge and world view is derived not only from personal experience but also from their local community and cultural heritage. In Iranian society, where each person is expert in doing a particular job, nobody has to do everything by himself. *Do it yourself* activities may save a lot of money for people in modern societies but would be more expensive in less developed societies like Iran where lack of skills and facilities makes it difficult if not impossible for a person to try to build something individually.

Due to the significance of the above issue, I have provided some general implications for EFL/ESL teachers:

- Acquiring background knowledge should be the focus of second/foreign language classrooms. In foreign countries like Iran, exposure to English language is limited to English classes; thus, extensive reading



should be encouraged which in turn helps students build new vocabulary as well as background knowledge. This argument is true even for L1 learners as their understanding of texts may be influenced by differences in their background knowledge.

- Teachers should not underestimate the role prior knowledge plays in learning and should not assume that their students are ready to grasp the materials they deliver or to comprehend the texts they read. Teachers should give students opportunity to activate background knowledge on things they are familiar with. Strangman and Hall (1999) proposed a variety of strategies for assisting students to activate prior knowledge, including prompting students to bring to mind, state, and write down or record what they know. Prior knowledge activation can be accomplished through interactive discussion with teachers and peers.
- If teachers use textbooks, they should be careful about what they choose so that students' prior knowledge is activated properly. Materials presented by educators might not be in line with learners' prior knowledge and consequently, do not result in successful learning even if the educators try their best to offer the materials in the best possible way. Additionally, in cases where prior knowledge is absent, pre-reading activities can be used as a means to provide students with the relevant back-

(Continued on page 26.)

## Technology: Friend or Foe? (cont.)

(Continued from page 24.)

us who came of age right when the tech boom was starting. We have a foot in both worlds, and this makes us, perhaps, the most apt to bridge the linguistic and cultural divide between the natives and immigrants much the way children of first-generation immigrants bridge the gap between their native-speaking parents and the English-speaking world. Make no mistake, there is a gap: one that feels almost insurmountable at times.

The technology training that I have received has not taken this divide into account. It has assumed many things: that everyone has the same attitude toward technology; that new devices are intuitive for everyone; and that all teachers pop into the classroom knowing how to use technology in a meaningful way. After I started teaching about technology to the teachers at EF International, I came to the conclusion that the training needed a more holistic focus, examining all aspects of the integration of technology

into the classroom.

I recommend the inclusion of the following aspects into new technology training:

- **Attitudes toward technology** (How do the teachers feel about technology? How do the students feel? ) Without the right attitude, all training is doomed to failure. Try to talk to the teachers about how they feel and why. Get to the bottom of any anger, frustration, or other emotions that could get in the way of moving forward. You do not have to be a psychologist, but at least acknowledging these attitudes/feelings can go a long way in making the teachers feel comfortable. Also, tap into the positive emotions as well. Channel the excitement and sense of possibility. Use that as a motivator to move both yourself and the trainees forward.

(Continued on page 27.)



## Background Knowledge . . . (cont.)

(Continued from page 25.)

ground knowledge necessary to comprehend a passage or to do a task. By having students answer some related questions before reading the new material, their understanding of the new material will increase.

- Vocabulary knowledge is part of background knowledge and helps students understand the reading passage. Note that "Background knowledge does not simply mean topic familiarity but also includes knowledge in the terminologies and vocabularies involved in the passage" (Chou, 2011, p. 114).
- Building on students' prior knowledge enables them to relate the content to their own culture and experience. That is why some researchers have emphasized the importance of incorporating parallels between a student's cultural background and curriculum design. In this regard, Alice Moses (1990) stated that "a culturally responsive education links curriculum, instruction and assessment to the students' experiences, language and culture, in other words, to their prior knowledge."

### Conclusion

The positive role background knowledge plays in second and foreign comprehension is of high significance because it doubtlessly enhances the quality of study. Limited background knowledge is a major barrier to comprehension. Students who lack background knowledge or are unable to activate it cannot make considerable progress in their studies. To put in a nutshell, background knowledge is the essence of understanding. Thus, for education to be successful, it is up to the teacher to provide students with opportunities not only to activate the prior knowledge they already have but also to build more background knowledge for every reading and concept teachers introduce.

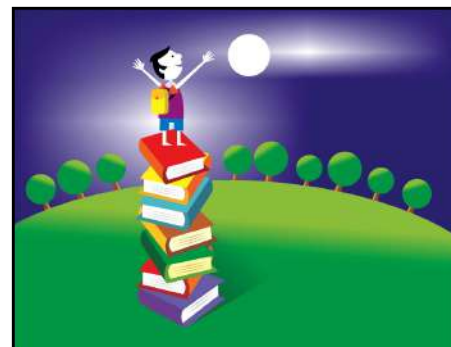
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### About the Author:

Maliheh Rezaei received an MA in TEFL from Mazandaran University, Iran. She has taught EFL for five years in Iran at a variety of learning institutions and universities. At present, she is a university lecture and researcher in TEFL/ TESL. She can be reached at <[maliherezai@yahoo.com](mailto:maliherezai@yahoo.com)>.



## Sister Affiliate TESOL Ukraine

### About Our Sister Affiliate:

TESOL Ukraine was formed in June 1995 and received International Affiliate status in October 1996. The membership includes over 500 educators involved in secondary and higher education.

TESOL Ukraine has special interest groups in ESP, methodology, research, linguistics, testing, teacher training, CALL, and young learners. The organization sponsors many regional conferences as well as the annual national conference which takes place in January. Members of TESOL Ukraine receive four TESOL Ukraine Newsletters annually. More information about our sister affiliate can be found at

<http://tesol-ukraine.at.ua>

In April 2001 Hawai'i TESOL took the first step to establish a sister relationship with TESOL Ukraine when the Executive Board agreed to the proposal. The official Partnership Agreement was signed by representatives of both affiliates during the TESOL 2002 Convention in Salt Lake City.

Also feel free to drop by the TESOLers in Ukraine collaborative web Blog at <http://tesol-ua.blogspot.com/> and leave some comments or notes to our friends in the Ukraine.



## Technology: Friend or Foe? (cont.)

(Continued from page 24.)

- **Basic use of the technology** (How do you turn it on? What are its basic functions?)  
This may seem simple but not always obvious. Every piece of equipment is slightly different from the next.
- **Teaching with technology in the classroom**  
How do you plan a lesson using it? How do you make the technology part useful instead of just something flashy? How can you use technology to make the job easier? How can it foster independent learning on the part of the language learners?
- **Troubleshooting technology**  
One of the worst feelings in the world is to feel helpless when standing in front of a group of students. Empower teachers by teaching them how to fix things themselves. They shouldn't have to be the IT people, but giving them basic methods for handling problems can help build the comfort level and confidence of the teachers. Also, provide them with resources such as websites, user manuals, and other teachers who can support them when things go wrong.
- **Classroom management with technology**  
Technology brings its own issues to class. We discovered with ipads that students try to find ways to sneak onto Facebook, take pictures of other students when they weren't looking, or do other things we didn't intend. Teachers need to be prepared to handle these issues before stepping into the classroom, not as an after thought.
- **Creation of a learning community**  
This is not so much a bullet point as an overarching theme. Nothing is worse than taking on a daunting task and feeling that you are all alone. Teamwork and dialogue in this process are key. As part of the ipad training proc-

ess, the school did lots of co-teaching and peer observation. We also had weekly meetings to discuss things that happened in the classroom, both positive and negative, and ways to handle these situations. In addition to in-person collaboration, teachers should be directed to resources for professional development, including technology blogs, chat, or any online forums for discussing the latest things in the use of technology in the classroom.

- **Securing support and maintaining communication at all levels of the organization**  
It seems that technology in the classroom has recently emerged more as a mandate from the higher-ups of organizations—deans, vice presidents, school board members—not as much from teachers themselves. These individuals at the top often do not have an understanding of the mechanics and challenges of the implementation process. One of the best ways to ensure success is to maintain communication with these individuals. As out of touch as they might seem sometimes, I have found that they often really want things to work well. Many will assist you when it comes to issues such as technology not working or lack of resources, if not for altruistic reasons, simply because consistent problems affect their reputation and that of the organization negatively.



Having this support will add legitimacy to your efforts on the ground. With all of my training, I still have fantasies of tossing my computer in the ocean sometimes, but I have come to realize that learning to use technology is a process. I am a second language learner when it comes to technology, just like the L2 students, and I need to have patience and give myself time. As long as I keep a positive attitude and remain open to possibilities, I know that I, too, can achieve the same goal in technology that the students seek in English: fluency.

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**About the Author:** Jennifer Hickman is the Academic Director of Education First International Language Center in Wai-kiki, Hawai'i. She is also the President of HITESOL.



## Not a Member of Hawai'i TESOL?

### MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

**THE WORD:** The newsletter written and edited by Hawai'i TESOL. Articles submitted from members discuss language learning and teaching, describe practical classroom techniques, and summarize relevant state and legislative activities. The Word is passed out at meetings and is available on the web at [HawaiiTESOL.org](http://HawaiiTESOL.org).

**MEETINGS:** Four to five times per year, Hawai'i TESOL has meetings open to the entire membership. Each meeting includes time to meet other ESL professionals and to promote networking.

**PROFESSIONAL INVOLVEMENT:** Members of Hawai'i TESOL are responsible for developing programs for the annual Practical Workshops and Conference, and will have the opportunity to give presentations or workshops at these events.

**DISCOUNTS:** Membership in Hawai'i TESOL also provides discounts to the Annual Hawai'i TESOL Conference.

**TRAVEL GRANTS:** Hawai'i TESOL offers travel grants for members to attend our annual conference (from a neighbor island) as well as conferences on the mainland or abroad. For details, go to the Travel Grants link.

**TESOL Connections:** Current issues of an online journal featuring articles by experts in the field, practical resources, and recent TESOL news.



*Hawai'i TESOL, the local affiliate of TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.), is a non-profit organization dedicated to building a community of professionals teaching English as a Second Language*

## Article Submission Guidelines: *The Word*

### Topics

We welcome any topic which would be of interest to HITESOL members or ESL professionals in Hawaii. We are interested in, for example: recommended internet sites (or a tech type column), book reviews, a grad student's perspective, field trips/learning outside the classroom, reports from members working overseas, content-based teaching ideas, using video and music in the classroom, online teaching, CALL, a "gripes" column, DOE news/concerns, K-12 news, outer island news, applying theory to practice, interview with someone in the field, etc. This list is by no means exhaustive. Please feel free to send any articles about these topics or others that you consider interesting to ESL educators in Hawai'i. (You do not have to be a member of HITESOL to submit an article).

### Format & Style

Articles should be no more than 4 pages, double-spaced, Times New Roman font, 12 point, attached as an MS Word document. Accompanying photos or clip art are optional but welcome. Please also include a short biography statement about the author (email address optional). In general, articles are written in a fairly informal, non-scholarly style. Please refer to previous issues of *The Word* to get a sense of the types of articles which appear in the newsletter, or contact the editors with questions.

### Submission Deadlines

Please note that the next deadline for submissions will be posted on the website. Please submit the articles via E-mail to Lisa Kawai at <[lkawai@hpu.edu](mailto:lkawai@hpu.edu)>.

We look forward to receiving your submissions!

*The Word* Newsletter Committee:

Elise Fader, Lisa Kawai, and Ashwin Pandit.



Keep up to date with Hawai'i TESOL events online at [www.hawaiiitesol.org](http://www.hawaiiitesol.org)