



# THE WORD

FEBRUARY 2020 / VOLUME 29 / ISSUE 2

# IN THIS ISSUE:

Hawai'i Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, the local affiliate of TESOL, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to building a community of professional teaching **English as a Second Language (ESL)** in the state of Hawai'i.

- 4**    **Using Data to Inform English Learner (EL) Student Instruction**  
Lauren Harvey, Andreas Wiegand, and Andrea DeGre
- 6**    **Developing Reading Skills: Top Tips for the Classroom**  
Emma Tudor
- 8**    **Preliminary Study for Paragraph Writing Instructions**  
Minako Inoue
- 10**   **Establish and Sustain Professional Learning Communities**  
Samir Omara
- 12**   **English Language Learners with HFASD: Identifying Specific Needs for Each Student** Michael Deatherage
- 15**   **Bilingual Language Acquisition Update**  
Nicole Renee Arihood
- 18**   **Addressing Absenteeism Among Marshallese Students**  
Alex Josef Kasula and Nikolas Wilson
- 20**   **Glue Girl** Bailey Ledesma
- 21**   **CBI Language Classroom Observation Report and Interview**  
Ye Won "Maria" Joo
- 23**   **TULIP: Experiencing Instructional Practices from a Learner's Perspective** Reed Riggs
- 25**   **TESOL Ukraine Spotlight** Sally La Luzerne-Oi

# Submissions



**Topics** I welcome any topic which would be of interest to HITESOL members or ESL professionals in Hawai'i. 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, neighbor island news, applying theory to practice, interview with someone in the field, blended learning, and other topics. (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 biographical 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 editor with questions.

**Dead-lines** You can send an article to me at any time and it will appear in the next issue of *The Word*. Please note that the deadline for submissions will be posted on the web site regarding the upcoming issue.

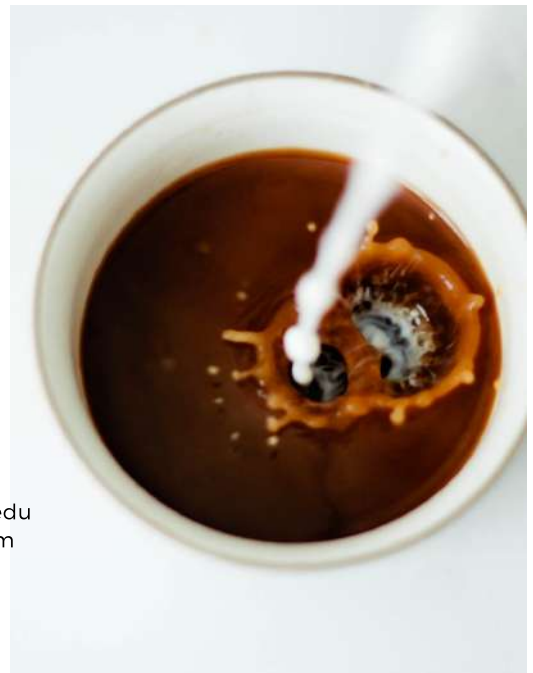
Submit to Lisa Kawai, Editor  
[lkawai@hpu.edu](mailto:lkawai@hpu.edu)

## Officers:

President	Tony Silva; <a href="mailto:silvaa@hawaii.edu">silvaa@hawaii.edu</a>
Vice President	Samantha Hume; <a href="mailto:sjhume@hawaii.edu">sjhume@hawaii.edu</a>
Treasurer	Carrie Mospens; <a href="mailto:mospens@hawaii.edu">mospens@hawaii.edu</a>
Membership Secretary	Brent Green; <a href="mailto:brent.green@byuh.edu">brent.green@byuh.edu</a>
Program Committee Chair	Monica Vidal; <a href="mailto:mvidal@hawaii.edu">mvidal@hawaii.edu</a>
Socio-Political Action Chair	Shawn Ford; <a href="mailto:sford@hawaii.edu">sford@hawaii.edu</a>
Editor: The Word	Lisa Kawai; <a href="mailto:lkawai@hpu.edu">lkawai@hpu.edu</a>
Copyeditor	Lono Willis; <a href="mailto:lonowillis@gmail.com">lonowillis@gmail.com</a>
Members at Large	Priscilla Faucette; <a href="mailto:faucette@hawaii.edu">faucette@hawaii.edu</a>
	Mark Wolfersberger; <a href="mailto:maw44@byuh.edu">maw44@byuh.edu</a>
Big Island Chapter Rep.	Chrissy Sugiyama; <a href="mailto:chrissys@hawaii.edu">chrissys@hawaii.edu</a>

## Board:

Conference Chair	Samantha Hume; <a href="mailto:sjhume@hawaii.edu">sjhume@hawaii.edu</a>
HITESOL / TESOL Ukraine Liaison	Jean Kirschenmann; <a href="mailto:jkirschenmann@hpu.edu">jkirschenmann@hpu.edu</a>
	Sally La Luzerne-Oi; <a href="mailto:slaluzerneoi@gmail.com">slaluzerneoi@gmail.com</a>
Social Media Chair	Kristen Urada; <a href="mailto:kurada@hawaii.edu">kurada@hawaii.edu</a>
Graduate Student Rep	Mery Diez Ortega; <a href="mailto:mdiez@hawaii.edu">mdiez@hawaii.edu</a>
Webmaster	Contact Tony Silva; <a href="mailto:silvaa@hawaii.edu">silvaa@hawaii.edu</a>



Be sure to opt-into the job announcements through the list-serve.  
See previous issues for directions if you have any issues.

# USING DATA TO INFORM ENGLISH LEARNER (EL) STUDENT INSTRUCTION

Written by LAUREN HARVEY, ANDREAS WIEGAND, AND ANDREA DEGRE

## About the Author:

**Lauren Harvey** is an EL/AAPI Specialist/Grant Manager at the Hawaii Department of Education. *Email: lauren.harvey@k12.hi.us*

**Andreas Wiegand** is an EL/AAPI Specialist/Grant Director at the Hawaii Department of Education. *Email: andreas.wiegand@k12.hi.us*

**Andrea DeGre** is an EL/AAPI Resource Teacher at the Hawaii Department of Education. *Email: andrea.degre@k12.hi.us*

As outlined in the Hawai'i's English Learners (EL) online data story (2019), about 18% of Hawai'i public school students are, or have been, English Learners (ELs). Hawai'i's K-12 English Learner (EL) student population represents over 70 different native languages, with Ilokano, Chuukese, Marshallese, Tagalog, and Spanish being the most prevalent. As of 2018, students who exited EL services before high school were more likely to graduate on time (90%) than students who were never EL (86%), signaling that EL students can attain high levels of academic achievement. On the other hand, students who were still actively EL students in high school had a lower graduation rate (68%), especially for Marshallese (40%) and Chuukese (32%) students. It is critical that EL students are provided with high-quality, data-informed instruction to reach English proficiency. To provide educators at the state, complex area (districts), and school level with actionable information to better understand and close achievement and opportunity gaps for their EL populations, the five-year federal Hawai'i Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Data Disaggregation (D2) Grant has focused on developing data tools and sharing effective instructional practices in coordination with project partners and Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) from three Hawai'i complex areas (districts).

According to TESOL (2018), "teachers can best adapt instruction to students that they know well" (p. 37). The Hawai'i AAPI D2 SMEs provided input on the following two questions: 1.) What are the key data points that teachers need to be able to instruct an EL student in the best possible way; and 2.) How can teachers use these key data points to inform student instruction? An in-depth content analysis of SME responses identified important themes (Creswell, 2003). In response to the question, "What are the key data points that teachers need to be able to instruct an EL student in the best possible way?", SMEs identified 22 key data points:

Quantitative	Qualitative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students' languages (first/home/most spoken)</li> <li>• ACCESS and WAPT scores (L, S, R, W, Overall)</li> <li>• Attendance</li> <li>• School history/mobility/educational background</li> <li>• # of ACCESS administrations (LTEL)</li> <li>• Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) data</li> <li>• Growth to Target (GTT) progress data</li> <li>• i-Ready data</li> <li>• DIBELS data</li> <li>• Content area grades</li> <li>• Ethnicity</li> <li>• Retention</li> <li>• Literacy in L1 and English</li> <li>• Instructional setting</li> <li>• Behavior</li> <li>• Course schedule/classes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personality</li> <li>• Learning style</li> <li>• Family situation</li> <li>• Cultural assets</li> <li>• Future goals</li> <li>• Adjustment/transition issues</li> </ul>

All three SME groups had four data points in common: languages (first/home/most spoken); ACCESS domain scores; attendance; and school history/mobility/educational background. SMEs indicated that these four data points are not necessarily more important than the other data points that were identified, but they are very commonly used data points. The majority of indicators identified by SMEs are quantitative, concrete data points available through the Longitudinal Data System (LDS), electronic Comprehensive Student Support System (eCSSS), or another school-level student data system. Other indicators are qualitative, individual, student-specific data points available through teachers getting to know students.

While many data points are quantitative, SMEs felt strongly that qualitative, individual student-specific data points are critical to informing instruction. According to one SME group, "qualitative data helps us build interpersonal relationships, humanizes the numbers, and the reasons behind the quantitative data." This is supported by TESOL (2018), which asserted that teachers need to know about their EL students' language proficiency in the four English domains (listening, speaking, reading, writing), as well as educational background, home language literacy level, cultural knowledge, learning preferences, interests, talents, life goals, and socio-emotional background. It is critical that teachers get to know their learners by gaining information about them and by embracing and leveraging the assets that learners bring to the classroom to enhance learning (TESOL, 2018).

## USING DATA TO INFORM ENGLISH LEARNER (EL) STUDENT INSTRUCTION

While SMEs identified students' domain-level English language proficiency scores to be a key data point, it is also critical that all teachers have knowledge of how to appropriately scaffold across the content areas based on what EL students can do at each level of proficiency. Harvey and Teemant (2012) found that classroom teachers need "a better understanding of what English proficiency level competencies mean in order to appropriately differentiate their content area instruction" (p. 44). This is supported by TESOL (2018), which stated that "for English Learners to have access to challenging, grade-level curricula and be successful in school, teachers must understand how second language development occurs and apply that understanding to their lesson designs and assessments. They must also teach in culturally responsive ways that value the learners' languages and heritages" (p. viii).

Overall, SME input indicates that there are a variety of quantitative and qualitative key data points that teachers need to utilize in order to effectively instruct EL students. To access these data, teachers need strong data literacy skills to effectively navigate LDS and teachers need to get to know their students on an individual level by gathering personal information. Together, all of these key data points can best inform EL teaching and learning.

In response to the question, "How can teachers use these key data points to inform student instruction?", SMEs developed if/then statements outlining teacher actions and student outcomes:

If	Then
If teachers know which specific domain the EL student is struggling with (i.e., ACCESS, SBA, I-Ready, STAR, etc.).	then they can provide targeted supports to increase students' domain scores and related data points.
If teachers know their students' strengths and needs based on ACCESS scores and learning styles.	then they will be enabled and empowered to effectively differentiate for ELs and set reasonable and achievable academic goals.
If teachers know more about their EL students' history.	then they will be able to enhance relationships which will consequently increase student engagement and improve attendance.
If teachers know their students' interests and develop lessons that are relevant to students.	then students will feel connected and engaged applying understanding & knowledge across other content areas.
If teachers provide students with opportunities to use their native language.	then students will be able to participate and demonstrate their understanding.

One SME group pointed out that "several if/then statements relate to teachers knowing the students' cultural assets and personal stories." Another SME group noted that the if/then statements aligned to TESOL Principle 1: Know Your Learners (TESOL, 2018). The third SME group indicated that the if/then statements focused on providing targeted instructional supports and differentiation as well as meeting the needs of the 'whole-child.' By accessing LDS reports on EL students' English proficiency scores, the number of ACCESS assessments, Growth to Target (GTT) data, and by using that data to inform instruction, teachers can provide a learning environment that builds academic language proficiency. By gathering individual data on the students' home cultures, interests, personalities, learning styles, and goals, teachers can plan instruction that better engages students and incorporates their personal and cultural knowledge.

As a result of Hawai'i's AAPI D2 grant, new data features and reports have been developed and key data points have been identified to support all teachers to implement data informed English Learner (EL) student instruction. This work will continue to support teachers to ensure that data are used to plan for engaging instruction, differentiation, and opportunities to leverage students' linguistic and cultural assets.

One SME group pointed out that "several if/then statements relate to teachers knowing the students' cultural assets and personal stories." Another SME group noted that the if/then statements aligned to TESOL Principle 1: Know Your Learners (TESOL, 2018). The third SME group indicated that the if/then statements focused on providing targeted instructional supports and differentiation as well as meeting the needs of the 'whole-child.' By accessing LDS reports on EL students' English proficiency scores, the number of ACCESS assessments, Growth to Target (GTT) data, and by using that data to inform instruction, teachers can provide a learning environment that builds academic language proficiency. By gathering individual data on the students' home cultures, interests, personalities, learning styles, and goals, teachers can plan instruction that better engages students and incorporates their personal and cultural knowledge.

As a result of Hawai'i's AAPI D2 grant, new data features and reports have been developed and key data points have been identified to support all teachers to implement data informed English Learner (EL) student instruction. This work will continue to support teachers to ensure that data are used to plan for engaging instruction, differentiation, and opportunities to leverage students' linguistic and cultural assets.



### References

- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Harvey, L., & Teemant, A. (2012). Who does what and why?: ESL district administrators' views on the roles of ESL specialists and mainstream teachers. *Indiana Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (INTESOL) Journal*, 9(1), 35-50.
- Hawai'i's English Learners. Hawai'i Data EXchange Partnership (2019). Retrieved from [http://hawaiidxp.org/quick\\_data/datastory/el](http://hawaiidxp.org/quick_data/datastory/el)
- TESOL International Association (TESOL). (2018). *The 6 principles for exemplary teaching of English learners: Grades K-12*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

# DEVELOPING READING SKILLS: TOP TIPS FOR THE CLASSROOM

Written by  
EMMA TUDOR

Reading theories for English as a Second Language have developed over the years from bottom-up processing to top-down processing and cognitive to metacognitive views. More traditional theories, such as bottom-up processing, focused on decoding the specific language used in a text, including letters, words, and grammatical structures, with importance on knowing the meaning of every individual piece of language. Later, theories moved to a more cognitive view, such as top-down processing, which enhanced the role of background knowledge when reading, including predicting, skimming, and scanning techniques. Most recently, attention has shifted to a metacognitive view, which is based on the control and manipulation that a reader has on the act of comprehending a text (Thornbury, 2006). Developing both bottom-up and top-down processing skills and jumping back and forth between these techniques as needed while reading can help ESL learners become more flexible readers. This allows them to read according to their purpose and get the information they need quickly. Learners in today's ESL classroom are showing more understanding of the need and importance of top-down processing techniques; however, we still see a majority of learners reaching for a translator or dictionary, wanting to decode every individual section of the text and reverting back to bottom-up practises. This article helps summarize some of the important top-down skills and tips on how to introduce them in a classroom.

## Top-down Processing Skills

### *Predicting*

Prediction is a pre-reading activity in which readers try to guess what they are going to read from triggers such as the title, images, names or text type. Prediction helps activate a reader's schemata (the assumptions we make on the world from what we have already experienced and how our minds organize these assumptions and experiences). This helps resolve difficulties and helps readers make sense of the sentences, which can help with better comprehension of texts.

### *Skimming*

Skimming can be defined as when a reader reads the text quickly and superficially to get a general idea of the meaning. It is a common skill used when reading newspapers, messages and emails. Readers use their discourse knowledge of how different texts are

person would. Learners in an ESL classroom often come organized, as well as their schemata, to help understand the text. Skimming places more importance on understanding the meaning of the whole text rather than structures or items in the text. If a word is not understood, readers can guess the meaning from overall context (Scrivener, 2005); in most instances, it's not necessary to understand every word to get the gist.

### *Scanning*

Scanning is a reading skill used when reading a text in search of specific information, ignoring everything else (Thornbury, 2006). It involves running your eyes rapidly over several lines of print simultaneously while keeping the target key words in mind. This skill is often used to locate a specific piece of information quickly from a great deal of information and is useful for finding dates, names, specific facts and statistics, for example, train times on a transportation schedule.

## Top Tips for the Classroom

### *1. Practice Makes Perfect!*

According to Glendinning and Holmstrom (2004), teachers can help make readers' predictions more accurate. Readers may have little practice with making predictions, lack confidence in contributing their thoughts, and often may predict the wrong meaning, so it is important to provide practice opportunity in the classroom.

### *Teaching Suggestions*

- **Speculation Activity:** Learners look at action pictures of people in different situations and make predictions about what has happened to the person. For example, a picture of someone finishing a race, falling down, shopping, at the doctors etc.
- **Peer Predictions:** Learners make predictions about their peers, using prompt questions, for example, where they are from, what languages they speak, what hobbies they have. Learners can give reasons for their predictions to help develop their thinking.

### *2. Choose Appropriate Materials*

As schemata are different for each individual, there may be a mismatch between that of the reader and of the author, making texts too difficult to make predictions. For example, a younger reader may find it more difficult to connect with reading texts or topics than an older

## DEVELOPING READING SKILLS: TOP TIPS FOR THE CLASSROOM

from very different cultures and societies, so they will have different presuppositions, in addition to differences in language, script, opinions, beliefs, and values. It is therefore vital to choose materials with topics and themes that learners can relate to.

### Teaching Suggestions

- **Needs Analysis:** Find out about your learners at the start of the course through a needs-analysis questionnaire, including their previous learning experiences and personal details about where they are from/hobbies/age etc. Throughout the course, take note of the material and topics that learners have responded well to and use this to inform future lesson planning with appropriate reading materials.
- **Strategically Group Students:** Group or pair learners of varying backgrounds when doing activities so that they can share their schematic knowledge.
- **Use Authentic Material:** Bring in authentic and current material, such as newspapers, timetables, or leaflets, which are intended to be objective and rely less on presuppositions.

### 3. Emphasize the Importance of Gist

Every time learners check a word's meaning, they interrupt their reading and thinking. Nuttall (2000) believes that learners should be discouraged from using dictionaries because the usual tendency is to use them far too often. Instead, we can train readers to see that decoding every single word is not always necessary to understand the gist of a text.

### Teaching Suggestions

- **Limit Dictionaries:** Limit the use of dictionaries to only five words per text so learners have to decide which words are priorities to understanding the text. This develops the learner's skill in recognizing which words are important for meaning and that some definitions are not necessary to know.
- **Word Replacement Activity:** Replace some words in a text with nonsense words (e.g., heb, snud, drit) and ask learners to answer comprehension questions about the gist, ensuring that the nonsense words do not interfere with the meaning of the text. When the reader sees that they are able to answer the questions, this demonstrates to them that they do not need to focus on or understand every word in order to comprehend a text.

### 4. Encourage Learner Training

A large part of encouraging learner training is to help learners find out how they read most effectively and encourage reading English outside the classroom.

Encouraging learners to take responsibility for learning can help produce more effective and independent readers.

### Teaching Suggestions

- **Independent Reading Activities:** Set independent reading tasks as homework for learners, for example reading a newspaper article of their choice. This gives them freedom to choose what they read and trains learners to take responsibility outside of the classroom.
- **Encourage Self-Reflection:** Ask learners to self-reflect on their reading skills, after practicing a variety of different reading tasks (e.g., predicting, skimming, scanning). This will help highlight learners' strengths and development areas, giving them insight into how they can focus their reading strategies to become more effective readers.

### Conclusion

While more traditional techniques using decoding techniques should continue to be applied when reading, raising learners' awareness of top-down processing skills such as predicting, skimming, and scanning helps break down what it means 'to read.' Along with giving readers the opportunity to practice these skills inside and outside the classroom, this awareness raising will help learners increase their reading comprehension and language acquisition, making them more successful readers.



### References

- Glendinning, E., & Holmstrom, B. (2004). *Study reading* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Nuttall, C. (2000). *Teaching reading skills in a foreign language*. Oxford, England: Macmillan.
- Scrivener, J. (2005). *Learning teaching*. Oxford, England: Macmillan.
- Thornbury, S. (2006). *An A to Z of ELT*. Oxford, England: Macmillan.

### About the Author:

**Emma Tudor** is the Vice President of Standards for English USA and Senior Operations Manager for EF Education First. Her work has been presented in multiple, international education publications, and she is a regular presenter at conferences throughout the US.

# PRELIMINARY STUDY FOR PARAGRAPH WRITING INSTRUCTIONS

Written By Minako Inoue

## Background of the study

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) in Japan has emphasized the need for English language education to enhance globalization as well as to prepare for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics. To improve students' practical abilities in the English language, use of the communicative approach has been encouraged. However, the use of this approach has resulted in students having a low level of basic reading or writing skills, which are often associated with a lack of knowledge regarding vocabulary and grammar. In 2017, MEXT tested the English skills of 60,000 third-year junior high school students. The results of this test revealed that less than 30% of students' skills met the English proficiency standards set by MEXT. In the writing section, approximately 20% of the students scored a zero. The new Course of Study for English prescribed by MEXT focuses on strengthening students' "productive abilities," with awareness of the growing need for writing skills as a part of international communication. However, the current practice for writing instructions has been criticized for being inadequate because many students are only aware of the below-sentence-level structure.

## English writing instructions in Japan

Many studies have reported that writing instruction heavily involves translation while ensuring to follow grammatical rules. Free writing tasks wherein students describe their ideas or thoughts rarely appeared in the textbook during the junior high or high school period. Despite these conditions, paragraph writing has become a popular approach at the tertiary level in Japan.

## Purpose of this report

As described earlier, with limited knowledge regarding vocabulary and grammar and limited exposure to free-writing, it is not easy for college students to write a paragraph. Therefore, it is necessary to design effective paragraph writing instructions that match students' needs. After carefully examining the context, a systematic needs-analysis should be conducted, which becomes the foundation of designing, implementing, and evaluating instruction. This report is conducted as a preliminary study that serves to aid future studies. It includes a brief summary of problems related to Japanese students' paragraph writing as well as the results of questionnaires that examine college students' knowledge and experience of English writing.

## Brief summary of issues related to Japanese students' paragraph writing

A paragraph consists of the topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence. In terms of paragraph cohesion, coherence and logical development is necessary for organizing the paragraph to ensure that readers can understand the writers' intention and main point. Studies regarding paragraph writing have indicated several issues among Japanese students.

### ① Lack of writing experience and limited knowledge of vocabulary and grammar

Yasuda et al. (2014) mentioned that throughout compulsory education, students have limited experience in terms of free writing. Kamoshita (2010) reported that students' limited knowledge regarding vocabulary and grammar hinders them from creating sentences that express their ideas or thoughts.

### ② Lack of knowledge regarding the concept of paragraphs or paragraph structures

Many Japanese students are confused with "Japanese danraku," which is defined as "a part of a long passage and a division group of the same content" (Matsumura, 1999) and "a major division in a long passage" (Shinmura, 2001). However, the rules or requirements for "danraku" are unclear. Japanese writers do not have to follow specific rules and can flexibly create "danraku," whereas English writers are expected to adhere to specific principles while forming a paragraph. As a result, Japanese students have a tendency to organize paragraphs in a similar manner as they would for "danraku," without a logical combination of topic sentences and supporting sentences.

### ③ Unfamiliarity with deductive writing format

Although the deductive style of writing exists in Japanese writing, the inductive style of writing, which features the "delayed introduction of purpose," is more commonly used in Japanese writing (Hinds, 1990, p. 98).

### ④ Less emphasis on writers' responsibilities

In Japanese writing, readers are often considered to be responsible for determining the objective of the paper, for making connections between the ideas, and for acquiring fundamental background knowledge prior to reading.



# PRELIMINARY STUDY FOR PARAGRAPH WRITING INSTRUCTIONS

However, in English writing, writers are often assumed to be responsible for creating a common understanding between readers and writers. In addition to the aforementioned points, it is reported that Japanese writers experience difficulty in using connectors. A revised process including providing feedback is often lacking in instructions.

## Findings from questionnaires

Questionnaires were prepared to obtain information regarding students' knowledge and experience in English writing. The target population was 31 second-year students in the Welfare and Psychology major, who are also enrolled in required English for Specific Purpose classes. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: In the first part, 9 English sentences, which included 5 sentences and 4 phrases, were presented to the participants. These sentences were prepared with the aim to examine their understanding of sentences and phrases; the second part examines students' experience regarding English writing.

### Students' knowledge and experience of English sentences

Twelve percent of participants responded with all correct answers. These students had free sentence writing experience. However, none of them claimed that they could explain the difference between sentences and phrases. Among the participants, 16% of the students selected only one sentence, and another 16% of the students selected two sentences. These students concluded that the other writings are not considered sentences. Among the participants, 72% of the students considered imperative sentences with exclamation marks to be phrases and 80% considered one-word imperative sentences to be phrases.

### Students' knowledge and experience of English paragraphs

Twenty-eight of the participants had experienced situations wherein they were required to create a sentence (instead of merely providing a translation), whereas the others had never experienced free sentence writing in English. In terms of paragraph writing, 88% of the students had heard of the word "paragraph," but only 12% claimed that they understood the meaning of the word "paragraph." These students had experience in writing a paragraph in English. Among them, 4% indicated that they had written journals and another 4% indicated that they had expressed their thoughts in written English in their high school classes. The remaining 4% had attended college writing classes and thus had experience writing various paragraphs.

## Discussion

The findings reveal that most students (88%) seem to have inadequate knowledge regarding sentence components, thus making it difficult for them to distinguish between sentences and phrases. Moreover, most students (72%) did not experience free writing in their previous education.

In terms of paragraphs, most students indicated that they have never heard of the word "paragraph," whereas 12% of the students had paragraph writing experience in their high school or in their college English writing class.

In this situation, the sudden introduction of paragraph writing in the college English class may not be adequate or effective. Many students may not even be able to produce sentences wherein they can express their thoughts or ideas. Before paragraph writing, students should engage in sufficient free composition activities that are designed to involve their cognitive and social knowledge. These activities should help students to build basic skills for writing sentences and gain knowledge regarding vocabulary and grammar. Following these activities, a process approach for paragraph writing should be introduced. First, students should be exposed to various types of paragraphs and recognize the components and structure of paragraphs. They should then start pre-writing activities, such as brainstorming, wherein they can use their critical and logical thinking skills. Moreover, students should be encouraged to construct paragraphs with appropriate connectors and logical development while learning how to recognize readers and understanding their responsibilities as writers.

To plan, implement, and evaluate appropriate writing instructions, a needs-analysis should be conducted. Instructors should be aware of students' abilities and needs and consider the factors that hinder students' writing activities. In the implementing process, instructors carefully monitor students' writing and activities, and they should provide help, such as scaffolding and feedback and revisions to support and improve students' learning.

Few studies have examined learner-centered approaches for writing paragraphs in Japan. Therefore, this report serves as a preliminary study or an initial exploration of issues related to paragraph writing instruction.

## References

- Hinds, J. (1990). *Inductive, deductive, quasi-inductive: Expository writing in Japanese, Korean, Chinese and Thai*. In U. Connor & A. Jones (Eds.), *Coherence in writing* (pp. 81-109). Alexandria, VA: TESOL.
- Kamoshita, K. (2010). *An empirical study on teaching second language writing to beginner-leveled college students*. *Bulletin of Tokyo Polytechnic University*, 33(2), 55-61.
- Matsumura, A. (Ed.). (1999). *Daijirin* (2nd ed.). Tokyo: Sanseido.
- Shinmura, I. (Ed.). (1998). *Koojien* (5th ed.). Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.
- Yasuda, S., Ohi, K., & Itatsuki, Y. (2014). *Writing instruction at tertiary education in Japan*. *ABAET Journal*, 18, 55-78.

### About the Author:

Minako Inoue graduated From UCSB with a Ph.D. in Education. Currently, she teaches English at the Health Science University in Japan. She has been a member of TESOL Hawai'i since 2015.

# Establish and Sustain Professional Learning Communities

Written By Samir Omara

Nowadays, life, technology, pedagogy and education change greatly and quickly. Learning is no longer restricted to classrooms or school years. To act upon Dewey's quote that "education is not preparation for life; education is life itself" (p. 239), twenty-first century students need to develop into life-long learners who always learn and develop everywhere. Teachers need to focus on skills that students need to develop and practise to be life-long learners. They need to focus on characteristics that help them develop to become life-long learners inside and outside classrooms. According to Glabicka (2015), life-long learning is "pursued throughout life: learning that is flexible, diverse and available at different times and in different places" (p. 51). Life-long learning is beneficial for personal development of individuals, social development of communities, and the economic progress of societies. To help maximize life-long learning for individual and collective benefits, there are some different skills that students need to develop to become life-long learners. These skills include basic computer skills, speed reading, time management, effective study skills, financial management skills, negotiation skills, mental wellness and stress management, writing a resume and searching the web. There are some characteristics that help educators to develop learners' life-long learning skills. Teachers need to set learning goals, encourage learning ownership, turn mistakes into opportunities, encourage curiosity at all ages, promote problem-solving, encourage creativity, teach resourcefulness, show students that learning happens every day, introduce them to new places and experiences, and help them expand their experiences.

In the twenty-first century, life, technology, and education have been changing continuously. Technology impacts life and education. Education helps students to practice and impacts life. In order to keep up with 'change,' professional development has been a key requirement for teachers. Life-long learning has been a key requirement for students. To sustain teachers' professional development, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) help teachers to reflect on, share, and develop their practices. To help prepare different students for life, teachers should be engaged in PLCs that share common interests.

to reflect on, share, and develop their practices. To help prepare different students for life, teachers should be engaged in PLCs that share common interests. Hord (1997) defined PLCs as school-wide communities that "aim at continuous improvement of teaching practices by involving staff in in-depth, systematic, collaborative activities of professional development at the school level" (p. 2). DuFour (2004) stressed the idea that PLCs help teachers focus on student learning as teachers "work together to analyze and improve their classroom practice" (p. 1). They develop their teaching in order to impact their students by helping them to obtain, practice, and develop different skills of life-long learning. As teachers continue to teach, reflect and share collaboratively, they impact students by helping them to be life-long learners. Later, those learners will start jobs that do not currently exist.

To develop teaching and learning, teachers should start professional learning communities that have numerous benefits. PLCs help teachers to link research and practice. Teachers put theories into action in classrooms, reflect on, and enhance their practice. PLCs help teachers to go through how things are done and how they should be done, so that they can develop teaching practice collaboratively. They help teachers address challenges of practice by defining and overcoming them productively. They help teachers to enhance student learning by defining twenty-first century skills that students should develop. They help teachers sustain students' life-long learning and teachers' continuing professional development. To enable students, teachers should help develop students' life-long learning, which is beneficial for the personal development of individuals, social development of communities, and economic progress of societies. Life-long learning helps students continuously define, reflect on, and develop their goals. It helps them communicate with others directly and indirectly. It helps develop students' mindset and future careers, so that they can take part in developing their societies socially and economically. It helps students to develop their self-esteem and self-realization as they always define their needs and goals, learn from challenges in order to create opportunities for themselves and their communities.

# ESTABLISH AND SUSTAIN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Professional learning communities help teachers continue professional development. To establish effective PLCs, teachers need to get involved in professional discussions where they share, reflect on, and develop teaching strengths, challenges, and solutions. They can use data to set and modify instruction by reflecting on the students' learning. They can learn from formative assessment to modify teaching. They can cut their workload and share methodologies and feedback. They can share how they teach and how to overcome previous and anticipated challenges. To keep PLCs growing and sustainable, teachers always need to be engaged in reflective and challenging dialogues. They need to address the most pressing instructional challenges within their own contexts. They share and agree on the priorities to save time and effort. They need to provide constructive feedback and continuous support. Constructive feedback helps teachers to deliver continuous support, so teachers can impact teaching and learning productively.

To put professional learning communities "PLCs" or communities of practice "CoPs" into action, the national continuing professional development "Teachers First Egypt" has helped thousands of public-school teachers to be actively and productively engaged in professional learning communities since September 2015. Teachers are empowered to be reflective practitioners through an online associate program, workshops and mentoring, and lighthouse school networks. They go through different comprehensive phases to develop their autonomy of behavioural change which in turn builds the sustainability of the professional development. Firstly, they go through the online phase: The Teachers First Associate Program. They do an online interactive introductory course, generate a personal professional baseline action plan and interact through the Associate program forum. Next, they take part in Teachers First workshops and mentoring activities. They attend face-to-face workshops to go through the behavioral change framework themes, topics and professional behaviors and they are coached through in-workshop and in-school mentoring.

They are also continuously supported and linked to colleagues locally and nationally by the Teachers First platform "Lengo." The Lengo platform helps teachers to obtain resources, track, share and reflect on behavioral change practices and experiences. They then go through the Teachers First Lighthouse Schools Networks. In the PLCs or CoPs nearby schools collaborate to create physical networks to define, share and develop their behavioral change and professional development sustainably.

They are empowered to participate in and/or bring in aspects of other education reform changes. These phases help to develop the teachers' mindset, behavioral change, and professional development. Thus, enabling them to act upon teaching, learning, assessment and digital resources, incorporate changes and new practices continuously, productively and sustainably.

## References

- Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education*. New York: Macmillan.
- DuFour, R. (2004). *What is a Professional Learning Community?* *The Journal of Educational Leadership*, 61(8), 1-7. Retrieved from <file:///F:/NT%2018%20Paper/NileTESOL%202018/PLC/What%20is%20a%20PLC%202014.pdf>
- Glabicka, K. (2015). *The importance of lifelong learning in XXI century*. *Central European Review of Economics & Finance*, 8(2), 51-62. Retrieved from [file:///F:/NT%2018%20Paper/NileTESOL%202018/Lifelong%20leaning/CEREF\\_Vol.8\\_No%202\\_Glabicka.pdf](file:///F:/NT%2018%20Paper/NileTESOL%202018/Lifelong%20leaning/CEREF_Vol.8_No%202_Glabicka.pdf)
- Hord, S. M. (1997). *Professional learning communities: Communities of continuous inquiry and improvement*. Austin, Texas: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. Retrieved from <http://www.sedl.org/pubs/change34/plc-cha34.pdf>



## About the Author:

Samir Omara has been an English teacher and teacher trainer since 1998 in Egypt. He has received diplomas of education, special education and AUC educational leadership. He took a "TEFL" course at University of Exeter and "Management & Leadership Development" course at University of Westminster in the UK. He has presented at ILACE, NileTESOL, IPAWL, Inspire Egypt, TESOL, BETT and ASES. He is a RELO-NileTESOL mentor trainer, AE E-Teacher Alumni, MOOC Alumni Facilitator, AUC Professional Certified Trainer, PAT and AMIDEAST teacher trainer. He also received the 2019 "UK Alumni Professional Development" award. Currently, he is Head of Professional Development for Teachers First Egypt and NileTESOL 2020 President-Elect. He can be reached at [samir.omara76@yahoo.com](mailto:samir.omara76@yahoo.com).

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS WITH HFASD:

## Identifying Specific Needs for Each Student

Written by Michael Deatherage

---

Autism is a well-known neurological disorder affecting approximately 1 out of every 68 students and, as the name autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) implies, there is not a set parameter defining exactly what autism is and that every child will exhibit the exact same patterns or symptoms resulting in the diagnosis of ASD. Combine this with the education system that, much like ASD, differs from district to district in its own understanding of what and who should be provided Special Education (SpEd) while never truly agreeing on any one way of providing resources. Obviously, the need for a district wide guideline becomes apparent. Data supporting autism research in education is being gathered from all over the world to further understand the autistic spectrum and where resources need to be allocated to meet the unique needs of the student. There lies, on opposing ends of the autism spectrum, two extremes which show the obvious need for students with as many combinations of ASD symptoms as there are keys in the world. These opposing ends of the spectrum are Low-functioning Autism (LFA) and Higher Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder (HFASD).

As research shows, educators are becoming more aware of students with HFASD in a general education classroom, yet these students do not have either a diagnosis, an Individual Education Program (IEP) or both due to the students often not needing further interventions for academic success. Current research results support theories suggesting that students with HFASD need some type of intervention beyond what is provided to inclusion teachers where academic intervention or traditional behavior is not the target but leaning more towards the social aspects of student learning. As Professor Stephen Shore shared, "If you've met one person on the autism

spectrum, you've met one person on the spectrum" (About Autism, 2019). In other words, every student with autism cannot be grouped together to receive the same, or even similar, interventions, but should be evaluated on a case by case basis. Research data shows that there is an urgent need for HFASD interventions for behavior by the educator who may not have the resources or access to professionally trained specialists in the autism specialty, yet they realize that there may be a student with undiagnosed HFASD or who is diagnosed, but conventional Preventative Resource to Intervention Manual strategies have little or no effect on.

### Students with HFASD

Before providing guidelines for HFASD inclusion, definitions must be understood and agreed upon for complete transparency in determining best approaches for the student with HFASD. The foremost agreement is to accept at what matrix of the autism spectrum HFASD lies in or what symptoms of autism the student overtly exhibits that are in comparison to other typically developing children. One of the most discernible differences between HFASD and Low-functioning Autism (LFA) is the command of communication and the understanding of communication for synthesis into interaction. Also, it is understood that autism is not a condition which is easily defined by using narrow parameters but varies in severity from mild to extreme symptoms that are associated with language and cognitive skills (Ozonoff, Dawson, & McPartland, 2015).

Leo Kanner (1944) identified autism in 1943 and diagnosis has continued to evolve since to determine exactly what symptoms are exhibited for precise autistic patterns, which have grown from being only autism to four types of inclusive diagnoses: Low-functioning, HFASD, Pervasive Developmental Disorder - Not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS), Rett's and Childhood Disintegrative Disorders (National Autism Center, 2015). These multiple diagnosis for different spectrums show that the further symptoms move to LFA on the spectrum, the blurrier the definitions may become; however, other observations will lead the educator to determine if the student is HFASD or ASD.

Observations become a necessity in determining which tool for the educator is the most beneficial in understanding the difficulties HFASDs have in the classroom and how to provide resources for the HFASD with or without an IEP or 504. Autism spectrum disorder, according to all research on the subject matter, is to be

## Identifying Specific Needs for Each Student



defined as the wide range of strengths and challenges students with ASD can exhibit in the classroom setting (NAC, 2015) while having learning disabilities that are “expressed in one or more skill domains” (Donovan, & Cross, 2002, p.245). This definition clearly creates a definitive separation between emotional and behavioral disorders that may exhibit similar symptoms as ASD but lack the multiple designators of other disorders (Donovan, & Cross, 2002, p.262).

### Similarities Among the Sources

There is common data among most HFASD studies based on determining what types of corrective classroom management practices can be productive to replacing maladaptive behaviors. As all sources used stated in some way, “few studies have investigated . . . individuals with HFASD” (Khor, Melvin., Reid, & Gray, 2014), the importance of determining students with HFASD should be the focus of subsequent researches so that behavior intervention can occur to help with multiple aspects of social learning, such as coping and empathy. By correctly recognizing HFASD behaviors and then teaching appropriate replacement behaviors that meet the same functional need (Mace, 1994), the educator can “begin the process of preventing ASD social behaviors” (Donovan, & Cross, 2002, p.268) from interrupting instruction. Ryberg (2015) pointed out that in implementation of the Early Start Denver Model (ESDM) for young children with autism spectrum disorder, early intervention is necessary for providing steps for adaptive behavior implementation in the classroom. However, Ryberg (2015) reinforced Johnson, Papadopoulos, Fielding, Tonge, Phillips &, Rinehart’s (2014) conclusions through analysis of students with HFASD and ADHD. Johnson et al. concluded that “understanding similarities and differences for children with HFASD and ADHD lay the groundwork for effective intervention strategies” (p.1639). Though students with HFASD differ greater on a case-by-case basis and, as most sources recognized during study, have significant areas of strengths in several domains, additional educational support is highly advised to facilitate behavior modifications where HFASDs often show social skills limitations (Sansosti, & Sansosti, 2012).

### Recurrent Concepts/Themes in the Literature

Sansosti and Sansosti (2012) noted that inclusion for students with HFASD does benefit aspects of their academics and other cognitive skills. Close study of the research repeatedly identified a theme where inclusion rarely addressed social behavior and the classroom did not provide strategies to develop the social behavior skills. These types of strategies rarely exist in the classroom; therefore, guidelines should be put into place to help the educator with creating adaptive behavior modification strategies within the classroom. A common theme amongst most research studies of HFASDs in the education environment has recognized the lack of data for developing strategies for HFASD identification. Sansosti and Sansosti (2012), through referencing the participants’ feedback, created a type of

## Identifying Specific Needs for Each Student

conclusion of study not commonly seen in other studies, that offered “positive ideas about the inclusion of students with HFASDs and their General Education peers” (p. 930), along with multiple agreements reached by not only the participants, but also the researchers.

### Conclusion

Common themes, which resonate across all the sources, was that observation of HFASDs is vital in the discovery of how adaptive behavior interventions may be started immediately upon recognition, with or without an IEP or 504 and that students with HFASD diagnosis exhibited significantly different types of behavior, motivation, and self-efficacy in their academic success. Without immediate intervention, severe adaptive behavior implementation can further alienate the student with HFASD who is also struggling with social behaviors and acceptance. This single most common factor is the focus of almost every source found that researched HFASD in the learning environment, regardless of the focus of study, due to the understanding of the impact that social integration has on learning for students with HFASDs. The theories of Lev Vygotsky were utilized as being the lens through which the researchers founded their theories upon.

To quickly intervene in the HFASD classroom environment will create an environment where the educator can utilize adaptive behavior intervention without further alienating the student. Academic functioning is rarely an issue unless social interactions with peers and HFASDs become negative. Therefore, as supported through the literature review, guidelines need to be created to help facilitate the ease with which educators can intervene and provide corrective measures for the HFASD. As noted repeatedly in studies, the effects of social deficits on the HFASD is significant in maintaining the emotional well-being and future functioning of the student. So as not to add on to the difficulties that ELLs experience in the social and academic environment, it should be considered that teacher preparation programs investigate the need for teachers to be instructed in recognizing the symptoms of HFASD in their ELL students. By being trained to recognize these symptoms, the school can further recognize the needs of the whole student, especially in needing special needs resources.

### References

- About Autism. (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.amaze.org.au/understand-autism/about-autism/>
- Donovan, S., & Cross, C. T. (2002). *Minority students in special and gifted education*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.
- Johnson, B. P., Papadopoulos, N., Fielding, J., Tonge, B., Phillips, J. C., & Rinehart, N. (2014). A quantitative comparison of handwriting in children with high-functioning autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders* 7(12), 1638-1639.
- Kanner, L. (1944). Early infantile autism. *The Journal of Pediatrics*, (25), 211-217. doi:10.1016/S0022-3476(44)80156-1
- Khor, A. S., Melvin, G. A., Reid, S. C., & Gray, K. M. (2014). Coping, daily hassles and behavior and emotional problems in adolescents with high-functioning autism/Asperger's disorder. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, (44), 593-608.
- Mace, F. C. (1994). The significance and future of functional analysis methodologies. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 27(2), 385-392.
- National Autism Center: Office of Autism Research Coordination, National Institute of Mental Health, on behalf of the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC). 2014-2015 IACC Autism Spectrum Disorder Research Portfolio Analysis Report. October 2017. Retrieved from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee website: <https://iacc.hhs.gov/portfolioanalysis/2015/index.shtml>
- Ostmeyer, K., & Scarpa, A. (2012). Examining school-based social skills program needs and barriers for students with high-functioning autism spectrum disorders using participatory action research. *Psychology in the Schools*, 49(10), 932-941.
- Ozonoff, S., Dawson, G., & MaPartland, J. (2015). *A parent's guide to high-functioning autism spectrum disorder: how to meet the challenges and help your child thrive*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Ryberg, K. H. (2015). Evidence for the implementation of the Early Start Denver Model for young children with autism spectrum disorder. *Journal of the American Psychiatric Nurses Association*. 21(5), 327-337.
- Sansosti, J. M., & Sansosti, F. J. (2012). Inclusion for students with high-functioning autism spectrum disorders: Definitions and decision making. *Psychology in the Schools*, 49(10), 917-931. doi:10.1002/pits.21652



### About the Author:

Michael Deatherage is a full-time English Literature teacher at Kealekahe High School in Hawaii. He is currently working on his dissertation for a Ph.D. in Education, specializing in English as a Second Language and Second Language Acquisition, at Northcentral University in the United States. His research interests focus on incidental vocabulary learning through project-based learning activities and brain-based research in SLA.

# BILINGUAL LANGUAGE ACQUISITION UPDATE

*Sharing research in the area of language learning and development with parents through a newsletter builds a home-school connection and empowers parents with knowledge to put into practice with their child. The topics in the newsletter reflect common belief systems or wonderings surrounding the language acquisition process from birth through childhood in the domains of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The goal of the newsletter is to give parents up-to-date and sound research to know the language development journey. To be very effective, the newsletter would need to be reliably translated into the parents' native language.*

Written by NICOLE RENEE ARIHOOD

---

ALOHA RAN ANNIM HOLA KASELELI OLA  
IAKWE MABUHAY SALAMAT SORE



## Language Acquisition and Your Child

Aloha Pu'u Kukui Elementary parents of ELL students! As the ELL Coordinator and Lead Teacher of your ELL student, I wanted to share some interesting research about children and language learning with you. I hope you find it useful and engaging! Please feel free to comment or contact me for anything at all.

## Do Children Learn Language Like a Sponge?

Regarding language acquisition in children, probably the most common thing I have heard from educators or parents is something to the effect of, "They pick up the language like a sponge." Children are actively involved in the language acquisition process from birth. Exposure to a language from birth to 12 months can influence the infant's neural circuitry in the brain prior to even uttering their first sounds (Kuhl, 2010). From 0-6 months babies distinguish vowels from consonants sounds, and when they are a year old, they can discriminate between their native language and other non-native language sounds (Ferjan Ramirez & Kuhl, 2016). This is a critical time for babies in learning language, as social interactions and speech quality is important for them to be able to interact with and learn from. The point that Ferjan Ramirez and Kuhl (2016) makes is that the quantity and quality of speech they hear in their first language (L1) and second language (L2) significantly affects their language

acquisition growth. The role of education is essential in preparing a person to interact with society. The lessons taught spring from many sources and often come from the most unexpected places when forming bonds with new kin: farmers, florists, fishermen, and others among them. They are not confined to enclosed classrooms and computer screens; rather they are transferred by word of mouth in organic encounters that arise when people are in their natural environments. Interacting first-hand with these individuals sets the stage for contextual dialogue that allows a language learner to absorb the lexicon and phonemes that are necessary to reproduce language and express thought in an original, comprehensible way. Offering programs that incorporate local languages into the core curriculum would ensure providing an immersive experience that so many international language institutes claim to offer.

## Children are not 'sponges' that randomly learn things on their own at all times.

Teachers and parents need to understand that the school-aged child needs numerous and regular opportunities to practice the target language (this would be English at school) to maximize their language learning. A critical learning period for learning phonemes begins around 12 months, syntax (grammar) is actively being learned from 18-36 months, developing vocabulary begins at 18 months, by 2-3 years of age the child can make sense of two part verbal instructions and have a vocabulary of around 1,000 words (Kid Sense Child Development Corporation Pty Ltd, 2019; Kuhl, 2010). By ages 3-4 years a child can follow three-part oral instructions, have a vocabulary of around 1,500 words, and are able to use/understand positional words, "wh" question words, and past events. By Kindergarten children should be able to follow discourse with a much larger vocabulary, speak in complete sentences, and begin using modifiers.

## BILINGUAL LANGUAGE ACQUISITION UPDATE

Language acquisition follows a specific course of progression and emphasizing this development should be our responsibility as language teachers.

### TIPS

Fascinating, isn't it?! So, interacting with the languages you want your child to learn is the best way for them to acquire them. Using speaking, listening, reading, and writing activities routinely will help them develop the languages in a progression.

**THINK:** Do you try to give your child speaking, listening, reading, and writing activities in both English and your native language?

### DID YOU KNOW?

Between the ages of birth through 18 years old the child absorbs the equivalent of 1.5 MB of information- about 1,000 bits of information daily. These numbers represent the amount of information one must learn to acquire a language. Each language has different kinds of information that needs to be learned. For instance, English speakers need linguistic knowledge that focuses mostly on semantics (word meaning) rather than syntax (grammar) (University of California, Berkeley, 2019).

### BILINGUALISM and LANGUAGE LEARNING RATES

Being bilingual is such an asset for students for cognitive brain activity, interpersonal wealth, and can bring many more opportunities for making global friends and opening up job options. Studies have found that bilingual children develop each of their languages at a slower rate due to the learning being spread across two (or more) languages.

**No need to worry though!**

Influences on the learning rate are the quality of the language input you and others around your child give, and the amount (quantity) of language input they are given. Your child will learn as many languages as they are receiving regular input from, and hopefully become



proficient in them all (Florida Atlantic University, 2018)!

### TIPS

Children will learn the language that they need to use for their context and environment, so expose them to different language environment needs!

Bilingual development is supported when the native language and new language(s) are valued by parents, schools, and society where they are encouraged to use them all!

**THINK:** Do you support your child speaking English and your native language wherever they are?

### FUN FACT!

Babies as young as 11 months old can associate the language they hear with the ethnicity of the speaker. Infants not only are hearing and learning about sounds and sentences but can make connections between languages and ethnicities based on the speakers they hear in their environments. Even before speaking their first words, they are making connections all on their own (University of British Columbia, 2019)!

### DID YOU KNOW?

Children who grow up learning and practicing two or more languages are better at multitasking than monolingual students?

A mental process called executive functioning oversees task switching activities like paying attention, planning, organizing, and strategizing. The ability to keep a language rule in mind and remember, inhibit, and shift between rules is what language multitasking is about. Since bilingual children have two sets of language rules in their brains, the ability to toggle between tasks is increased by their knowledge of more languages (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2012)!

### LANGUAGE LEARNING AND THE BRAIN

Languages learned and stored in our brains have previously been found to only be represented in one area of the brain. New research shows that L1 and L2 and other learned languages are represented in different places in our brains. How they are represented is still unclear to scientists, as well as how languages of similar or different structures are represented (University of Haifa, 2009).

**Language learning is a fantastic way to keep your brain in shape!**

The part of the brain called the hippocampus and three areas in the cerebral cortex have been shown to grow when humans learn new languages! Studies have found that students that have better language skills (learning more than one language, or actively mastering one language) had greater growth in these brain regions than students that know one language or are not actively mastering one language (Lund University, 2012).



## BILINGUAL LANGUAGE ACQUISITION UPDATE

**THINK:** Do you and your child switch between languages often? Is it easy or difficult? In what situations do you toggle between your languages?

### *FUN FACT!*

Research has indicated that Alzheimer's disease could have a later onset in people who are bilingual or multilingual (Lund University, 2012)

Resource website for all the articles::

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/>

You can type anything into the search bar on the right to find articles you're interested in!

MAHALO KOMMOL GRACIAS KINISOU

SALAMAT OBRIGADO KALAHNGAN



### **About the Author:**

Nico Arihood is the ELL Coordinator and Lead Teacher at Pu'u Kukui Elementary on the island of Maui. Over the last 20 years she has taught K-6 special education, visual arts, intervention, reading, regular education, inclusion and ESL. Her undergraduate work focused on multiethnic visual education. Her current doctoral work is focused on leadership and second language instruction, specifically understanding and advocacy for the Micronesian migrant community on Maui. She enjoys hula, canoe paddling, surfing, and traveling.

### **References**

- Ferjan Ramirez, N., & Kuhl, P. K. (2016). *Bilingual language learning in children*. Seattle, WA: Institute for Learning & Brain Sciences, University of Washington. Retrieved from [http://labs.uw.edu/Bilingual\\_Language\\_Learning\\_in\\_Children.pdf](http://labs.uw.edu/Bilingual_Language_Learning_in_Children.pdf)
- Florida Atlantic University. (2018, August 23). Children take longer to learn two languages at once compared to just one -- don't fret. *ScienceDaily*. Retrieved from [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/08/180823092018.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/08/180823092018.htm)
- Kid Sense Child Development Corporation Pty Ltd. (2019). Stages of language development chart. Retrieved from <https://childdevelopment.com.au/>
- Kuhl, P. K. (2010). Brain mechanisms in early language acquisition. *Neuron*, 67(5), 713-727. doi:10.1016/j.neuron.2010.08.038
- Lund University. (2012, October 8). Language learning makes the brain grow, Swedish study suggests. *ScienceDaily*. Retrieved from [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/10/121008082953.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/10/121008082953.htm)
- New York University. (2018, September 10). Bilingualism: How we turn on and off languages. *ScienceDaily*. Retrieved from [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/09/180910160656.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/09/180910160656.htm)
- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2012, April 3). Bilingual children switch tasks faster than speakers of a single language. *ScienceDaily*. Retrieved from [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/04/120403112006.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/04/120403112006.htm)
- University of British Columbia. (2019, June 25). Babies can learn link between language and ethnicity, study suggests. *ScienceDaily*. Retrieved from [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/06/190625102412.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/06/190625102412.htm)
- University of California - Berkeley. (2019, March 27). Kids store 1.5 megabytes of information to master their native language. *ScienceDaily*. Retrieved from [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/03/190327134547.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/03/190327134547.htm)
- University of Haifa. (2009, July 9). Do bilingual persons have distinct language areas in the brain? *ScienceDaily*. Retrieved from [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/07/090708094825.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/07/090708094825.htm)

**"THANK YOU SO MUCH  
FOR READING AND I  
HOPE THIS MAKES YOU  
THINK MORE ABOUT  
YOUR CHILD AND  
LANGUAGE  
DEVELOPMENT!"**

**MISS NICO, ELL COORDINATOR AND LEAD TEACHER  
& MRS. VERONICA, ELL PART-TIME TEACHER**

# ADDRESSING ABSENTEEISM AMONG MARSHALLESE STUDENTS

Written by  
ALEX JOSEF KASULA  
AND NIKOLAS WILSON

Absenteeism is one of the greatest challenges that we face at the College of the Marshall Islands. For example, a recent in-house study showed that 52% of our department's students are "chronically absent" (Chang, Bauer, and Byrnes, 2018), meaning they miss 10% or more of classes throughout the semester. Although this was the first time we were able to comprehensively analyze attendance in our department, we know chronic absences is normal in the Marshall Islands (Black, Seder, & Kekahio, 2014), and generally high among Pacific Islander immigrants to the US. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to help Hawai'i's English language teachers, or other teachers elsewhere, to gain a better understanding of the attendance issues and how to deal with them among the growing Marshallese migrant population in the US and Hawai'i education systems.

The reasons for our students being absent vary greatly, but there are a few primary reasons why these absences occur. Firstly, students are often coming from a K-12 education system that struggles to address profound attendance issues. For example, the latest publically available data from public schools in the Marshall Islands showed the K-8 dropout rate was 32%, and 9-12 dropout rate was 51% (RMI Public School System, 2016, p.7). In effect, only  $\frac{1}{3}$  of public-school students in the Marshall Islands continue to a high school diploma. Although the factors for dropping out have not been specifically studied in the Marshall Islands, we are certain they are deeply rooted in poor attendance, which we discuss below. Another example of factors effecting poor attendance is that public high schools in the country have an attendance policy that allows a student to be absent twenty times a semester, a rate of absence which, at 11%, exceeds chronic absenteeism. Furthermore, teacher absenteeism is anecdotally a problem, although we do not know of data to corroborate it.

Besides these primary- and secondary-school institutional factors, from attendance data gathered over the course of a semester, we have also discovered several distinct factors in our community college students' absenteeism. There is a very high number of students who report absence because of sickness. However, we have little means of officially confirming these reports of illness since there is a lack of quality modern Western healthcare in the Marshall Islands (Tahana, 2020). While at the same time, there is a reliable, deeply held tradition of indigenous medicine (Taafaki, Kabua, & Thaman, 2006) that students often

seek as a first choice. (Besides, if practiced by a relative, as is often the case, procedures in Marshallese medicine may be free of cost and more privately undertaken.) Indeed, the difficulty of verifying sickness in the Marshall Islands may make it an appealing excuse in moments of dishonesty. Therefore, while we accept that the precise reliability of sickness as a cause for absenteeism is questionable, on the whole, we find it credible. For it is indisputable that locally unprecedented epidemic diseases (dengue fever, chikungunya, and measles), as well as more common endemic diseases (influenza, pink eye, and dysentery), strike the community for various reasons. Other major causes of absenteeism tend to follow from family obligations, whether these be a funeral (where public mourning can last at least a week), traditional keemem (first birthday) celebrations, or caring for family in the hospital or at home.

In addition, beyond our observations, we know that public education has a relatively weak footing in family life as a very recent foreign institution introduced to the Marshall Islands. The first public high school dates to the 1960s. Moreover, according to Marshall Islands census data, 30 years ago a Marshallese person was more likely to have no Western education than to have a college degree (RMI Office of Planning and Statistics, 1988, p xxiv). Besides its foreign provenance, school has often been of questionable value. Even today, the Marshall Islands education system employs many local teachers who have only a high school diploma. With limited texts available in classrooms, the quality of daily learning and progress in formal curriculum is dubious. Many elders and authority figures in today's Marshallese households may recognize this issue of quality, and may not appreciate, or may have never experienced, how foreign educational institutions value attendance. Therefore, such elders may not be in a position to informatively monitor and persuade the younger generations about school.

Thus, at least in the Marshall Islands, we find that attendance is a complex issue combining factors such as vulnerability to sickness, competing family obligations, and intergenerational unfamiliarity or skepticism toward education. This combination often makes for valid excuses to miss class, from the perspective of both the student and their family.

Here in the Marshall Islands we have undertaken various projects and applied several different attendance policies to address absenteeism, yet these efforts have

## ADDRESSING ABSENTEEISM AMONG MARSHALLESE STUDENTS

mostly unfolded in individual classrooms, with little or no coordination for data collection and analysis. In order to address this shortfall, over the course of the past year our department at the College of the Marshall Islands has been gathering rigorous data about why and how often our students are absent as a part of an “attendance coach” initiative. This attendance coach initiative focused on finding out when and to what classes students were late or absent, and then emailing or meeting with the students who were having attendance issues to discuss the reasons behind their absences and ways to work with the students to improve their attendance. We have also tried to apply several different attendance policies in our classes; for example, an attendance policy was attendance is not taken, and another was attendance is continuously taken and graded. The later policies are usually superior, when combined with immediate communication for absences and ‘lates,’ and a regular classroom homework and assignment routine.

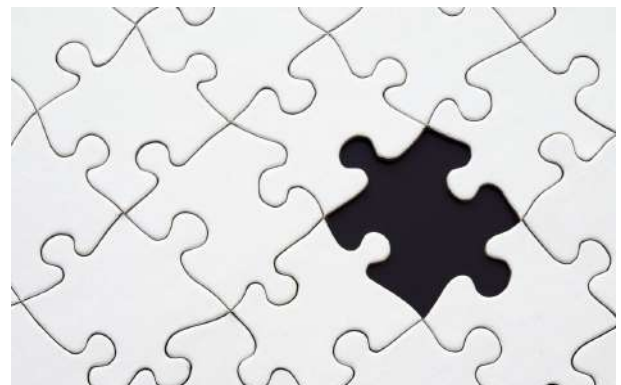
From our initiatives, attempts at policies, and exploring new teaching methodologies, we would like to make the following suggestions to improve attendance or at least engage more with the students as you develop your own new methods. We are confident that any teacher can improve attendance with most Marshallese students by these methods.

- **Track attendance. Having data on each student's attendance informs proactive communication.**
- **Take a proactive role in understanding why students are absent. Brainstorm with them the means of addressing the issue(s). This has helped us to better understand how to work with the student to solve recurrent attendance issues.**
- **Personally contact family members, parents or guardians about students' attendance and the importance of it. It has become clear that due to the strong family support network and obligations, in order for our students to get to class, the family has to support their attendance as much as we do. We note federal regulations prevent us from engaging with the family of our adult students without a signed waiver from students', but our communication has revealed that, aside from sickness, family obligations are mainly what draw students away from school. Thus, we know family communication could strongly encourage students to come back to class.**

- **Develop lessons in time management—implicitly through regular activities and explicitly through content-learning. It has helped improve reliability of student's attendance and assignments.**
- **Finally, establish strong class routines: create a regular format for homework assignments, submission of homework, in-class feedback on homework, and meeting with the instructor. These have all had positive influences on students' attendance and assignment completion, which in turn is usually the most important piece of the puzzle in successfully teaching Marshallese English language learners. When our students are in our classes, learning a little from every lesson, they have a high chance of meeting and passing the SLOs for the course.**

### References

- Black, A. T., Seder, R. C., & Kekahio, W. (2014). *Review of research on student nonenrollment and chronic absenteeism: A report for the Pacific Region*. The US Department of Education: Institute of Education Sciences.
- Chang, H. N., Bauer, L., & Byrnes, V. (2018). Data matters: Using chronic absence to accelerate action for student success. Attendance Works. Retrieved from <https://www.attendanceworks.org/data-matters/>
- Republic of the Marshall Islands Office of Planning and Statistics. (1988). *Census of Population and Housing 1988: Final Report*. p xxiv.
- Republic of the Marshall Islands Public Schools System. (2016). Ajri Mokka meeting learning objectives for a brighter future: Strategic plan 2017-2020 [PDF file]. Retrieved from <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YwRC1rBK7ul-bPQNrm308P2JUTwybdD2/view>
- Taafaki, I. J., Kabua Fowler, M., & Thaman R. R. (2006). *Traditional medicine of the Marshall Islands: The women, the plants, the treatments*. Suva, Fiji: Institute for Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific.
- Tahana, J. (2020, January 23). Marshall Islands dengue outbreak: 'We're fighting a war here.' *Radio New Zealand*.



### About the Author:

**Alex Kasula** is an instructor in the Developmental Education Department at the College of the Marshall Islands. He has teaching experience in Honolulu, Thailand, and Colombia. He received his MA in Second Language Studies from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

**Nik Wilson** is the Bilingual Education Unit Advisor for the Marshall Islands Customary Law and Language Commission housed at the College of the Marshall Islands. He has lived and taught here for 11 years, mostly in the Developmental Education Department. His MA in Linguistics is from Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan.



**[Image 1]:**  
Coach Bailey & Coach Peroff – Girls on The Run  
Classroom without walls – outdoor movement and bonding.



**[Image 2]:**  
NASA's Global Rocket Launch – Apollo celebration at Waikiki School!



**[Image 3]:**  
Channel 2 – our mock TV station. WIDA speaking opportunities!



**[Image 4]:**  
Class gardens/sustainability time – The excitement of seeing plants grow!

# GLUE GIRL

Written by  
BAILEY LEDESMA

“Breathe kiddo! Breathe!” My cross-country coach shouted. I trotted from Saddle Road back to the Hawai'i Preparatory Academy campus in Kamuela. While on these long-distance runs, Coach Shutes would give advice, quiz our squad on historical facts and simply encourage us to take a leap of faith to try new things. As a new boarding school student on campus, I was overwhelmed with homesickness and homework! Running became my regular routine and allowed me to connect with a wide variety of international students. Coach Shutes was the glue that kept me anchored in boarding school.

Coach Shutes understood the power of learning outside the classroom. He would tell us stories of his time in the military. Messages of kindness, hard work, and personal exploration were common themes. “Be the first to take out the trash and the last in the chow line” was one of his favorite sayings. He was a mentor and coach that never sat on the sidelines but lead us by doing. He knew we would rise to the occasion.

Today, I teach fourth grade. I tell my English Language Learners to “Breathe kiddos! Breathe!” I understand their desperation to adjust and make sense of their new settings. Most importantly, I know that their learning will not happen unless I soothe their worries and become the glue that binds them to our cozy school at the foot of Diamond Head. Additionally, I take every opportunity to expose my ELs to activities outdoors. Our classroom without walls is where the magic happens! This year we ran a 5K together (Girls on The Run), launched straw rockets to celebrate NASA's Global Rocket Launch / Apollo anniversary, tested STEM foil boats with cargo, explored art with nature sketches and measured our basketball court to understand area and perimeter for our Math Adventures lesson.

The best way to learn is to move and breathe! Tell your students to breathe through the struggle and take risks to learn. The class, as a whole, will flourish.

Coach Shutes passed away in 2011, but his humor and advice live on in my classroom. I meet my ELs where they are and cheer them on. They know that I am in their corner. I remind them that perfection is not our aim, but community and academic rigor are our targets. Most of all, I hope to be the glue that secures them to our school, community and academic opportunities. I pray Coach Shutes would say: “Good job, Glue Girl!”

## About the Author:

**Bailey K. Ledesma** is a local Hawaiian Irish girl from Kaimuki. She attended Hawai'i Preparatory Academy in Kamuela and University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Bailey is a certified TESOL and Structured Literacy Teacher. Project GLAD and TPR strategies are her go to teaching favorites. Her teaching interests include ELs with language-based disabilities, word games and exercise breaks to enhance learning. She is a wife, mom of three, sports coach, avid reader, pasta consumer and puppy lover.

**\*\*Stanford W. Shutes Jr.** Teacher / Administrator, Cross Country Coach, and Army infantry veteran. He was my advisor, coach, AP History teacher and dear friend.

# CBI LANGUAGE CLASSROOM OBSERVATION REPORT AND INTERVIEW

YE WON "MARIA" JOO

As an experienced language learner, I have always had the feeling that what I experienced learning English in Korea, my home country, was not effective. One of the reasons for having those feelings was that it took me more than ten years to be able to start speaking English with other speakers of English, including both native and non-native speakers. Despite many years of studying English, when I was in situations in which I had to use English as the primary medium of communication with other people, I felt incapable of formulating sentences expressing what I wanted to say. Also, by relying heavily on the rote memorization method when studying vocabulary in Korea, I found that words were coming in and going out very quickly from my mind once I had taken mini-quizzes and tests. I did have some knowledge about vocabulary words and grammar, but they were like separate pieces of information floating in my brain, not making any connections between them. In other words, I knew about English without knowing how to put this knowledge into practice.

However, when I moved to Hawai'i in pursuit of earning degrees in Second Language Studies (SLS), starting with an Associate in Science (AS) Degree in Second Language Teaching (SLT) at Kapi'olani Community College (KCC), I experienced a totally different language teaching method, Content-Based Instruction (CBI). This was an eye-opening and life-changing experience for me as a language learner because in CBI, language is the medium of instruction, and students learn the language through content (Larsen-Freeman, & Anderson, 2011). The key concepts in CBI are purposefulness and meaningfulness. Every piece of information that students receive has the purpose of developing the necessary language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. What I was learning made sense, and I could keep track of my English learning process as well as the progress that I had made throughout the semester. Since then, I have been a big fan of this method.

Coincidentally, this past semester, I took a course at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM) with a focus on second language teaching methods and approaches. Among the various methods, CBI stood out because of the positive experience that I had had at KCC. Also, I was required to conduct language classroom observations as one of the course assignments. I took this opportunity to join Professor Kanaoka's English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) 92 class (intermediate ESOL) at KCC, where the ESOL and ESL curricula are entirely based on CBI. I spent almost ten class periods (each class period lasts for two hours and five minutes) in this class meticulously observing a highly experienced CBI instructor, who has been teaching ESOL for 26 years, nine of which have been at KCC, taking thorough notes following her lesson plan sequence and actively participating in in-class activities as a facilitator. I helped the ESOL students develop ideas for their drafts by conversing with them, organizing their sentences and paragraphs coherently, and revising their papers by explaining grammar points.

However, I have noticed that ESOL 92 has somewhat different features that I did not have in my ESL 100 (college composition) course, such as chances to work with partners or in groups using verbal skills and having enough time to write and revise papers in class with the help of the instructor's on-demand feedback. These differences in the organization of the course intrigued me enough to have an interview with Professor Kanaoka, who graciously received me in her office for the interview.

At the beginning of the interview, I showed her the table below to verify if the content was accurate. She kindly provided me with the correct information to complete the table. **[see page 22]**

As shown by the table, last semester's content, health, was divided into three learning modules: diet, exercise, and stress.

## CBI LANGUAGE CLASSROOM OBSERVATION REPORT AND INTERVIEW

Sequence	Module 1: Diet	Module 2: Exercise	Module 3: Stress
Intro	Overview 6 health dimensions Video & Article & Vocabulary	Video & Article & Vocabulary	Video & Article & Vocabulary
Log	Daily food journal	Exercise and physical activity log	Stress log
Analysis 1 Paper	Write about your own diet and eating habits.	Write about your own lifestyle including habits and physical activity patterns.	Write about your stress including types, levels, and ways to overcome it.
Pair interview	Interview your partner asking about his/her diet and eating habits.	Interview your partner asking about his/her lifestyle (active / sedentary) including exercise habits and physical activity patterns.	Interview your partner asking about his/her stress log including various types and levels of stress and ways to release stress.
Analysis 2 Paper	Compare and contrast your own diet and eating habits with those of your partner.	Compare and contrast your own lifestyle (active / sedentary) discussing your own exercise habits and physical activity patterns with those of your partner.	Compare and contrast your own stressors, stress level, and stress management strategies with those of your partner.
Group Presentation	5 Food Groups	Sedentary vs. Active Lifestyle	Causes & Effects of Stress
Guest Speaker	Nutritionist	Athletic Trainer	Meditation
Reflection Paper (Writing quiz)	Write a reflection paper about what you've learned overall throughout Module 1.	Write a reflection paper about what you've learned overall throughout Module 2.	Write a reflection paper about what you've learned overall throughout Module 3.
Note	Grammar, vocabulary and writing instruction was offered <u>only when needed</u> according to the teacher's and students' needs.		

The sequence of each module was consistent and coherent and well-organized. I was impressed by her lesson plans because they were designed in such a way that helped her students to personalize the information they were learning. At the same time, they could internalize and make it relevant to their daily lives by keeping journals and logs according to each module's topic. By observing the students while actively discussing and exchanging information with each other, I could confirm the differences between an ESOL course and an ESL course.

Due to time constraints, college composition courses, such as ESL 100, lack chances for students to practice their speaking skills. Professor Kanaoka confirmed this issue by sharing her own experience of teaching both types of classes at the same time; she always feels as if she is running out of time when switching from ESOL to ESL. This has some advantages and disadvantages.

In this regard, she added, in some cases, ESOL students often get lost along the way. Two major reasons that create this confusion are the massive amount of time spent in class and on the content. Since ESOL courses are 7-credit courses, students spend eight hours per week

learning language through content. Because of this, they are sometimes confused and misunderstand the learning outcomes that focus on the necessity to master the content knowledge instead of writing about what they have learned throughout the semester. In contrast, in ESL classes, the purpose of the course is evident, which makes it easier for both students and teachers to be on the same track—focusing on writing. For teachers in general, ESL 100 course preparation is easier and more straightforward, as compared to that of ESOL because of the shorter instruction time.

However, because ESL 100 is a 3-credit college course (each class period lasts for one hour and 15 minutes), the opportunities to give feedback, which is the key component of CBI language instruction, are limited. In this regard, she revealed that she encourages her students to come to her office hours or communicate through email to increase the opportunities to provide feedback for her students. Also, she shared that she offers short tutorial video clips to save some instruction time spent during class to explain basic tasks repetitively, such as how to use the Laulima website. However, she pointed out that most importantly, she does pay close attention when choosing teaching materials and designating homework assignments to ensure they are as meaningful and useful as possible for the students.

Finally, I asked her if she had other comments regarding CBI, and she said, "I am glad to be a CBI teacher. I think it's a better way to 'recycle' language: students use language without even noticing they are using it in such a natural and meaningful way, which excites me... Overall, the purpose of language learning is communication, right?... CBI helps it." (Y. Kanaoka, personal interview, January 17, 2020). Also, she provided some suggestions for teachers who are still not familiar with CBI and pre-service and novice teachers: "CBI is never boring...the best way to be familiarized with CBI is to

## CBI LANGUAGE CLASSROOM OBSERVATION REPORT AND INTERVIEW

observe a CBI teacher in action where she focuses on language..." (Y. Kanaoka, personal interview, January 17, 2020).

This past semester's classroom observation experience was excellent. It has allowed me to explore more deeply what I had learned in class and reflect on what I observed in Professor Kanaoka's classroom. It did help me make connections between school and the real world. I offer a special "Thank You" to Professor Kanaoka for all her support.

### References

Larsen-Freeman, D., & Anderson, M. (2011). *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

### About the Author:

**Ye Won "Maria" Joo** earned her Associate in Science (AS) Degree in Second Language Teaching at Kapi'olani Community College (2019) and is currently in Second Language Studies (SLS) at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, working toward her Bachelor of Arts Degree. Throughout her years at KCC, she conducted research projects for her major courses volunteering in the local language classrooms in Hawai'i, including Jefferson Elementary School's after school tutoring sessions and Korean and ESOL classes at KCC as an SLT major. Her field of interest in SLS is teaching academic writing, and to gain experience in this field, she works as a writing tutor at KCC's Study Hub with great passion. You are welcome to contact her at [yewonjoo@hawaii.edu](mailto:yewonjoo@hawaii.edu)

# TULIP: EXPERIENCING INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES FROM A LEARNER'S PERSPECTIVE

REED RIGGS

Any time I start a new semester teaching novice language learners (note: I teach Chinese, but I believe that the ideas in this article can be useful to all language teachers, including teachers of English as a Second or Foreign Language). I often think about how comprehensible and how inclusive I am through my own use of the target language. Am I helping everyone feel connected and engaged? Is that attentive look on everyone's faces only meaningful in my imagination? As we engage in whole class discussions about pictures, film clips, calendar events, world events and each other, I used to think, "Everyone basically gets what we are talking about. I'm sure they're all just fine. Let's move on!"

It was often around 5 out of the 20 people in the room, including myself, that showed active engagement in the discussion. However, in the first weeks of the semester, I have watched on as roughly a third of the students left the course, typically for a different language. Reports would come in through the students who stayed, and who still talked with the students who left, that they thought the language was "too hard" and many blamed themselves for being "bad at languages."

In the US it is probably more difficult for English learners to simply switch to a different language class, since ESL in K-12 schools is usually mandatory and separate, or at least offered in addition to, "foreign" language classes. Still, I and a community of language teachers in K-16 schools throughout Hawai'i have seen higher retention rates when we don't scare away our learners at the start. It is always a loss to the individual and to society whenever a person gives up on becoming multilingual.

Even for the people who stay in the class, finding more ways to engage everyone and help each individual feel successful has value. One solution I will focus on in this article is to see things from the perspective of a novice language learner—the proficiency level that requires the most care to be comprehensible with.

Since we are all novices in more languages than we are advanced in, it's easy to find a teacher of a language of which we have very little knowledge. I and a group of teachers in Hawai'i have been doing just this.

Since Fall 2018, every few months, I meet up with a small group of passionate language teachers at a school in Honolulu. We practice comprehension-based instructional approaches, but other groups can teach in whatever ways fit their goals. For each upcoming meeting, a teacher in our group will announce through an email and in several local Facebook groups that they plan to host a "TULIP gathering" (Teaching and Understanding Languages In Paradise, a name coined by some of the teachers in our group when we first started meeting). We gather in the host teacher's classroom to see how they set up and use their teaching space.

The most recent TULIP gathering was hosted in one Chinese teacher's classroom. We wrote our agenda on the board: 1-1:30pm discuss take-aways from recent professional development, 1:30-2:30 teaching demos & feedback, 2:30-3 discuss presentation ideas for the upcoming Hawai'i Association of Language Teachers (HALT) conference. For the first teaching demo, one teacher interacted with us in Japanese by playing an animated clip about video

## TULIP: EXPERIENCING INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES FROM A LEARNER'S PERSPECTIVE

game addiction. He used this as a springboard to ask about what counts as addiction, who among us plays videos games, how often, on what devices, and other related questions. The second teacher showed us her unique collection of portable signs for expressing Spanish exclamatory phrases. She asked us questions in Spanish about a photo of a man and his baby in the ocean, and we all co-created a fictional scenario that we all seemed to find entertaining. The discussions moved in such a way that everyone could share and learn about each other and about the world, and be creative and have fun, all while using the target language. In the past we also experienced listening to Hawaiian stories, reading in Mandarin Chinese, a party game in Korean, story-building in French, Total Physical Response in Vietnamese, a picture-based discussion in Hawaiian Creole English (Pidgin), and more. We typically fit 2 to 3 language teaching demos in a single hour.

Following each teaching demo, we have recently begun asking two follow-up questions. I learned to ask these questions from training as a “teacher coach” at the 2019 Agen Workshop for language teachers in France. The first question we ask after each teaching demo is: “What did the teacher do to help you feel connected and engaged?” We first ask this of the learners from the demo, and general types of responses have included: “The teacher looked at all of us when speaking to us;” “The teacher invited us to offer our own ideas;” “The teacher asked follow-up questions based on answers we had just given;” just to name a few.

Next, we ask the teacher, who just demo-taught, the same question: “What did you notice about your own teaching that you think helped everyone feel connected and engaged?” Following, the facilitator shares their own observations about the same question. The second question we ask, again starting with the learners, is: “What did the teacher do to help you comprehend the language?” Learners that are completely new to a language will often respond with comments such as, “The teacher pointed to visual aids while saying each word;” “The teacher spoke

slowly and clearly so I had time to process and think about what I might say in response;” and “The teacher used hand and body gestures consistently, reassuring me that my understanding wasn’t too far off.” Teachers new to our meetings often comment on how they thought they were doing enough already in their own classrooms to help learners follow along, or that learners could simply sit back and let the discussion wash over them without need for stress.

Conversely, after experiencing this for themselves, teachers typically comment on just how exhausting it is to try and process a new language, and that everything the teacher did to aid comprehension was, indeed, a big help. After such learning experiences, we see teachers talk about quite a bit more that they would like to start doing to help all of their learners comprehend language so that they can feel more engaged and connected in the content of the discussions in class. After all, it’s difficult to think of meaningful answers when you are not confident that you understood the questions. Some teachers will ask for negative feedback after their demo, often because they are just that dedicated to growth. We focus mainly on the positive feedback for two reasons: (1) we typically see that most teachers are afraid to get up in front of their peers. By promising to only focus on what they are doing well, our practice space can feel safer and more teachers are willing to come up “on stage.” (2) Professional learning takes time, especially when we keep noticing so many new micro-practices to keep adding to our novice-interactive routines (think about all the little things your hands, feet, eyes, and mind have to do while driving, and how when you first started learning you had to do this all with focused attention). So far, I have seen teachers gradually dedicate increasingly more time to the practices that engage learners, and the less impactful (or negatively impactful) practices disappear as time passes.

I offer this summary about our professional activities as a template for other language teachers to consider shaping into something that fits their own contexts and goals.

Maybe you teach English, but you know your school also offers Spanish or other language courses. You might consider reaching out to the teachers of a few different languages and offer an invitation and a space to meet up. Even if it’s just occasionally, or even just once, it can be powerfully transformative to our professional practices (and it can be very fun) to share and get feedback from colleagues.

*Note from the Editor: If you like this idea (and we at HITESOL do), you should join us in May for the Language Experience at which we learn a new language and put ourselves in the student’s place.*



### About the Author:

**Dr. Reed Riggs** teaches Chinese at Brigham Young University-Hawai'i. He completed his Ph.D. at the University of Hawai'i in 2018 and has been working in language teacher education in Hawai'i since 2012. He has presented workshops for language teachers across the United States and internationally in China and in France. His research ties popular teaching practices with learner corpus research, focusing on Usage-Based Linguistics, Construction Grammar, and Conversation Analysis. He hopes to highlight more areas where teachers and researchers can work together and gain from each other's work. [Email: rsriggs@go.byuh.edu](mailto:rsriggs@go.byuh.edu) or [reedsamuelriggs@gmail.com](mailto:reedsamuelriggs@gmail.com)



# TESOL UKRAINE SPOTLIGHT

## SALLY LA LUZERNE-OI

Sally La Luzerne-Oi is the TESOL Ukraine Liaison for Hawai'i TESOL.

### A Bit of History about the Partnership

In 2000, the then Hawai'i TESOL President, Donna Prather, wrote an article for *The Word* relaying a request from the TESOL International Association suggesting that U.S. affiliates consider forming partnerships with international affiliates. She asked if any HITESOL members had a connection with an international affiliate. Sally La Luzerne-Oi had spent the 1995-96 academic year as a Fulbright Scholar in Ukraine precisely at the time when Ukrainian teachers of English were working to form an official affiliate of TESOL, which became a reality on October 31, 1996. She shared this story in response to Donna's article, and interest in collaboration grew as result. After some hard work over the next few years, the partnership became official at the TESOL 2002 Convention in Salt Lake City when representatives from TESOL Ukraine and Hawai'i TESOL both signed a formal Partnership Agreement and celebrated over dinner. Since then, the members of both affiliates have connected in a number of ways, including meeting at the annual International TESOL Convention. Watch for stories about present-day TESOL members and events in future issues of *The Word*.

### Recent News from TESOL Ukraine

TESOL Ukraine has been busy since our last update (see *The Word*, September 2019) sponsoring the following events:

- Tutors' Conference in Kyiv, October 19, 2019
- Sumy Media Literacy Institute in Sumy, November 22-23, 2019
- TESOL Ukraine Teacher Development Institute on Teaching Writing as a 21st Century Skill in Lviv, January 9-10, 2020

For more information about TESOL Ukraine and past issues of its newsletter, visit the TESOL Ukraine website <http://www.tesol-ukraine.com/>. You might also want to like TESOL Ukraine on Facebook.

### TESOL Ukraine Member Profile

In this issue, we are profiling two of our Ukrainian colleagues, Dr. Svitlana Chugu and Dr. Svitlana Gladio. Dr. Chugu was the local organizer of the first Summer Institute on Current Methods and Practices in TESOL held in Vinnytsia in 1994. Discussions on establishing an affiliate of the TESOL International Association in Ukraine grew out of that institute. She and her colleague, Dr. Gladio, were the first two presidents of TESOL Ukraine. Dr. Gladio was instrumental in starting the Hawai'i TESOL/ TESOL Ukraine partnership. Both teach at the same institution, Vinnytsia Institute of Trade and Economics of Kyiv National University of Trade and Economics, so you will see only one response to several questions for which the answers are the same. Hawai'i TESOL member Sally La Luzerne-Oi was on the faculty of the 1994 Sumer Institute and spent the 1995-96 academic year teaching at Vinnytsia State Pedagogical University alongside Dr. Chugu and Dr. Gladio.

## Svitlana Chugu

**Please tell us about your institution.** Vinnytsia Institute of Trade and Economics is a regional subdivision of Kyiv National University of Trade and Economics. It is one of the most powerful regional educational institutions of Ukraine. Vinnytsia Institute of Trade and Economics of Kyiv National University of Trade and Economics (VITE KNUTE) is the only educational institution in the region that has been granted the Quality Management System Certificate in higher education ISO 9001.

The main building of VITE KNUTE in Soborna Street is a historic landmark and a monument of municipal engineering of the 19th century. It used to house a non-classical secondary school, the cultural and educational centre of the town at the time.

VITE KNUTE began its present history in 1968. It offers Bachelor and Master programs in Accounting and Taxation, Finance, Banking and Insurance, Marketing, Economics, International Economic Relations, Management, Public Management and Administration, Trade and Stock Exchange Activities, Food Technology, Hotel and Restaurant Business, Tourism, Law, Philology (Translation).

The mission of VITE KNUTE is to train competitive highly-qualified professionals via implementation of traditional and innovative technologies for educational and research purposes to further integrate into the European educational, scientific and information community. The key guiding principles in teaching scientific and extra-curricular activities in VITE KNUTE are based on quality, professionalism, and transparency.

**What is your position at this institution?** I am an Associate Professor, PhD (Philology), affiliated with the Department of Foreign Philology and Translation. I teach EFL and ESP courses, supervise course and diploma papers of Bachelor and Master students.

Please tell us something about the city where your institution is located. Vinnytsia is a city in west-central Ukraine, located on the banks of the Southern Bug River. It is situated about 260 km southwest of the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, 430 km north-northwest of the Black Sea port city of Odessa, and 370 km east of Lviv.

With a population of about 380,000, Vinnytsia is a multinational city, that enjoys cultural diversity, long-

## TESOL UKRAINE SPOTLIGHT

term traditions, innovative approaches to urban development, tolerance and love of variety. Vinnytsia has been recognized as the top city in Ukraine for infrastructure and urban development three times in recent years. The place is blessed with warm summers, cold, snowy winters, gorgeous falls and awesome blooming springs similar to northern Pennsylvania. There are two huge urban parks, interesting museums, and numerous cozy cafes to spend quality time with family and friends.

Vinnytsia is a student center, that has a range of educational institutions, Vinnytsia National Medical University, Vinnytsia National Technical University, Vinnytsia State Pedagogical University, Vinnytsia Trade and Economics Institute, Donetsk National University (evacuated from Donetsk in 2014 due to the armed conflict in the eastern part of Ukraine) among them.

**What are your professional interests?** I have been involved in both administrative and educational activities for more than 30 years. My areas of teaching and linguistic research are Teaching Materials Design, EFL/ESP Teaching, Text and Cognitive Linguistics, Narratology, and Translation Studies.

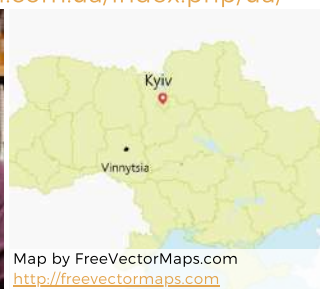
**How long have you been a member of TESOL Ukraine?** I have been a TESOL Ukraine member since 1995, serving as the first TESOL Ukraine president for six years.

**Can you suggest a website where Hawai'i TESOL readers can learn more about you, your institution, or your region?** Further information about VITE KNUTE:

<http://www.vtei.com.ua/index.php/ua/>



Svitlana Chugu



Svitlana Gladio



Svitlana Chugu, Maryna Tsehelska (profiled in the September 2019 issue), and Svitlana Gladio at the 2019 TESOL Ukraine Conference

## Svitlana Gladio

*Svitlana Gladio also teaches at Vinnytsia Institute of Trade and Economics.*

**What is your position at this institution?** Associate Professor, PhD (Philology) I have been teaching ESP/ EFL to students enrolled in BA programs, particularly to future finance and business administration managers. My priority, however, is BA and MA programs in philology (translation). We have been educating future translators, teaching them both language and translation issues.

**What are your professional interests?** I have been involved in EFL/ESP for more than thirty years; my main professional interests focus on material design, language teaching and research in cognitive linguistics. I combined administrative responsibilities of the dean, assistant dean, head of the chair with teaching and scientific research.

**What are your personal interests?** Travelling, photography, writing short stories, sports (walking, cycling, swimming, skating, skiing, fitness exercise), a bit of dancing, classical and contemporary music, languages (basic Spanish and long forgotten German ☹) sometimes DIY and pets.

**How long have you been a member of TESOL Ukraine?** I have been a member of TESOL Ukraine since its founding in 1996 and served as secretary while Svitlana Chugu was the first TESOL Ukraine president. Then I was elected and served as the second TESOL Ukraine president for four years. At present, I am a member of TESOL Ukraine and IATEFL Ukraine.

**What else would you like to add about yourself or your work?** Retrospectively, I never used to dream of becoming an educator or a researcher, least of all an administrator. However, I find my job absolutely rewarding as it gives me the sense of my existence, fills my inner world with memories of great students and the presence of soul mate teachers, encourages me to feel part of the team of enthusiasts who believe they can do this world just a little bit better, make it a little kinder and nicer. My sense of humor, a certain amount of skepticism, a sincere belief in God and a huge circle of friends, the youngest being 7 months old and the oldest 79 - it is my Dad, who helps me to survive all the hardships and to enjoy every tiny thing I am doing as well as inspire me to do it really well.

**TAKE**

**NOTES**



Stay Updated: [hawaiitesol.wildapricot.org](http://hawaiitesol.wildapricot.org)