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TBE

the Winter Break Issue

Winter 2012

Reflecting & Learning

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- article: Microsoft Word attachment only (.doc/.docx)
- APA citations/references
- 1 space between words & after punctuation
- Pictures embedded
- Ideas for regular columns are welcome
- Submitted by the deadline
- No Press Releases, Please

Quarterly Deadlines:

June 15 September 15 December 15 March 15

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about

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A letter from the president

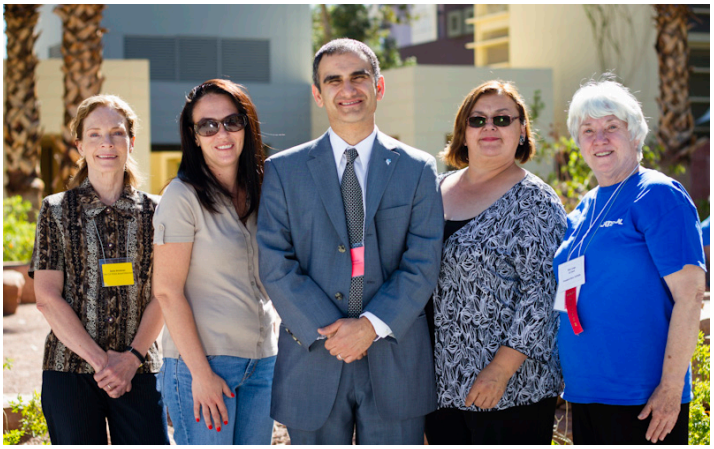
Hello ITBE members! I hope this article and newsletter find you all in good health and good spirits. It is a tough time for all of us educators struggling to meet deadlines and finishing up odds and ends as the semester draws to a close. All the while we are preparing for the holidays, trips and family visits. Indeed, it is a busy time, but a happy time, I am sure.

Gevik Anabrchian, ITBE President, Presenting at SNCATESOL's Annual Conference

One of my goals for this year has been to increase collaboration between our TESOL affiliate and others. It is nice to hear what other affiliates are doing in other parts of the country where the socioeconomic, educational, and professional challenges are different than in our own state and in our own little neck of the woods. To this end, on October 19 and 20, I had the pleasure of attending Southern Nevada California TESOL's (SNCATESOL's) annual conference, "The Promise of English," in Las Vegas as a guest speaker. (SNCATESOL is one of California TESOL's eleven chapters.) I met the president of SNCATESOL, Jodi Rubacki, in March at an affiliate leaders' luncheon in Philadelphia at the TESOL Convention, and the two of us agreed to collaborate during the 2012-2013 academic year.

I presented two different sessions, one on each day of the conference: "Using Political Speeches to Teach Language and Culture" and "Teaching Language and Culture through *The New Yorker* Cartoons." While I would have preferred a few more attendees, the conversation was definitely productive, and we all shared many useful teaching ideas for the ESL classroom at various fluency levels and with various ages.

In addition to leading my own sessions, I attended several others, two of which I would like to highlight here. Connie Kratky, a program coordinator with the Clark County School District (CCSD) in the Equity and Diversity Education Department of the Student Support Services Division, led a very eye-opening workshop on "The Impact of Poverty and Instruction." (CCSD stretches over 8,000 square miles across southern Nevada from its eastern borders with Utah and Arizona to its western border with California and includes all of Las Vegas.) Ms. Kratky spoke to the challenges of teachers asking students to meet increasingly demanding standards when they are struggling through "six different forms of poverty" and the instability that poverty causes. Her "reality check" activity drew a vivid picture of the disparities that exist as you go up and down the social ladder. In fact, Ms. Kratky will be an invited featured speaker at our conference in February. She will be giving an encore presentation of her poverty session on Saturday, February 22, this time looking at the issue from the perspective of learners who are struggling with adversities that interfere with academic success. Look for her session,



"Poverty's Impact on Student Learning," in the convention program. You are sure to walk away awakened to the harsh realities many of our students who appear to be "okay" face on a daily basis.

Gevik Anbarchian (middle)
and Jodi Rubacki (to his left)

I also had the pleasure of attending a very practical and necessary session for a technological amateur like me on the use of various online tools; this included an introduction to tools such as Voki, Jing and wikis to facilitate distance learning. The session was presented by Diana Booth, former ITBE Board Member and tech guru. Diana moved to Las Vegas a couple of years ago after a stint in Ohio and is now an instructor at the Charleston Campus of the College of Southern Nevada (CSN) where the conference was held.

In addition to attending sessions, I spent time networking to create other cross-affiliate opportunities. I met with Dr. Vicki Holmes, Director of UNLV's English Language Center, and spoke at length about UNLV's extensive adult education program, which trains and places students throughout Las Vegas' vast tourist industry. We hope to have Dr. Holmes present for our adult educators at a future ITBE event.

I also met Jennifer Gotkin, a sales representative for the language arts and reading publisher Zaner-Bloser. They will have a sales rep at our convention. Look for their vast array of books and other educational resources.

Finally, I sat down with many teachers, coordinators, and program directors to try to wrap my mind around what has recently happened to K-12 ESL education in Las Vegas and the rest of Clark County. Suffice it to say, it is an utter quagmire that I will not pretend to understand fully. In short, in 2010, CCSD, in an effort to battle budget shortfalls, made the decision to downsize ESL education and implement an all-inclusion model across the entire school district. Now, *all* ELLs in Clark County are mainstreamed without any pull-out language classes or sheltered content classes. Rather than providing designated ESL classes, the District instead trains mainstream classroom teachers with no ESL training or background how to integrate ELLs into their standard curricula. They have, in effect, gone back to the sink or swim model of second language instruction that our discipline has fought so hard to change these past few decades. Students are provided almost no services, and many times can spend weeks and even months in school before they are even tested for language proficiency! (One teacher told me of a case in which a mainstream teacher "assumed" one of her fourth graders was simply shy or in culture shock after observing her for two months in which the little girl was quiet and withdrawn even among other Hispanic students. It turned out the little girl was *not* Hispanic and speaks *no* Spanish but was in fact Lebanese and spoke Arabic!) When students are eventually tested, it is often done by untrained itinerant district personnel. Though they are breaking both

state and federal laws, CCSD has been able to pull this "plan" off given the grim economic condition of the state. This gives Sin City a whole new meaning.

October 19-20 was indeed an eye opening weekend spent in Las Vegas and not for reasons commonly associated with Sin City. In this case, whatever happened in Vegas did not stay in Vegas, as I have tried to share with you the highlights of my trip. I hope that such cross-affiliate collaboration will continue in the coming years, and that it becomes a standard, ongoing part of ITBE's mission as a professional organization. We are currently reaching out to other affiliates both in the region and across our great land. Hopefully, I will be reporting on other such events in the near future.

Please make every effort to attend our annual convention on February 22-23, 2013 at the Lisle Wyndham. We have an exciting slate of speakers and presentations that our Convention Committee has tirelessly been working on organizing since the summer. Details can be found on the convention homepage.

I hope to see you at the convention!

Warmest Holiday Wishes,
Gevik Anbarchian, ITBE President

Professional Planner

February 22-23, 2013 – **ITBE Annual State Convention**	Lisle, IL
March 20-23, 2013 – **TESOL Convention**	Dallas, Texas
April 2013 – **ITBE Spring Workshop**	TBA

Check www.itbe.org for details

Book Review

Review by Deborah Silver,
Northeastern Illinois University

Learning One-to-One
Authors: Ingrid Wisniewska (2012)
Publisher: Cambridge University Press

Ingrid Wisniewska tackles a difficult task in this book: providing a blueprint for instructors who teach students on an individual basis. As anyone who has taught one-to-one knows, such lessons are as varied as the instructors who teach them and the learners who take them. In short, there is no such thing as a typical one-to-one session. So many variables come into play, including setting, purpose and language level. Wisniewska, author/co-author of numerous ESL texts, duly notes the challenges of teaching students individually: for the instructor, prolonged interaction with each student and little time for reflection on how the lesson is going, and for the student, the need to constantly participate and the lack of peer support. However, she also heralds the benefits for both parties. Students are often more relaxed, receive immediate feedback, and can direct their own learning paths, while teachers find the individual interaction more collaborative and less demanding than teaching a roomful of students and, not to mention, the ability such lessons afford to fine-tune instruction to meet students' language needs.

The author spends the first half of the book exploring the basics of one-to-one instruction, providing information on where best to teach the sessions, how to conduct needs analyses and design the course, and what materials to use and, if necessary, adaptation ideas. All of this is useful information. However, the most thought-provoking and valuable chapters of the book explore the various roles the one-to-one teacher inhabits: conversation partner, observer and listener, feedback provider, mentor and guide, and learner. Each role is

explained in detail and given its own chapter, complete with valuable exercises specifically geared to that teacher-student dynamic.

As conversation partners, for example, teacher and student exchange information and opinions on topics of interest to both participants. But as conversation partners, Wisniewski emphasizes that teachers must adjust the level of their speech to that of the students, keeping in mind Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development and leading students to a higher level of competence by giving them the means to learn how to do tasks by themselves (the process known as scaffolding). Toward that end, Wisniewska provides numerous exercises for structuring and scaffolding conversations, which can also be used as a catalyst for grammar- or vocabulary-related work. In the activity "Ask me a question," for instance, instructor and student take turns rolling a die, with each number on the die corresponding to a different question word (1 = what, 2 = when, 3 = why, 4 = who, 5 = where, 6 = how). A set of cards with a different verb written on each card is placed on the table. After rolling the die, the "roller" picks up a card from the set and asks their partner a question using the correct question word and the verb on the card; the partner must truthfully respond.

Each teacher role-focused chapter proceeds along the same lines, providing numerous exercises in precise detail that meet the function of the role at hand. As feedback provider, for example, one exercise asks the teacher to record a student's one-minute talk, which the student transcribes for homework; Wisniewska provides a list of possible topics. In the next lesson, teacher and student go over the transcript together, working on grammar, vocabulary, and adding or clarifying information as needed. In the teacher-as-learner chapter, students become the educators, with exercises that focus on their knowledge or expertise, for example, describing their country's education system or their

career path, giving the steps in a process related to their field or for cooking a favorite dish, etc. For each exercise in the book, the author starts with a simple, highlighted synopsis that includes a brief outline of the exercise, its focus and level, and time and preparation required. This allows the teacher to assess fairly quickly whether an activity is right for a given student.

The wealth of information and activities in its pages makes *Learning One-to-One* an important aid for the one-to-one teacher. It provides invaluable explanations for teachers as to how to pinpoint and meet students' needs through targeted activities, many of which can easily be adapted to a regular classroom setting. Exercises can also be adjusted to fit a wide age range, from young learners to adults, and while the majority of activities are best suited for beginning to intermediate levels, teachers will have no problem finding ways to make them work for more advanced students. In addition, the book breaks down the one-to-one teaching experience into easy-to-understand categories and components, explaining in clear, concise language how to make sure students get the most from their individual instruction.

Wisniewska, I. (2010). *Learning One-to-One*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
(*Note: the book includes a CD-ROM with photocopy materials as PDFs.*)

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A Letter to Adult ESL Educators

By Jose R. Cabrales,
Instructor in the Language Partners
Program at Danville Correctional Center

My letter is directed to those of you who work with adults, especially those who teach English as a Second Language, ABE, or some form of adult literacy.

While I haven't received a Master's or PhD in education, my experience as an ESL student myself (I learned English in my late teens), and now as a teacher in Language Partners (LP), has taught me a few things that, while commonsensical, can easily be forgotten due to the daily stresses on the average teacher. The three "musts" that I have learned while teaching in Language Partners are: you must provide your students with the tools to become critical thinkers, you must never lose the joy of teaching, and you must be humble and learn while you teach.

The first thing I learned from LP is that you must provide your students with the tools and the opportunities to become critical thinkers. In the book *Pedagogy of Freedom*, Paulo Freire (1998) states, "To teach is not

History of Language Partners

Danville Correctional Center (DCC) is a medium-high security men's prison with a sizable population of inmates who don't speak English. Unfortunately, DCC did not have an ESL instructor for many years due to funding. This made it difficult if not impossible for those inmates to enter ABE and pre-GED classes. Indeed, these people were left out.

As a resident of this institution for many years now, I have seen firsthand how this situation affected those inmates. They really wanted to attend school, but because of the language barrier, they could not get into school, or if they managed to get into ABE, their limited English frustrated them. As a result, they would drop out.

Recognizing this need, and with support from the Education Justice Project (EJP),[1] I developed a no-cost solution: a proposal that would pair students at the prison taking college courses through EJP with students in need of ESL instruction to help them achieve a level of English proficiency, which would allow them to enroll and succeed in their ABE or pre-GED classes. The proposal was accepted, and the program began in the form of instruction for the tutors in a multiple month program called, Teaching Partners (TPs), on how to teach ESL students.

Beginning in January 2011, Language Partners (LP) became a reality. We spread the word about the program and the turnout was impressive. The administration allowed LP to begin with ten students, who got together with eight TP's for three hours twice a week to receive formal ESL instruction. The TP's are in charge of developing activities and lesson plans, delivering instruction, and assigning/grading homework and tests. The TP's count on the experience and expertise of the resource partners, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign instructors who aid the TP's in whatever way they can through helping with lesson planning, finding materials, or teaching mini-lessons. At the time of writing, this first group has graduated, and we are now teaching our second class of 15 students.

[1] The Education Justice Project (www.educationjustice.net) is a program from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign that offers upper-level college courses to incarcerated men at Danville Correctional Center. (To be eligible for these courses, students must have at least 60 credit hours of lower-division coursework.) EJP also offers workshops and reading groups, tutoring, guest lectures, a sustainable garden project, a mindfulness group, and many other programs, in addition to initiatives at the Urbana-Champaign campus.

To learn more about how Language Partners works and its effects, see our collaboratively authored article, "Prisoners Teaching ESL: A Learning Community Among 'Language Partners,'" in the September 2012 issue of *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*. You can download it here: <http://www.educationjustice.net/home/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/TETYC0401Prisoners.pdf>.

to transfer knowledge but to create the possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge" (p.30). As educators, you must instill in your students the capacity to think critically with the goal of creating a group of citizens who question the status quo, and, most importantly, who can create innovative solutions to problems other generations before them have ignored.

There are those who might tell you, "This is just an ESL class, how can you teach this type of problem-posing education? After all, you're just teaching English." While it is difficult to teach critical thinking in an ESL class, it is not impossible. For instance, in LP we formerly used an ESL newspaper called *News for You* that covered news from around the world. The newspaper, however, had articles we felt were irrelevant to our students. I mean, what relevance could a coin from the royal wedding possibly have to them? So, instead, we looked for articles that were more pertinent to them. How? We simply asked the students what interested them. They asked about current immigration issues and about the role of women in the armed forces, among other topics. An article about Zapatista women fighting in the Mexican revolution sparked a great debate about perceived gender roles. We baptized this new "newspaper" *News*

Figure 0. All eight Teaching Partners and six of the Resource Partners. Front row, left to right: LuAnn Sorenson, Heather Mehrtens, Elfego Núñez, Andre D. Slater. Middle row, left to right: Otilio Rosas, Nick Watkins, Joseph L. Mapp, Orlando Mayorga, Erick Nava, Jim Sosnowski,

for Us. Never stop improving; never stop innovating. If you think creatively about it, critical consciousness can be woven into any curriculum.

Another thing I learned while teaching in LP is to never lose the joy of teaching. Many years ago, there was an ESL teacher at DCC (we'll call him Mr. X), who was infamous, especially among the Latino population, because of the way he treated the students in his class. I knew many of his students, and they would tell me that they couldn't approach him when they had questions. He went as far as to give students tickets when they "bothered" him. I felt outraged that these students had to go through that, and I remember telling them that I could probably teach them better if I was given the chance.

I'm sure Mr. X was not thinking about being a horrible teacher when he started his career. Like you, he probably got into teaching for the joy of it. Along the way, though, he just got burned out. Teacher burnout is a dangerous thing, both to the teacher and to the student. In *Teaching Community*, Bell Hooks (2003) says that in the last stages of burnout she dreaded teaching. She claims, "The most negative consequence of this type of burnout is manifest when teachers begin to abhor and hate students" (p.15). You must never get to that point.

When I asked my fellow TP's about what they do when they get burnout but manage to still show up to classes with joy, the common answer was that we do not want to let our students down. The motivation of the students becomes our own. Besides, our students are quick to let us know when we are not at 100 percent!

We tend to become critical of our performance as instructors: what we did not do, what we could have done better, etc. Remember that teaching is a process. If you feel that you are getting in to Mr. X's territory, carve out some time to reflect on the reason you became a teacher in the first place. When you come back from your inner exploration, you will be refreshed and have renewed energy and enthusiasm to continue teaching effectively and passionately.

The third lesson that I've learned while teaching in LP is that we must always stay humble and never become paternalistic. These students are adults, and they deserve our respect and our admiration for trying to learn an entirely new language. In *Pedagogy of Freedom*, Paulo Freire (1998) states, "My respect as a teacher for the student, for his/her curiosity…demands of me the cultivation of humility and tolerance" (p.65).

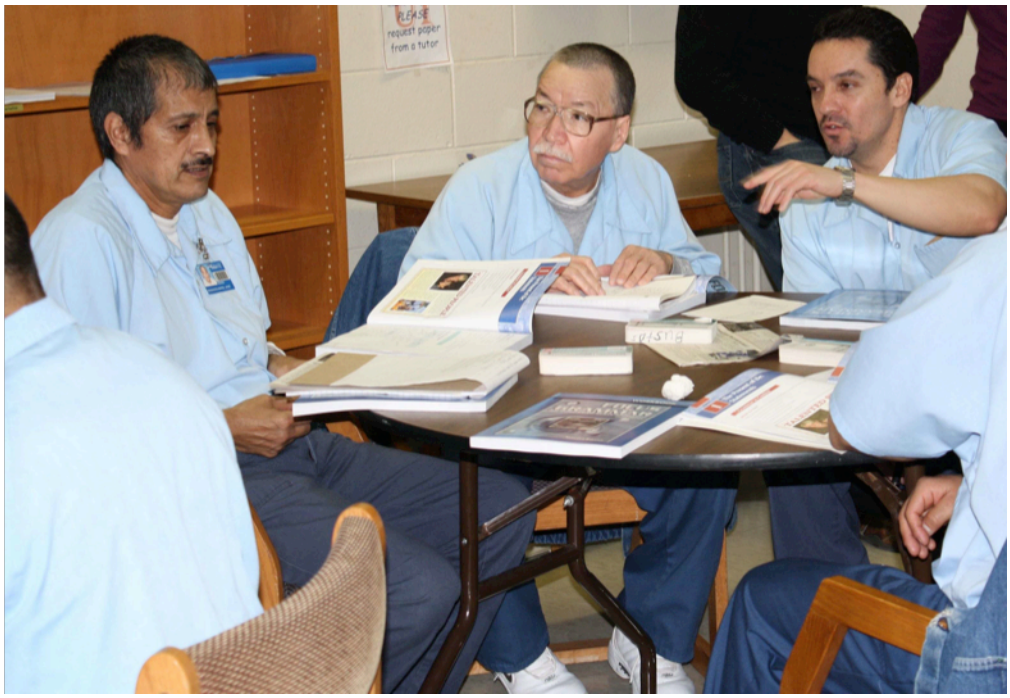

Figure 0. Left to right: Students Jaime Granados and Nahum Bustos working with instructor Jose R. Cabrales (pointing).

Stay humble; you are not a superhero or anyone's savior. You are a teacher sharing your knowledge. In the same manner, Joel Kincheloe (2008) notes, "Critical teachers make use of this knowledge not to 'save' marginalized students but to provide a safe space for them and to learn with them about personal empowerment, [and] the cultivation of the intellect" (p. 25). I love that Kincheloe says, "to learn with them," because that is exactly the way it should be. If you keep in mind that you are "unfinished" (p. 66), as Freire (1998) states, you will always learn, even when you're teaching, and that will keep you grounded and humble.

One of the things that I dislike is public speaking (funny thing, since I have to do that in order to teach). When I have to do it for my own class, I think about my ESL students, and how they are brave enough to do it, even with their limited English. Nahum, for instance, is 65 years old, and he is one of our best students. He is very committed and enthusiastic. When we first asked him why he wanted to learn English,

he said that he wanted to communicate better with his grandchildren who speak only English. It is for students like Nahum, who at his age still has the hunger to learn, that we stay committed and humble.

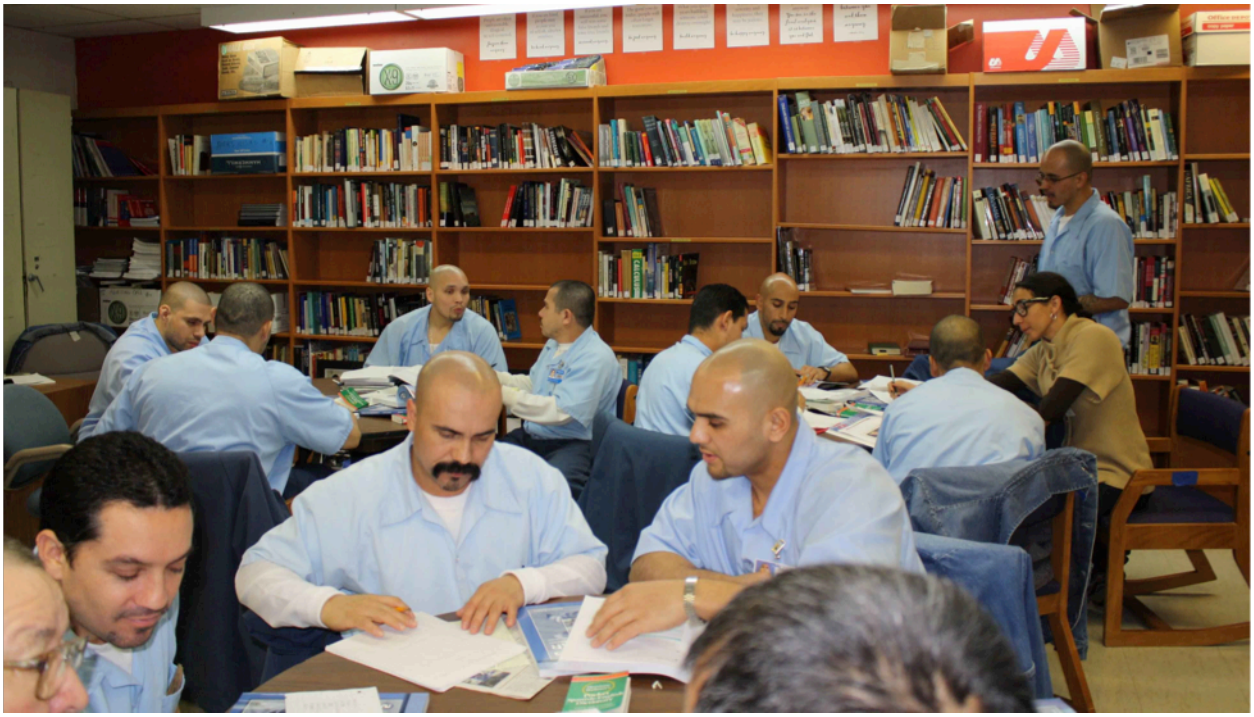

Figure 0. Class in action. Small groups of learners, instructors ("Teaching Partners"), and a University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign "Resource Partner" working together.

The three "musts" that I learned from LP—critical thinking, never losing the joy of teaching, and staying humble—are lessons that I believe could be easily implemented in any classroom. We do it in Language Partners, and we can testify that it works. The environment is such that we learn while we have fun in a relaxed, inviting atmosphere that is conducive of learning. However, I would not have learned these things if critical thinkers had not taught me about them in the first place. Now, it is with joy that I feel compelled to equip my students with the tools, so, together, we can achieve change. If you think this sounds utopian as I once did, just look at Language Partners: Yesterday it was a dream, and now, it is a beautiful reality.

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Freire, P. (1998). *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage*. Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield. hooks, b. (2003). *Teaching community: A pedagogy of hope*. New York: Routledge. Kincheloe, J. L. (2008). *Critical pedagogy primer* (2nd ed.). New York: Peter Lang.

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Book Review

Review by Molly Kelley,
Faculty Lecturer, University of Iowa

The ESL/ELL Teacher's Survival Guide
Authors: Larry Ferlazzo & Katie Hull (2012)
Publisher: Wiley

Many readers already have some degree of familiarity with Larry Ferlazzo and Katie Hull Sypnieski from their previous publications, but everyone should be excited by the fact that they have a new book that was published this year. The book is titled *The ESL/ELL Teacher's Survival Guide: Ready-to-Use Strategies, Tools, and Activities for Teaching All Levels,* and it is recommended for 4^{th} – 12^{th} grade.

This book is divided into a number of chapters within five different parts. Part one begins by giving a general overview of the field and also provides simple, readable definitions for acronyms and commonly used vocabulary. It then moves into a discussion of "the three R's of a successful ESL class: relationships, resources, and routines" (p. 14). Parts two and three give the reader a practical approach to matching teaching instruction to common curriculum standards, while giving brief descriptions of these standards. Part two also discusses helpful activities for daily instruction, both for beginning and intermediate ELLs. Part four discusses mainstream classrooms and recommends employing the organizing cycle in order to teach content such as social studies, science, and math. Part five contains a mixture of topics including always-useful subjects such as handling classroom challenges and assessment.

This book is both readable and direct. Each chapter provides clear overviews, easy to implement activities, a discussion of current research, and some helpful websites to aid instruction. The activities range from old favorites such as dialogues and cloze items, to newer ones such as dictogloss and

computer assisted language learning. The writers are, at times, refreshingly blunt. In a chapter discussing curriculum and standardization, the writers posit that "perhaps we educators should be more concerned with what students hear and learn, and less focused on what we believe we are teaching" (p. 40). Although this is easier said than done, they go on to give the reader clear activities that coincide with some commonly accepted standards of English achievement. I especially appreciated the chapter on assessment, which is strong in its discussion of formative and summative assessment and suggestions for implementation.

The only actual downside to this book is more a reflection of my cynical nature than a critique. The chapters begin with parables, folktales, and other stories that I found myself skipping in order to get to the more applicable material.

Overall, I would recommend this book to any teacher who is new to the field or who is in need of a professional development refresher. Its usefulness as an activity bank or as a review of current literature cannot be understated. Keep it on your bookshelf: you will use it.

Ferlazzo, L., & Hull Sypnieski, K. (2012). *The ESL/ELL Teacher's Survival Guide: Ready-to-Use Strategies, Tools, and Activities for Teaching All Levels.* Somerset, NJ: Wiley.

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Nurturing a Classroom of Language Risk Takers:

Tips to Enhance the Classroom Experience & Improve Student Performance

By Tom Osgood

It is one of those continual challenges for teachers of any experience level to foster student oral production in their classrooms. We, as ELL educators, know that students who speak the language in our classrooms are also students who are learning the language, so we are always trying to devise techniques and exercises to encourage students to take the risk of practicing the skill of speaking in front of others, along with, of course, the complementary skill of listening.

Because students have different personalities, temperaments, cultural norms, and motivation levels, some are naturally more inclined to be active participants in the classroom setting than others. This is beneficial for them to be aware of, but in our position as instructors it should be our goal to develop a classroom full of language risk takers with these dynamics in mind.

It is quite a lofty aim, so how do we strive to attain it? In my student teaching among lower-level Chinese ELL's, I found a lot of progress can be made by creating an environment where oral production is expected of all students, but where it is also safe and fun to do so. We, as teachers, may have to place one foot (or two) outside of the box in order to make this a reality, but if our goal is to raise the language ability level of all students, we should be willing to take those steps. Additionally, taking an informed look at how instruction is linked not only within a teaching period but also between periods can reveal insights that can help students maximize their classroom time and make faster progress in their language learning.

Or the teaching experience referenced, I was placed in a classroom of about 20 high-beginning level Chinese students at a community center in the Chinatown neighborhood of Chicago. Many of these students had immigrated to the U.S. within the past year or so and live in a community where they generally do not have to speak English outside the classroom in order to get by. Additionally, it was an early morning class, and several students had worked a late shift the

night before. The deck was certainly stacked against me to have room full of excited learners ready to speak English at the drop of a hat.

I decided if I wanted my students to take risks, I was going to have to take some as well. I began by rearranging the desks in the classroom from the traditional setup of rows into a large semi-circle. This was beneficial for enhancing the classroom environment for several reasons. First of all, it had the students facing each other. This served to break the ice a little bit when I would ask them to initiate conversations with each other. I think this element of interpersonal connection led students to help one another with the language they were producing. By the third or fourth day of large-group speaking activities, it became a natural sight to see more advanced students assisting less advanced ones. I think this process was sped along by the large amount of communicative activities the students did with one another. Second, it created a large open space in the classroom for students to get up and converse with each other. At the early hour at which I was teaching, I was encouraged by my cooperating teacher to keep the students moving as much as possible. The new seating arrangement also allowed me to easily access all the students in order to monitor their production and answer any questions. It can be rather difficult to navigate to the back row of a small classroom in order to get an accurate assessment of student performance, even though this is where some of the students who need the most help have a tendency to sit.

If I was going to have the seats arranged to maximize student oral production, I had better make those types of activities a large proportion of class time, and that I did. I tried to devote at least 45 minutes of the 105 minutes of class time each day to a variety of activities that encourage students to take risks with English. I tried to mix up these activities each day, with some of them in pairs, some of them in small groups, and some of them with the entire class. For one period, I introduced students to a series of feeling words and then had them converse in pairs using a script to ask each other questions about what they do when they are in a certain mood. Another time after a lesson on the modal 'will', I posted picture cards on the wall and instructed students to look at each picture and tell another student what they think the person in the picture will do next. These types of activities have the added benefit of being more authentic than the ones in many textbooks and can be of more interest to your students.

What I found to be of great importance with any of the exercises was to give them time to develop and achieve their desired result. Whether this be with a simple paired activity of completing an exercise in a textbook, or a more complex one of using pictures hung on the wall to practice a conversation script, it is important to give adequate time for students to become familiar with the instructions and "get into the groove" of the activity. With students who have limited language ability or limited exposure to communicative-style teaching techniques, this may take longer than we expect. As educators, we may also have a tendency to think some of this time is being wasted, and that it could be better used in some other way. However, even the act of figuring out instruction can have educational value, if students are allowed to negotiate meaning among themselves. If, as a teacher, you remain committed to using these activities on a regular basis, students will become more adept at doing them and will perform them more efficiently.

One additional element that I felt was important to incorporate into my lesson planning, and that I thought made an impact in a number of areas related to student learning, was that of recycling. This is the idea of returning to a concept or teaching point multiple times in order to reinforce it in the minds of students. This can be done both within a class period and from one class to the next. For my lower-level students who spoke very little English outside of class, I thought it was necessary to recycle in both ways. I would introduce a concept such as the 'will' modal, set them off on a communicative activity using it, and then return to it in another form later in the class. I also took advantage of a concept my cooperating teacher used and had each student answer a final question in order to leave class at the end of the period. This both reinforced a key concept of the day, and it also made excellent use of that portion of the class period. The next day always began with a re-formatted exercise that incorporated the concept from previous day, showing them another way that it could be used in everyday language. For example, the picture card activity referenced previously was used the next day with different pictures and an instruction for the students to place themselves in the scene and tell another student what they will do in that particular place. I think this level of reinforcement was very profitable for the type of learners I had in this classroom.

My student teaching experience made a significant impact on my overall teaching philosophy and revealed to me that how you teach something can be as important as what it is you are teaching. This is especially true when it comes to teaching skill areas such as speaking and listening to low-level English learners. Creating a safe and fun learning environment where they feel comfortable taking risks can make a huge difference in their rate of language development. This is a lesson I will certainly take with me into future teaching environments.

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