



TEAL NEWS

The Association of B.C. Teachers of English as an Additional Language

WINTER ISSUE 2010



Taking Stock: Teaching and Assessing in a Global Context

BC TEAL 42nd Annual Conference

Details Inside

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Contributors

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Our dynamic newsletter team needs you! To apply for a volunteer position as editor, writer, artist, researcher, proofreader, please write to admin@bctéal.org

Letter from the President

Michael Galli

Greetings BC TEAL Members,

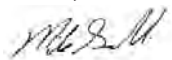
I hope this edition of the Newsletter finds you well. Thanks to the Newsletter Committee once again for providing us with this publication. The TEAL Newsletter is a key feature of our association; it keeps us all connected and provides a place for us to come together to network and share ideas. I hope you make the most of it. Please do consider contributing to the newsletter yourself: we all have something to offer, and it is important that each of us add our voice to our professional community.

The annual BC TEAL Conference is not far away; I feel this more keenly this year because it is being held at BCIT, the institution at which I work. The plenary speakers are sure to impress you. The downtown campus is convenient but limited in size, so we may need to cap the number of registrations. Make sure to register early to safeguard your spot.

I look forward to welcoming you at the conference at BCIT on April 30th and May 1st. I'm also pleased to announce that on April 29th ELSANet will also be holding its conference at BCIT. This is exciting as it signifies closer ties are being developed between BC TEAL and ELSANet. We all benefit by working together, especially when it comes to professional development and advocacy. Because these conference are scheduled side-by-side, we're sure to further solidify the positive and long standing relations between our two organizations.

Thank you all for your membership in and support of BC TEAL. I'm sure you all agree that our common profession is important to many layers of the social, political, and economic fabric of our province, and the work we do is necessary and appreciated. I wish you well in 2010, and look forward to seeing you at the spring Conference. It will be an outstanding event. Remember to register early!

Sincerely,



Michael Galli

President – BC TEAL



Letter from the Editor

Shawna Williams

Dear Readers,

I've been editor of TEAL News for over a year now, and knowing that my term will eventually come to an end, I've been thinking about what advice to pass to my successor.

When I took on this role, I had some great support from Marina Crawford, longtime newsletter committee member and former guest editor, and was able to chat with Barbara Siennicki, a two-term newsletter editor, to glean ideas about how to make TEAL News an engaging and relevant document. I was thankful for the community that existed, but I was at a loss in terms of what was expected of me; there was no manual to direct me (or if there once was, it's now long lost). I've since been given the TEAL Board Manual, which has some guidelines for the newsletter. However, many of the items in the manual are no longer relevant since TEAL has moved to deliver more and more announcements electronically.

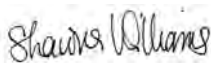
One of the benefits of the move to embrace technology is that the newsletter is available online, along with issues dating back to 2003. These back issues have been a great education for me as editor. They've inspired me in terms of people to contact and ideas to resurrect. I'm pleasantly surprised to see that many of the past articles, even if a few years old, are still current. I am continually impressed by the caliber of our membership and what their contributions offer to the TEAL teaching community. A true test of any profession is the willingness of its membership to share with the colleagues. It's comforting to know these contributions are now easily accessible online.

A major drawback of having moved to an online format, however, is that we continue to produce a print-version of the newsletter. Although distributed electronically, TEAL News looks best when printed onto paper - and in colour at that! While going online has saved TEAL hundreds of dollars in printing and mailing costs, should we continue with a printer-friendly format? Do you prefer being able to print off the newsletter to read at your leisure, or would you appreciate an on-line format where you don't have to continually scroll up and down the columns?

During my time as editor, I've added "1 Topic, 3 Takes" (which will return) and the printing of the ESL Writing contest winners (runners up in this issue). I hope these additions to the newsletter remain. That said, when it comes time for another TEAL member to take on the role of editor, I look forward to the innovations to the newsletter that connects our community.

Indeed, I'd love to receive your feedback - not only about the articles you read this time round, but also about the format and direction the newsletter has taken.

Happy Reading!
Shawna Williams, editor



What I Learned Teaching ESL

by Kathy Vance, PhD, Communications Department, BCIT

BC TEAL Writing Competition 2009

In recognition of ESL Week (May 3rd to 9th, 2009), BC TEAL, the UBC Bookstore, and Cambridge University Press sponsored a province-wide Writing Contest. The winners were published in the Fall '09 TEAL News. For the Winter '10 issue, we're pleased to feature the runners-up in the instructor category. Look for details of the 2010 Writing Competition in the spring.

Little did I dream when I started teaching ESL over a quarter century ago that I was bringing the whole world not only into my classroom but also into my heart and mind.

Through my students I experienced the Chinese Cultural Revolution, harrowing escapes from Vietnam by boat, imprisonment in reeducation camps, and interminable waits at refugee camps. I also learned more about life in Canada: families living on the floor in overcrowded apartments with friends, and women trapped in abusive relationships because of their fear of being deported. While some students brought food and clothing for other impoverished students, others used my telephone to negotiate real estate deals that I would never be able to afford without winning the lottery. And everyone wanted nothing more than to learn the English they needed to get on with their varied lives.

In my ignorance I corrected my students' pronunciation of

the Himalayas, although now I've become quite snobby about saying it the Indian way. I tried on kimonos from Korea and Japan and Punjabi pant suits and learned how to wrap myself in a sari and in so doing, I learned that all our clothing is costumes. I remember when a student explained to me about dowries, while I listened with interest and, I must admit, a sense of superiority. Later, I remembered what the student said about the importance of putting the dowry in a joint bank account. When my own relationship was deteriorating, I thought about what that student had taught me about the power of a bank account and made the bank deposit that would become the first step to my own independence. I remember a woman wearing a hijab who objected in class to a course exercise that referred to Middle Eastern terrorists. As a result of that student's objections, the class worked together to rewrite the materials, and I learned that the strength, bravery, intelligence, and independence of a woman is independent of what she wears on her head.

I remember my surprise when a student told me she was happier to have a used piece of clothing because then she knew someone else had loved it and worn it before her. She taught me that something does not have to be new to have value. I also learned not to admire a piece of jewelry a student was wearing because she would then take it off and give it to me. I was not used to such generosity. I learned from my students of the many jobs people have and the dignity, joys and trials of those jobs. I learned who cleans restaurant kitchens at night, cleans hotel

rooms and office buildings, and does the sewing and detailed handiwork. I remember a student saying how much she enjoyed sitting at a table with other women tying intricately fine knots in the string between each pearl in a necklace because she was so good at it and could talk to all the other women while she worked. I thought of that student and of my own hours spent developing course materials all alone. After that, when I was offered a project, my answer would be that I would do it only if I could work on a team. I too wanted to experience that camaraderie in my work.

I remember the student who bowed repeatedly while telling me that people from his culture didn't bow. I learned then that our cultures influence us in subtle ways that are difficult for us to be aware of. Daily experiencing so many other ways of being in the world taught me that my way was not the only way, the only right way of doing things. Some of my students were upset that other people would enter the room with a personal serving of food and not share it. Others expected to be offered something three times before they would say yes, and became quite offended when I offered something only once. I knew I could never memorize all the varieties in human behavior, but I could become more aware of them. I also learned not to stand upon ceremony. If someone brought ice cream, but no ice to keep it frozen, to a class picnic to the park on a hot day, it is best to just begin the picnic with the "dessert."

My ESL students also taught me much about responsibility.

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How Can Chinese Students Practice Speaking English without 'Losing Face'

Bozena Felsz, VanWest College

Chinese philosopher Lao-Tzu once said: "people shoot the bird who sticks his head out." This could be one of the reasons why Chinese students are so terrified of speaking English. Making mistakes in front of others is a bit like losing face. However, a good coping technique can increase their communicating competence as well as self-confidence. This article describes step-by-step how the mind mapping technique may help students practice their speaking skills successfully.

INTRODUCTION

I taught in China from 2006 to 2009 and one of the schools I worked for was Shanghai Chuansha High School, a key state school near Shanghai. I was the only foreign teacher in this school. My challenge was to teach speaking skills to twelve large classes of over fifty students each.

It is commonly known, Chinese students are not in the habit of participating spontaneously in lessons. They tend to answer only when asked. When I first started teaching in Chuansha High School, most students kept silent even if they knew an answer. Few students dared to risk speaking out. Even though I tried to encourage them to contribute to their learning experience in an active way, it was extremely difficult to apply any interactive approach mainly because most students were so reluctant to speak.

So what could I do to help my Chinese students practice their speaking skills?

I decided to try the mind mapping technique.

Mind Mapping:

- Provides an easy to use way to generate words.
- Offers plenty of opportunities to practice the newly learned skills and vocabulary.
- Gives lots of positive reinforcement and thus help build the students' self-confidence.

The following is an outline of the four-week program I devised for my students from Shanghai Chuansha High School.

Weeks 1- 2

TOPIC: Tourist Attractions in Kelowna, B.C.

Material: geopictorial 3-D maps of the Okanagan Valley and attractions in Kelowna

Approach: brainstorming, mind mapping, group discussions, oral practice, presentations

Task 1

Question: If you went to Kelowna, what could you do there for fun?

Steps:

Find Kelowna on the map and look for some attractions there.

Make a vocabulary map using selected relevant key words such as Kelowna, location, attractions, swimming, golfing, picking fruits, fishing, boating, skiing, wine tasting, etc.

Find the names of the places where you would enjoy these activities. Add them to your map.

Task 2

Conversation:

Student 1: Asks: What attractions would you visit in Kelowna?

Student 2: Answers the question by giving examples from his/her chart about Kelowna.

Task 3

Read the description of Kelowna on the back of the map. Select the key words related to the locations and attractions in Kelowna. Add new words to your chart.

Task 4

Map-and-Speak

Give a two-three minute speech about Kelowna using the key words from your map.

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CONCLUDING REMARKS

This experiment involved 593 students (twelve classes, more than fifty students per class).

English level: Beginners to Intermediate

Most of the students actively participated in the exercises and were able to use their mind maps when speaking. At the end, they gave points to each other according to their observations recorded on the evaluation forms. The average score was between 3-4 points, with 5 being the highest score. According to my record, 8% received 5 points, 34% received a score of 4 points, 45% received 3 points, and 8% received 2 points. Those who scored 5 points were well-prepared and confident speakers, and they volunteered to give a presentation in front of the class.

These results clearly show that mind mapping is not only an effective approach to practicing speaking skills but also an easy tool to help students build their self-confidence and empower them as public speakers. I was pleased to notice that, as students became more comfortable with the mind mapping technique, their maps became bigger and bolder with a good variety of words around. Furthermore, they were more comfortable with using their maps when delivering their speeches.

Mind mapping is a useful technique for helping students improve their communication skills without being too self-conscious and afraid of 'losing face'.

Teaching English as a Second Language. Now at Douglas College.

Douglas College is proud to announce the start of its new TESL Citation program. Students will gain an introduction to the fields of ESL and EFL in this hands-on course.

Offered at the New Westminster Campus, the program begins in May 2010.

For details and more information, please see our web site at douglascollege.ca or contact Program Coordinator Janice Penner at 604-527-5175.



TCF: Mary Ashworth Scholarship Winner

TESOL 2009: The Experience of a Lifetime

by Fatimah Mahmood

I owe gratitude to the TEAL Charitable Foundation for awarding me the Mary Ashworth Scholarship with which I attended the TESOL Convention 2009 in Denver, Colorado. This was an opportunity and an experience of a lifetime for a female international student from Pakistan, committed to capitalizing on the opportunity to excel in the field of education.

On March 24, 2009, I started my journey with a fear of traveling alone (without family of course!) and yet excited about the experience ahead. Soon I was in Denver. Next morning, I headed down to the Colorado Convention Center, the venue for the event. I had pre-registered for presentations: "Preconvention Research Day – TESOL Research: What? Why? How?", scheduled in the morning, and "Selecting and Using Print Visuals for Instructional Activities", scheduled in the evening.

The morning session was conducted by Anne Burns and Michael Legutke. They provided practical orientation to key issues in conducting TESOL research. The session was informative and interactive, and later helped me when I came back and started conducting research for my master's thesis. My field of study and research interest is based on Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences with special reference to visual-spatial intelligence and ESL instruction.

In the evening session, I was given hands on experience developing a repertoire of useful print visuals, formulating and applying evaluative criteria, selecting visuals for various



classroom scenarios, and creating context-based activities using prepared and/or teacher-created visuals. Anne Martin and Paula Schlusberg surely added a "print visuals perspective" to my research.

Next morning, I began the regular TESOL convention holding a 267-page program book, overwhelmed by the vast array of options to select from. I had never attended a convention of such magnitude before. However, I was enthusiastic to experience and to absorb the maximum. By the end of the day, I had attended six workshops. I was completely exhausted but was satisfied that each workshop contributed to my learning experience.

For the next two days of the conference, I mainly spent time walking back and forth between the conference halls, making sure to be on time for the sessions. For a few, I had to line up and some were too full to enter. I was surprised to get into a session where what I had envisioned by the program abstract was not at all the actual content of the session! Within all this, I met a few professionals with similar interests. One was Gabriela Kleckova from the Czech Republic, presenting on "Building Language Learner's Visual Literacy Skills". I attended her workshop after which we happened to sit through a common session. We chatted a bit and she showed a keen interest in my research area. To my surprise, she scheduled an appointment with me for the next morning. An hour went by quickly and I felt honoured

when she said, and I quote, "Well, who knows? We might be presenting together at the next TESOL conference."

Sunday was scheduled for sightseeing. The fear of traveling alone arose again. I gained confidence, grabbed a map and set out for the adventure, determined to prove to myself that I could do it. By the end of the day, I had been to two museums, walked the famous 16th Street, peeped into souvenir shops, marvelled at the architecture of the state buildings, and had a Moroccan dinner.

On the whole, attending the 2009 TESOL Convention was excellent not only for my professional development but for my personal growth as an individual. The richness of diversity it brought forth through workshops, presentations and/or research papers, was a great learning experience. Being part of such an educational event gave me an opportunity to experience theoretical and practical issues of language learning within varied educational contexts and thus expanded my research to a more global perspective.

Wired Teacher article: A Steed with Wings

by Denise Geiss



photo by Galina Barskaya

There is a saying: "Language is a steed that carries one into a far country." When music is added to language, that steed has wings.

Language teachers usually incorporate songs into their classes – firstly, because students enjoy them. Songs also have linguistic features which make them useful in language learning. Certainly, songs have the power to put the listener in touch with the soul of a people and a period in time. I still fondly remember the songs by Beau Dommage, which were popular in Quebec when I studied French, and the tunes on the radio in Japan when I was working there. I was a fan of *enka*, but that's another story.

Using Canadian songs in the classroom has now become much easier, thanks to two new websites: The Real Canadian Songbook (TRCS) and its companion site, The Advanced Canadian Songbook (TACS).

Sharon Yoneda, an instructor

with 36 years of experience, and Roma Sedgman, an ESL instructor whose very first memory as a baby is of hearing her father whistle "Men of Harlach", used ESL Video to put together the two sites. Ryan Detwiler, the creator of ESL Video, set up the sites to a Wordpress theme. Both sites are getting rave reviews in the ESL Community.

I took a look and found that the sites are easy to access and use. All the songs have a quiz and notes (background information on songs) and many have a transcript. The YouTube videos are visually engaging and the audio is clear. The Canadian content is great, and I had a pleasant time browsing through the list and reading the notes.

Creating the sites was apparently not without challenges. In the beginning, there was a bug which prevented the addition of "Notes". After Ryan dealt with several technical problems, the second challenge was that the sites need constant grooming to keep the YouTube links up-to-date.

TRCS and TACS are licensed under a Creative Commons Licence powered by Wordpress which allows "certain liberties" with regard to copyright. The site creators are simply linking off of YouTube, and have never been asked to remove a video. Sharon has also made no reference to VCC [to release the college of any copyright entanglements] on her blog because she is working freelance. By the way, if you want to create your own ESL Video quiz, follow these instructions.

The Wordpress.org format allows users to leave Comments. I encourage you to visit the sites

and let Sharon and Roma know what you think. They would be very happy to hear from teachers.

Denise Geiss began teaching at the English Language Institute at UBC in 1981 and has more than two decades of teaching experience in the field of ESL. She has taught in Japan and Vietnam. In addition, she has taught adult basic education classes in the Canadian high arctic. She has a particular interest in CALL.



**BC TEAL
Annual General Meeting**

to be held

**Friday, April 30th, 2010
at
British Columbia Institute of
Technology
Downtown Campus**

**555 Seymour Street @
Dunsmuir
Vancouver, BC**

Teaching Tips: Developing Community in the ESL Classroom

Karen Densky, Instructor ESAL/TESL, Thompson Rivers University

In December, the ESL Department at Thompson Rivers University (TRU) had a one day retreat in which a common theme emerged: Developing Community. Establishing community for new Canadians or new international students is vital to avoid alienation both in and out of the classroom. I asked some of my colleagues to share a few successful strategies for the TEAL Newsletter. Thanks to Dian Henderson and Julie Bond who contributed the following.

Community Building from Start of Session to End of Session: Three Ideas

Dian Henderson, Instructor TRU

1. Introductions

At the start of each semester, I have students introduce themselves by teaching us all how to greet and say thank you in their language. The class puts this information on a chart as we also distinguish between the nationality (adjective), the country (noun), and the language (noun). Then over the next few days, we all practice identifying: Where is _____ from? How do you say hello in _____? What nationality is _____? What language does _____ speak? In effect, we are learning much more than just names! After one week or so, we then have an in-class pop quiz where students have limited time to walk around the room and fill in the answers to the same sorts of questions as above along with "Find three people from _____." Or, "Name three classmates who are NOT from the same country as you." Etc. It's a lot of fun and creates all

kinds of interactions beyond this bare essential!

2. Pot Luck

Food is always a great community builder. People need to share meals together to build a different sense of community connection, so at least once in a semester, I ask students to bring in some food that might be 'common' in their country. We have a potluck class dinner where we set all the tables with plates, napkins, glasses, and cutlery - the Canadian way. We talk about how food is generally passed around the table or served buffet style in Canada as well as how to use serving utensils and how NOT to use your own cutlery to take things from a common plate. Other things on the list are not 'double dipping', not chewing with your mouth open, not burping, not reaching across the table, and not putting your elbows on the table. We also talk about waiting until everyone has served up their own plate before anyone starts eating. Then we put all these rules of dining etiquette into practice. While we all eat, we talk about the food, the ingredients, how it is made, and when it is usually served. After we eat, I invite students to share a song - even the national anthem - with the class so we can hear the music from their countries and share a line together. This activity is always a great success - students love it, and when we write about it later, they always



have lots of ideas. They are not wondering WHAT TO WRITE ABOUT.

3. Ball of Wool

This activity is good for the end of a semester. I call it the "Ball of Wool." You need a ball of wool, and a pair of scissors. I start by writing on the board phrases such as: I have appreciated..., I have learned..., I have enjoyed..., and I will always remember... Then I have students form a circle and I tell them to think about what they have learned from their classmates and what they have enjoyed doing with their classmates or what they will always remember about their classmates. I tell them to pass the ball to classmates across the circle from them as we make a web - like a spider's web. Each time the ball is tossed, the receiver wraps the wool around their wrist and then says one thing about what they will remember, etc. The ball is passed until everyone has received it at least once - but subsequent rounds can sometimes be the most fruitful! When everyone has had their turn, the ball is tossed back to the teacher, who then holds up the scissors and asks students to cut themselves from the web. As they cut the wool, they are invited to say goodbye to the group - say it in different ways, with words from any language, with no words and just an action - anything goes. In the end, we tie the string on our wrist and there is a bunch of wool on the floor in the center of the circle. I then make a few comments about the symbolism of the web and about what we have on our wrist is what we take with us. There is much left

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Fall TEAL Sessions Report: Theory Informed Practice

by Jennifer Martin, Director of Studies, VanWest College



Luiza Levy and Michael Galli

Saturday, November 14th, 2009
Report submitted It's not always easy for tired teachers and administrators to get up early on a Saturday morning, but it's safe to say that the participants in this year's BC TEAL Fall Sessions on

November 14th were very glad they braved the early morning mists.

About 60 educators from a number of institutions around the province attended the day of professional development, which was hosted by VanWest College this year. Coffee and muffins in hand, participants set off to explore a wealth of options. Workshops on Cultural Literacy, Field Trips, the Common European Framework and Pronunciation were only a few of the offerings facilitated by our talented ESL professionals.

The framework for the sessions was, "Theory Informed Practice", and SFU's Sarah Fleming inspired all with her plenary talk "What Were You Thinking? Theory and Practice

Meet in Language Classrooms". Who hasn't, at the end of a long and tiring day, reflected back on the heady days of our TESL programs and wondered what happened to the ideas that excited us so much?

In addition to workshops and seminars, there was a publisher's display area with copies of the newest resources on hand, as well as tried-and-true texts we all love. A special thank you goes to Oxford University Press for sponsoring the refreshments.

Our thanks go out to all who attended, to the organizers, and to those who so generously shared their expertise.

BCTEAL 42nd Annual Conference 2010

Taking Stock: Teaching and Assessing in a Global Context

The 42nd Annual Conference will be held April 30 to May 01, 2010 at the downtown campus of the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT).

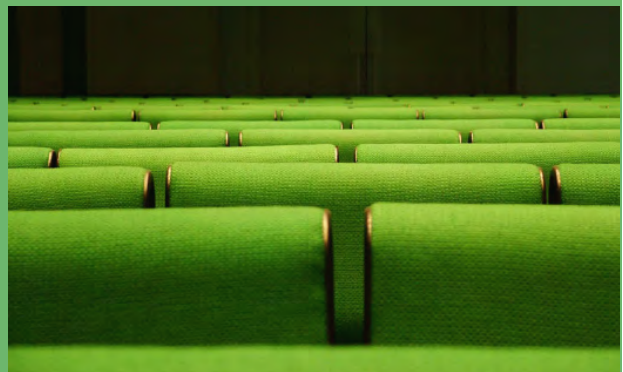
We hope you will join your colleagues from across the province to take part in this stimulating professional development opportunity.

Keep up to date on conference events and changes by visiting www.bctéal.org.

If you would like to present, please submit your proposal online under Conferences in the main menu.

The Call for Presentations deadline is February 8, 2010.

Registration will open mid to late February!



2009 BC TEAL Interior Conference

Submitted by Michael Galli



The second annual 2009 BC TEAL Interior Conference, hosted by Thomson Rivers University, was once again a solid success with some 100 participants in attendance. ESL Professionals from Kamloops, Kelowna, Revelstoke, Abbotsford, Vancouver, Salmon Arm and more... came to engage in professional development workshops and presentations, and the activity of the day demonstrated just how dynamic the ESL field is in BC's Interior.

Our many thanks go out to the Conference Committee, with special mention to Joe Dobson, the Conference Committee Chair, Mike Burri, the TEAL PD Chair, and all the volunteers who helped deliver this quality event. Our appreciation also goes to the three publishing representatives from Cambridge (Ian Sutherland), Oxford (Patricia Nicoli) and Pearson Longman (Zinta Williams). The book displays were well attended and the conference participants had plenty of time to review the wide selection of both new and established resources. This year's Interior Conference had the special distinction of including a keynote address by none other than TESL Canada's President, and our very own Jennifer Pearson Terrell. Yes, BC TEAL lays claim

to Jennifer for being a past president and our current Treasurer. In her consistent manner of providing a professional

and humanistic face to the ESL profession, Jennifer presented a meaningful and inspiring perspective on the value of professional development. This lent the perfect touch to the end of a long day, and helped us reflect on the reasons and meaning behind attending PD conferences. Thank you Jennifer, and kudos to you.

The 2009 Interior Conference is well on its way to becoming a tradition and with the support and interest of our institutions and colleagues in the interior regions, we hope to see this annual event continue to grow. We have received expression of interest from Okanagan College to host next year's conference and I look forward to attending that event in beautiful Kelowna in 2010.

Once again, I would like to thank all who participated in the 2009 Interior Conference. Whether you presented, attended sessions, or volunteered on the conference committee, you have fulfilled a significant part of your responsibility to your profession. I encourage all TEAL Members to attend these events, which don't come along often enough. I also ask that everyone help promote our professional association. TEAL is key to ensuring that the ESL profession continues to be recognized, and TEAL members are our most important asset in this. Together as an association of professionals we are a Professional Association. Please spread the word and encourage your colleagues to join and become important part of the profession.





BC TEAL 42ND ANNUAL CONFERENCE

BRITISH COLUMBIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
DOWNTOWN CAMPUS

APRIL 30-MAY 1, 2010

TAKING STOCK: TEACHING AND ASSESSING IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

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The Best of “The Westcoast Reader” now online

By Janet Nicol, Killarney
Secondary School

<http://janetnicol.wordpress.com/>

Joan Acosta retired as editor of The Westcoast Reader, B.C.'s award-winning newspaper, in June 2009. But as might be expected, Joan is still dedicated to helping adults improve their English skills. Her first project is an online series of e-books called Best of The Reader. The content is based on some of the best stories from the last 27 years of the newspaper.

“The power of this resource is teachers and learners can print the materials again and again,” she says.

There are six e-books (<http://bestofthereader.ca/>) and a 2010 calendar of special days and holidays. The material is organized by topics: People and Jobs, Special Days and Holidays, Many Ways to Help, Families, Keeping Safe, and Sports. Each e-book has 6 to 8 stories with exercises and an answer key. Photographs, maps and illustrations are also included.

The stories are written at three levels of reading ability, according to the levels Acosta developed for use in The Westcoast Reader.

The e-books, available at no cost, are a flexible tool for learners because they can select stories to print or read online.

Readers can expect six more e-books and a Teachers' Guide up on the web soon. Acosta says she is pleased with the positive reaction so far.

“The site has had over 7,000 hits so the word seems to be getting out,” she says.

What I learned teaching ESL continued

continued from page 5

When the classes were faced with cutbacks, the students protested. They wrote letters and appeared before the authorities. They stuck together, and they organized. From my students I learned to do the same, to organize, protest, and make significant gains in the working conditions of ESL teachers. The world had come into my classroom, and I learned that with that came a greater realm of responsibility and a larger arena for acting in the world.

I realize I have hardly mentioned teaching the English language. I value the story boards and story squares, the game I invented to help the students pass their Motor Vehicle tests, the tables of rules for when to use the definite and indefinite article, and all the resources for which I am eternally grateful for helping me unravel the mysteries of English for my students. Nonetheless, the biggest lesson has been how much language and culture are intertwined and how language must be individually molded to allow each of us to express our various identities.

When I was a little girl, my mother gave me a book about children from countries all over the world, each page with a new picture and a new story from a different land. I would spend hours leafing through that book, thinking “just like me” and “not like me.” As I continue on the lifelong journey of forming and expressing my identity, I am grateful to the ESL classroom for widening the range of possibilities to the whole world and the range of responses to include also “could be me” and “why not try it.”

Kathy Vance, PhD, is the co-author, with Dale Fitzpatrick, of the textbook Writing for Success (ERPI/Pearson Longman) and four English textbooks for the BC Ministry of Advanced Education. She has published in ESL since 1982 and co-authored with Dale Fitzpatrick “Teaching Tips and Assignment Ideas for ESL Students” in Business Communication Quarterly (March 2007). In the summer of 2009 she taught English and language teaching techniques to teachers in Changping District in Beijing, China. She has taught in the BCIT Communication Department since 1984. Before that she taught for the Burnaby School Board and for Fraser Valley and Capilano College.

Big Sisters of the Lower Mainland

Meet Study Buddies Isla & Aziza



Every Saturday, Study Buddy tutor Isla and Little Sister Aziza get together to learn new words, write stories, and work on grammar and various school subjects. Aziza has always enjoyed learning, however, when she moved here from Uzbekistan two and a half years ago with limited English, she had trouble understanding people and difficulty interpreting questions in school. Aziza's mom turned to the Big Sisters Study Buddy Program in hopes that this tutoring and mentoring program might help Aziza regain the confidence she had in school before arriving in Canada. With hard work and the support of her Study Buddy, you would never know that the only English words Aziza knew a couple of years ago were "yes" and "no!"

The Big Sisters Study Buddy program, offered by Big Sisters of BC Lower Mainland (www.bigsisters.bc.ca), nurtures the self-esteem of girls by matching them with caring volunteer tutors who offer them academic assistance. This program is for girls, ages 7 to 17, who demonstrate a need for educational support and are from households that cannot access other tutoring services due to financial constraints. Study Buddy matches meet for one

hour once a week for a minimum of six months and work together to set appropriate educational goals for the Little Sister. Tutoring sessions take place at a mutually agreeable location after school or on weekends. With the support of their Study Buddy tutor, these girls are encouraged and equipped to improve their educational performance.

Although Big Sisters' mentoring programs are only offered in English, we reach out to all our multicultural communities. While it is important that our program staff be able to communicate with our Little Sisters, their parents/guardians, and our volunteers in English, we welcome many families who have English as a second language.

"I can understand a lot of questions now like if we have word problems in math," says Aziza proudly. "I don't have as many problems [in school] as I did last year."

Aziza's improvement in her grades and school work has not gone unnoticed. Her teacher recently asked her mom how Aziza was managing to improve

so quickly, and the "smart kids" in Aziza's class are now asking her for help.

Isla agrees that Aziza has come a long way in a short time. "She understands the questions in school now, her writing is better, and her reading comprehension is better."

"All I need is practice!" says the determined and insightful ten year old.

So how does Aziza feel about the Study Buddy program? "It's fun. If you are at school and you have trouble with something you can always work on it [with your Study Buddy] and you can also have fun with it," says Aziza who appreciates how Isla takes the time to explain things in a way that's easy for her to understand.

Isla is equally enthusiastic about the program. "I think it's great. I really enjoy meeting Aziza every Saturday. Aziza is really creative and I really enjoy hearing her stories," she says of her Little Sister Study Buddy. "We have lots of laughs together. I didn't know school could be fun, but we seem to have some fun with it."

"More than some fun!" Aziza exclaims with a big smile.

Being a Study Buddy tutor helps volunteers gain more work experience as well as the rewarding experience of giving back to the community.

Find out more about the Big Sisters Study Buddy Program! Visit www.bigsisters.bc.ca or call 604-873-4525 ext. 300.



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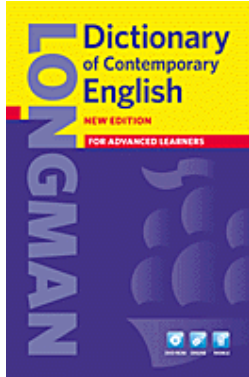
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Book Review: Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English

Marti Sevier

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The Publisher's suggested price: \$43.95

I have always loved dictionaries. In elementary school I would sit and read the family **Webster's Collegiate** and then quiz my mother on words I had encountered: "Mom, can you use *halcyon* in a sentence?" and she would wearily look up from feeding a bleating baby brother or two and say, "Back in the halcyon days of college, I studied hard." Later, when I started my own halcyon days in university, I discovered the English Department Library at the University of Washington: it had big windows, big chairs, and big dictionaries, notably the **OED**. Times, even halcyon ones, change. The OED was shrunk to micro-printed volumes (equipped with a massive magnifying glass) in the mid-70s. By the late 80s, the first electronic dictionaries began to appear, and, with pronunciation features, began bleating themselves. The OED continued to shrink, and in 1992, became available on CD-ROM (History, 2009). It is now undergoing a complete revision. I wonder who will read it.

In fact, I am really beginning to

be depressed about dictionaries. A number of my CERT TESL teacher trainees last semester argued that students use them too much and that dictionary perusal interrupts classroom activities, preventing learners from trying to guess meaning from context. My students complain that print dictionaries weigh too much and so neglect to carry dictionaries at all, unless they are made of plastic and have LED screens. In a recent discussion on TESL-L, one participant wrote, "I think students should be advised not to use any kind of traditional dictionary...It is too time consuming to thumb through a dictionary only to then forget the word as soon as the dictionary is closed" (Kaufman, S., cited in R. Scott, 2007). Other participant views ranged from wishing to stomp electronic bilingual dictionaries into tiny little pieces to decrying criticism of any strategy that could conceivably help students learn the language. However, I do question the value of a dictionary that gives erroneous definitions, archaic synonyms and little or no guidance in how to select appropriate language; many of the electronic dictionaries my students use commit one or more of these transgressions.

For this reason, the quest for the perfect learner's dictionary, one that is both informative and portable, continues. Does the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (5th edition) signal journey's end? The cover is promising. In the lower-right corner, blue icons signifying access to information via DVD-ROM, online, and *mobile phone* wink seductively. Mobile phone?

"The LONGMAN DICTIONARY

OF CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH just got even more contemporary. **Download** the new 5th edition today to find the meaning of hundreds of new words – now with **FREE Thesaurus and Collocations Dictionary**" crows the advertisement from the Mobipocket website. Unfortunately this application is not included in the publisher's suggested price and will cost the user an additional \$26.95 (Mobipocket eBook "Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English 5th edition" [n.d.]). Since a number of free downloadable dictionaries are already available, I doubt that students will jump at the chance to pay for one.

The only argument –but I think it is a compelling one--that can be made for the purchase of heavy print dictionaries is that they can be an important part of a student's reference library. The addition of collocations, thesauri, pop-up definitions, test preparation material and exercises and the like give added value by assisting their language learning at different proficiency levels. The *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (LDOCE) offers a number of advantages not seen in its *Exams Dictionary*. First and foremost, it is Mac compatible which is key where language labs are Mac-dominated. Another advantage of the LDOCE for learners is that if they register their dictionaries online, they will be able to access most of the features via the Web, sparing them the agony of hefting those tomes around, as long as they have access to computers. Even so, it is up to instructors to ensure that students

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learn *how* and *why* they should use dictionaries.

The print dictionary

What does the LDOCE offer? At the very least, three versions in one package. A short tour of the print dictionary shows the use of color coding to indicate, for example, red for high frequency items (in spoken and written English) and whether an item is used in academic contexts (i.e. is from the Academic Word List). Collocations and grammar information are given in bold in the entries, and small text boxes give information on register and frequency of phrases for some items. For example, the word “alone” is given in red, with S2 indicating that it is one of the two thousand most frequent words used in speaking, and W1, to show that it is one of the thousand most frequent words used in writing. The box uses bar charts to compare the use of “alone”, “on your own” and “by yourself”, in speaking and writing. In this way, a learner can see that “alone” is used far more often in writing than in speaking, and indeed a note at the bottom of the textbox says exactly that (LDOCE, 2009).

Thesaurus entries are given in purple and include definitions of word, rather than the long wordlists of conventional thesauri. In the middle of the dictionary is information on levels of formality in spoken and written English. In the section entitled “Requests”, for example, it compares more and less formal ways of asking for permission, such as “do you mind if I...” and “I was wondering if I could...” (LDOCE, A11).

A final reference section of the dictionary mostly contains word lists. First is the Longman Communication 3000 which, according to the authors, are the 3000 most common words in

English (in the Longman Corpus Network, which is made up of five corpora, spoken and written, American and British. Next the reader meets the Longman Defining Vocabulary, i.e. the 2000 words which are used in LDOCE definitions, irregular verbs, geographical names (along with a set of reasonably clear maps), and finally, information about numbers and word formation.

The DVD

Before using the DVD version of the dictionary, the student would do well to take the Guided Tour. Although the DVD contains much the same information as the print dictionary, it adds a cultural dictionary, the Longman Language Activator, exercises, a vocabulary trainer, pop-up dictionary, the Academic Word List, and the Writing Assistant. (See Figure 1.)

The Cultural Dictionary may be passed over quickly, as it will never replace Wikipedia, and shouldn't bother to try, though it could serve as a useful adjunct to an extensive reading program in which students encounter vocabulary like “lawn bowling” or “Elvis”. Of greater interest is the Longman Language Activator, a sort of reverse dictionary. It enables users to gain

greater precision in their word choice. It does this by listing general keywords and then categorizing the ways in which those keywords are used. In the example below, “enough/not enough” is categorized into eight different uses, each of which is explicated in the right-hand column.

ENOUGH/NOT ENOUGH

- 1 when there is enough of something you need
- 2 big enough, strong enough, old enough etc
- 3 to have enough of something
- 4 enough and more
- 5 not enough
- 6 not good enough, important enough etc
- 7 to not have enough of something
- 8 an amount, quantity etc that is less than is needed

In the example shown here, “not enough”, meaning “an amount, quantity, etc that is less than is needed”, yields “shortage”, “shortfall”, and “deficiency”, each of which gives a definition or example and sample sentence (LDOCE [DVD], 2009, n.p.).

The Grammar gives information about the grammar of English but is not interactive and seems

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Figure 1, LDOCE Start Menu, DVD-ROM.

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Figure 2, Longman Language Activator

somewhat oddly organized. It starts with “Statements and Questions,” followed by sections on verbs, which are not very coherently organized, nor is the terminology used consistent, since it ranges from the rather technical “Verbs: Intransitive and transitive” to the more comprehensible “talking about the present”, etc. (See Figure 3).

The exercises give ample practice in Grammar, Vocabulary, Synonyms, Register (of particular interest to those working in academic English) and many other areas, but the areas of IELTS, FCE, CAE, CPE and TOEIC will be attractive to many exam-obsessed students.



Figure 3, Grammar topics

Unlike the vocabulary exercises, the rather challenging Vocabulary Trainer is a pack of virtual flashcards that give students information about words which they must memorize in order to move on to new words. First they choose a general category academic, general, or topic vocabulary, and then they select an area within that category. For example, under “Topic vocabulary” students might choose from among Books/Literature, Business, Computers/Internet, etc. Under the category of “Business”, for example, they might see this question:

Upon answering correctly, as the

author did, a number will appear on the “session progress” line, showing how close to completion of this lexical set the students are. They can then “flip” the card to learn more about the correct word, “manufacturer”:

However, a word is not *added* to students’ lists until they have correctly answered several questions different aspects of a word, covering meaning, spelling, collocation, grammar, etc. (Regrettably, the writer failed to add *any* words.) Despite my enthusiasm for this application, one potentially frustrating problem with it is that misspellings, which are counted wrong, can include incorrect punctuation, rather than incorrect letters, so “startup”, for example, must be spelled “start-up” to be considered correct. Another, bigger concern is that the LDOCE dictionary section does not include all of the definitions referred to in the Vocabulary Trainer. For example, “administration” is defined as “when a company is being reorganized by a specialist from outside the company, because it is in serious financial difficulties” (LDOCE, 2010). However, this definition is absent from the dictionary itself. A third issue is that students can’t input their own vocabulary into the

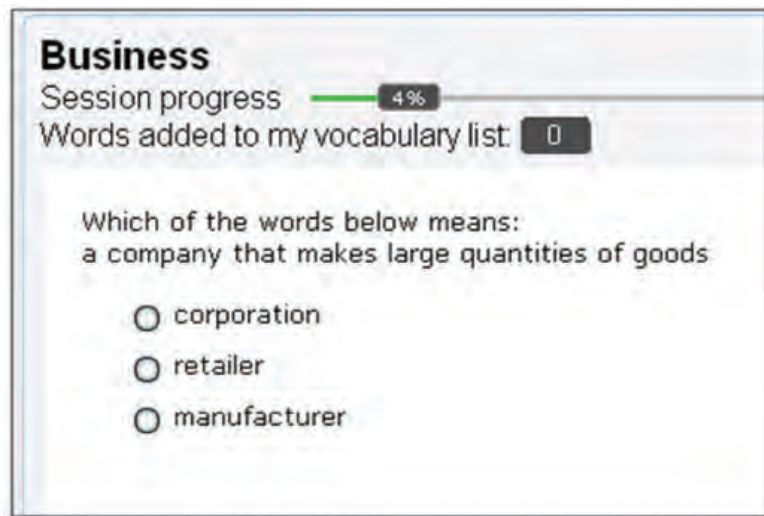


Figure 4a, Vocabulary Trainer, Business

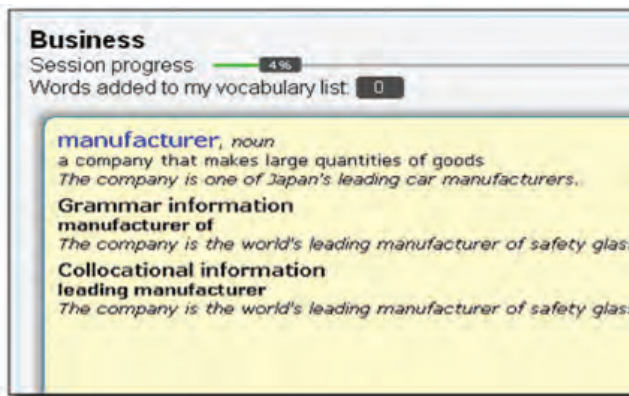


Figure 4b, Vocabulary Trainer

trainer but can only use the words that Pearson has deemed necessary. Nor is there a means of adding notes on specific words, as there is in the dictionary.

The Teacher's Resources include PDF worksheets, quizzes and homework tasks on topics from dictionary skills to register to Famous People. No one class would ever do all the worksheets but many of the topics are related to common curricular topics, e.g. transport, food, sports, etc. and incorporate different task types, from crossword puzzles to gap fill. The Pop-up Dictionary is a fun feature, but of somewhat limited value. Activated by the menu bar at the top of the screen, it provides hypertext links to the dictionary entries from Word or html documents. This can enable students to proofread their writing, including emails, but the feature does not, unfortunately, work on PDFs, which are increasingly commonly used on the Web.

The final feature described in this review (I am ignoring the Longman 3000 and the Academic Word List, since they amount to little more than mini-dictionaries) is the Writing Assistant, which allows the user to access the dictionary features—definitions, thesaurus, collocations, and grammar—while writing. A student can also use a feature called "errors" by clicking on

a word in their composition and checking against errors (in red) from a student corpus and then seeing the corrections in green. Can the reader spot an error from an earlier draft of this review? The problem of course is

that learners are capable of far more errors than a learner corpus can provide. Still, it's a start.

The online dictionary

A third way to use the LDOCE is by logging in to the Longman Dictionaries Online website. The back page of the dictionaries gives instructions on how to register one's copy of the LDOCE and thereby gain a year's access to most of the features of the DVD, i.e. Dictionary, Cultural Dictionary, Activator, Exercises, Vocabulary Trainer, and Teacher Resources. The Vocabulary Trainer can be downloaded at no extra charge to cell phones; information on how to do this is given on the website.

Despite its flaws I am going to give the LDOCE a year's trial in my classes to see if students will actually learn to use dictionaries and recognize their value. While they may never succumb to the urge to sit down and read it for pleasure, it will hopefully become a well-used resource and enhance their understanding of English. Now that SFU classrooms are becoming

wireless they may not even need to carry it!

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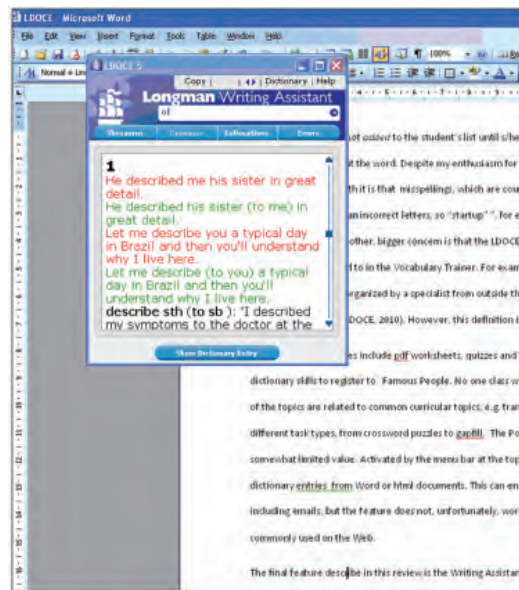


Figure 5, Writing Assistant

Remembering Reggie

Submitted by Nicholas Collins



John Godfrey taught ESL (mainly higher levels) at Vancouver Community College (VCC) for almost thirty years. He was a prolific author and was always working on his next textbook. He wrote six best-sellers; they were student centred, encouraged critical thinking, and were always pegged at affordable prices. Multilingual, John was interested in people and their success. He adored teaching and his students and was an amazingly generous colleague. His wit, wisdom and kindness touched everybody he met. He was the quintessential colleague.

John had special names for people close to him; e.g., 'Bones' or 'The Saint'. He called himself 'Reggie', the name of the lion mascot of King's College, London where both he and I did the same undergraduate degree in Modern Languages in the 60's.

John passed away on Saturday, October 10, 2009. I asked his daughter, Sara Godfrey, and his colleague and friend, David Smith, to share their thoughts.

A Daughter's Perspective ***Sara Godfrey***

My father, John Godfrey, had a gift for languages. Through his studies and his travels, he knew how to speak and read five languages fluently. Growing up in England, he got streamlined into the

arts and languages faculty of his high school. He studied Latin and French and then his travels took him to Spain and Italy where he perfected a native flair for both languages. He taught French at the Sorbonne, Spanish at the University of Toronto, and ESL at VCC King Edward Campus in Vancouver. While in Toronto, my dad gained his masters degree in Spanish at the University of Toronto and he was recommended for a PhD, which he started but never finished.

In Vancouver in the 80's and 90's, and with his writing partner, Barbara Bowers, he embarked on a book writing mission. Over 15 years they published four ESL textbooks together and he wrote two on his own. Barbara Bowers and my dad worked tirelessly to produce text books that were academically sound as well as culturally sensitive to the needs of the students in his classes. My father taught with a passion for language, a sense of friendship and an understanding of his students, evident in the bonds he formed with many of them, many of whom worked in restaurants and would treat our family to weekend dinners every so often.

My father loved to write. Later on in his life and after he retired, he wrote his memoir: a poignant and humorous account of the many struggles and adventures in his life. My dad had a very rich and interesting life. He lived in several countries, including England, France, Spain, Italy, the Bahamas and Canada, and he almost always worked as a teacher of one sort or another. One of his jobs was working as a bus conductor in Spain, where he, though not a Spaniard himself, taught tourists about the local culture of Seville. He also taught in schools: as an English teacher in Sicily and at a private high school in Nassau. He also played for the Bahamas International Soccer Team. That brings me to another one of my father's biggest passions in life: soccer. He played competitive soccer throughout his entire life and later on became a referee in Vancouver. He had a passion and a gift for the sport that

he instilled in both my sister and I; we both still play the beautiful game. He loved the flow of the game and the excitement of cheering on his country. Even though England hasn't won a cup since 1966, my dad would wake us all up at all hours of the night to watch World Cup competition. Sometimes we ended up on Commercial Drive when Italy was involved. It was one of the rare times he would actually watch TV.

My dad was a wonderful, caring and intelligent man. He loved languages and had a passion for education. He was a wonderful father and I am so proud of all of his life achievements. I know he will be remembered fondly by those who knew him. As a teacher of languages myself, I hope to carry on his passion for languages and teaching.

A Colleague's Perspective ***David Smith***

The most important thing about John as a teacher was his respect for his students. During his time as a teacher, there was a tendency to see learners as people who were too stupid to speak English. Teachers spoke loudly to them because they clearly suffered from deafness and could only hear loud, slow speech. Teaching methodology often consisted of non-contextualized grammar. Students were confined, for months, to a single structure and themes such as zoo animals. John enjoyed communicating with people and realized ESL students had fully functioning minds, human desires and a need to use English to fulfill their ambitions. He gave them material to sink their teeth into. They could learn new structures yet at the same time solve problems, learn content and practice critical thinking. This is reflected in the books he coauthored with Barbara Bowers - "Decisions" being the first of a series.

As a colleague, John was open and supportive. He relished new approaches and ideas and at the same time was able to placate those who were

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Teaching Tips continued

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behind, but what is most valuable is what we take with us. Then we take the pieces off the floor and throw them up like confetti and give a cheer! It brings great closure to a great class!

The Importance of Knowing Each Other's Names **Julie Bond, Instructor, TRU**

Since students are together for three or four months in the same class, I find it is important for students to know each other's names and get to know each other. A student will feel as though they belong in the class and want to be there more if they know at least one or two students in that class, someone they can ask what homework they missed if they are absent or study together with. Since many students are shy, the teacher needs to structure the classroom so that students can meet and get to know each other and have opportunities to meet outside the class. One thing I've done is ask students to form study groups. I usually let them choose their own groups, but if students are having difficulty forming groups, I will put them together. Then I say that for homework you need to meet with your study group and study for the quiz or test together. Therefore, they have an excuse to get each other's names and phone numbers or emails and to make a plan to see each other outside of class.

It is also good for them to get to know all the names of the students in the class and have the opportunity to work in groups with all the different students in the class. One thing I do is get students to each write the name they would like to be called on a

notecard. Then when we are doing a group activity and I need to put students into groups, I will take all the notecards with the students' names on them, shuffle them, and then place the notecards on the desks. Students will go and sit at the desk where their notecard is and the other people who are moved to sit near them will be their group members. This avoids the confusion from students and questions about which group they should go to, where they should sit and who is in their group. All they need to do is find their name card on the desk and sit there, and the people sitting near them are their group.

To further help students learn each other's names, I may even do a 'name quiz' where I ask students to remember all the students' names in the class and then write them down. This could be informal or formal. I could do it as a game at the start of class: "Okay class, take out a piece of paper and write down as many students' names in this class as you remember. Who can remember the most names?" Or I may do it as a more formal spelling quiz. Students need to deliberately learn each other's names because often their peers' names are unusual new names for them, names from other countries they have never heard before, or are names they aren't familiar with.

I have found all these things to be helpful in developing community in the classroom.

Remembering Reggie continued

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threatened by any change. As a friend, what I remember is that John was a man that loved to laugh. He was a man who was crazy in love with his two daughters. He loved his wonderful wife, Almas. He was thrilled with his new sons-in-law and grandchildren. Life made things difficult for John in his final years but he always adored and appreciated things in this order - family, friends, education and soccer. loudly to them because they clearly suffered from deafness and could only hear loud, slow speech. Teaching methodology often consisted of non-contextualized grammar. Students were confined, for months, to a single structure and themes such as zoo animals. John enjoyed communicating with people and realized ESL students had fully functioning minds, human desires and a need to use English to fulfill their ambitions. He gave them material to sink their teeth into. They could learn new structures yet at the same time solve problems, learn content and practice critical thinking. This is reflected in the books he coauthored with Barbara Bowers - "Decisions" being the first of a series.

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