

matsol

# Currents

MASSACHUSETTS EDUCATORS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS  
Equity And Excellence For English Learners  
Vol. 44, No. 2 Fall/Winter 2021 - 2022

We believe in **ELs!**

is **YOU!**★

★ Collaboration ★  
at  
MATSOL  
Share your talents!  
Meet other educators!

Connections  
lead to learning  
↔ MATSOL ↔

EXCELLENCE & EQUITY  
  
for our English Learners!!!

Together  
★ We ★  
Are MATSOL

MATSOL  
Building Bridges

Magnificent  
Matsol  
Members

MATSOL = advocates  
researchers • educators  
in a community

MATSOL:  
INSIDE  
Pandemic Pivot: Mentoring in a Virtual World  
Cultural Attitudes Towards Smiling  
Call for Research Participants  
TOGETHER!!

**ON THE COVER**

“Bumber stickers” created by the MATSOL Board

matsol



# Currents

MASSACHUSETTS EDUCATORS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Equity And Excellence For English Learners

Vol. 43, No.2 Fall/Winter 2020 - 2021

## Contents

---

### MATSOL News

- 4 President's Message
- 6 Editor's Message

### Reports

- 7 Past Presidents Get-Together  
**KATHY LOBO**
- 9 Special Interest Group (SIG) Reports

### Articles

- 14 Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Strategies for Teaching ELs in Community College  
**TERESA VARRIALE GONZALEZ**
- 25 Pandemic Pivot: Mentoring in a Virtual World  
**CATHERINE GLENNON MURPHY**
- 30 Cultural Attitudes Towards Smiling, with Implications for ESL Instructors  
**JOAN BARTEL**
- 39 Improving Our Assessment Practices for ELs  
**KRISTIN LAMBERT**
- 41 Instructional Application: Teaching English to Cape Verdean English Language Learners  
**WILLIAM MORENO**

### Reviews

- 49 Reading & Writing with English Learners: A Framework for K-5, by Valentina Gonzalez and Melinda Miller  
**REVIEWED BY ELENA MURPHY**

### Calls

- 52 Call for Authors: MATSOL Currents
- 53 Call for Research Participants

## DEAR COLLEAGUES AND FRIENDS,

Let me start by hoping all of you have had a happy holiday season, one in which you found time to unwind and recharge. The past several months have been exciting yet stressful, hopeful yet cautious, familiar yet uncharted. While COVID-19 continues to demand our careful attention, we have resumed so many of the activities, programs, and routines we were forced to curtail or abandon: Students arriving and leaving school by the hundreds, engagement events that unite our families and educators, in-person collaboration and collegiality, classroom discussions, bustling hallways, loud lunchrooms. The list goes on and on. Profound or perfunctory, I am savoring every aspect of the school day with renewed appreciation.



For our English Learners, we are connecting with families in ways that eluded us last school year. Here in Everett, we held a district-wide EL Family Night in which our teachers and family liaisons talked to parents and guardians about the communication tools we use and how they can support their students at home. We are offering in-person ESL classes for our families. We held free and fun welcome events for our youngest students and their families. With each gathering, I am heartened and emboldened by the sight of every dimension of my school system.

**Every day is capable of producing a conversation, an observation or an anecdote that gives me a new perspective or something to rethink.**

Returning to school has not been without challenges I am certain we have all dealt with to different degrees. Some of the issues have been operational and/or procedural, and therefore reasonably addressed in the immediate term. Others will require mid- and long-term planning and constant reviewing and adjusting. Some concerns center solely around instruction and learning. Others relate to the social and emotional realm, which is more critical and immediate than ever before.

Despite the challenges, we continue to work our way through the stages of the pandemic. Every day is capable of producing a conversation, an observation,

or an anecdote that gives me a new perspective or something to rethink. But one thing my colleagues have proven to me over the past months is that the best way to approach the very real notion of “learning loss” is to celebrate the gains we are making. As a principal in my district recently said with genuine compassion and conviction, “It is far more productive to laud a second grader for learning a skill than it is to lament the fact that said skill is ordinarily mastered in first grade.”

As we move forward as educators and leaders, I am sure that you will find this issue to be a great resource for you and your team. Some of the exciting and engaging things you’ll find in this issue of Currents are a report about a get-together of past MATSOL presidents ([page 7](#)); articles on teaching community college ELs ([page 14](#)), virtual mentoring ([page 25](#)), the cultural implications of smiling ([page 30](#)), assessment ([page 39](#)), and teaching pronunciation to Cape Verdean students ([page 41](#)); as well as a book review of Reading & Writing with English Learners: A Framework for K-5 ([page 49](#)). Enjoy this issue and I hope you have a safe and enjoyable spring semester. 🍀

**As a principal in my district recently said with genuine compassion and conviction, “It is far more productive to laud a second grader for learning a skill than it is to lament the fact that said skill is ordinarily mastered in first grade.”**

In Partnership,  
**Priya Tahiliani**  
[ptahiliani@everett.k12.ma.us](mailto:ptahiliani@everett.k12.ma.us)

**D**EAR READERS,

I am happy to introduce myself as the new editor of *MATSOL Currents* as of this issue. In this transition, I want to thank Mary Clark who edited the newsletter from 2013 to 2021 and helped me immensely as I stepped into this new role. This issue of the *MATSOL Currents* marks the fiftieth anniversary of both the newsletter and MATSOL, founded in 1972. At the time, the publication was prosaically called the *MATSOL Newsletter*.



The masthead of the first issue of the MATSOL Newsletter.

MATSOL maintains an [archive](#) of newsletter issues, which offers an interesting journey through the association's history. In the first-ever

issue, MATSOL's first president, the late Boston University English and Linguistics professor Robert Saitz described the association as "dedicated to the interests, concerns, and problems of the people who are struggling to develop new educational models appropriate to life in multicultural communities" and as an organization appropriate for a wide variety of educators working with students who "live in two languages, in two worlds." The founders' mission for MATSOL was clear from the beginning and has only crystallized in the past five decades, which is reflected in the newsletter. Advocacy, research-based articles, practical classroom ideas, sharing of resources, and member engagement have always been a part of the publication, and will continue to be so.

I invite all of you to participate in the association's work on the pages of this newsletter, whether it be as a contributor or a member of the publications committee. Send me your articles, reports, personal accounts, and student stories – even if only at the idea stage ([see page 52 for more information](#)). Following past editors' philosophy, I will help you turn your idea into a publication that will interest the readership. Or email me if you'd like to take on a light commitment of serving on the publications committee. Let's continue working together to keep this publication the valuable member resource it has been for the past fifty years. 

**Johanna Tigert**

Editor, *MATSOL Currents*

[currensts@matsol.org](mailto:currensts@matsol.org)

# Past Presidents Get-Together

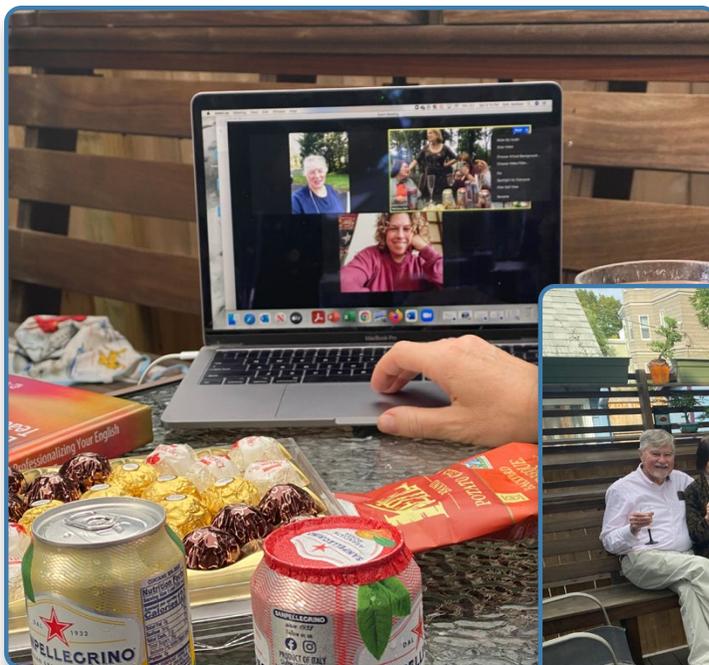
Report by Kathy Lobo

**A** GROUP of past presidents of MATSOL met Saturday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, for lunch at my home in Cambridge. The event was hosted by me and Melissa Latham Keh. The weather could not have been more perfect for a picnic lunch on the deck. This is the first time we have organized a past presidents' event.



The first objective for the group was to reconnect and socialize. The second objective was to decide if we want to get together on a regular basis and whether we'd like to take on a small project as a group. We discussed several possibilities. For example, we could foster and support others who are at earlier stages in the field, possibly create an award, or sponsor and lead an event such as a film discussion.

Our one concrete decision was to meet twice a year - Paula Merchant will host the next event in the spring. While the pandemic is with us we will stick with outdoor picnics with an option to join virtually.



The earliest serving president in attendance was Paul Abraham (1985-1986). Melissa, who is presently serving on the board, will be our liaison/connection to the board.



Top row: Melissa Latham Keh, Paula Merchant, Kellie Jones, Robin Grant, Kathy Lobo.  
Bottom Row: Paul Abraham, Juanita Brunelle, Ester Iwanaga, and joining virtually Zoe Morosini and Linda Foley-Vinay.

This group is energetic and dynamic and its members are knowledgeable. Given where we are in our careers and life's journeys, we are in positions to support our MATSOL community. **C**

# Special Interest Group (SIG) Reports

MATSOL offers a variety of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) which, except for MELLC, are open to all members, free of charge. To join a SIG, please visit the [MATSOL SIGs webpage](#).

Advocacy

Cape Cod and Islands Regional Network

Community College ESL Faculty

Early Career Educators

Educators of Color

ESL Unit Developers

Family-School Partnerships

Instructional Coaches

Low Incidence Programs

MATSOL English Learner Leadership Council (MELLC)

Private Language Schools

Teacher Educators

## **COMMUNITY COLLEGE ESL FACULTY SIG**

The Community College ESL Faculty SIG is focused on advocating for more full-time faculty and staff for our multilingual students. The diversity of our student population is growing in the communities we serve, and there is an increasing need for trained professionals at our colleges to oversee outreach, testing and placing, advising, curriculum development, and teaching for these students.

Our mission statement endorses the TESOL policy\* for ESL credit courses receiving graduation credit. In addition, we advocate for transfer credit for these courses to ensure equity for our multilingual students as they continue to pursue higher education degrees.

Four community colleges have adopted the Seal of Biliteracy, which grants college credit for proficiency in English as well as for one or more additional languages:

- Cape Cod Community College
- Middlesex Community College
- North Shore Community College
- Northern Essex Community College.

We invite faculty and staff from our fifteen community colleges to join us to share issues and concerns in support of our ESL students. For more information about the Community College ESOL SIG, please visit our [website](#) or write Juanita Brunelle at [jbrunelle@matsol.org](mailto:jbrunelle@matsol.org).

### STEERING COMMITTEE

- Teresa Cheung**, North Shore Community College
- Eileen Kelley**, Holyoke Community College
- Stephanie Marcotte**, Holyoke Community College
- Bruce Riley**, Cape Cod Community College
- Anne Shull**, Quinsigamond Community College
- Juanita Brunelle**, MATSOL Liaison to Steering Committee

\* See Position Statement on Academic and Degree-Granting Credit for ESOL Courses in Postsecondary Education Approved by the TESOL Executive Committee, June 2012.

### FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS SIG

The Family-School Partnerships SIG brings together educators working with linguistically and culturally diverse families. During our first two sessions, we engaged in a discussion about how the pandemic has changed the way we are supporting families. We considered how the narrative needs to change about how we are measuring success for students, families and educators. We also brought together a panel of family engagement specialists from Waltham and Milford to discuss how their jobs have changed over the last year. During our next two meetings, we will be inviting family engagement specialists from Sommerville and other districts.

As the Family-School Partnership SIG considers how current events in the world affect partnerships between schools and families, enlisting the support of all members of the community has become increasingly more important. Our discussions have highlighted the work that many members of the school community have been tasked with. In many instances, the members of the school community have served in roles that have been focused on securing help for families to get their basic needs met rather than primarily focused on supporting educational needs. Districts have approached this in many different ways. Milford and Waltham shared their approach as high incidence districts with dedicated departments to family engagement. Other districts work through bilingual educators on the teaching staff to help support family and school partnerships.

We are looking forward to further exploration and understanding of how districts across Massachusetts are working with families to create meaningful partnerships. For more information, visit our [web page](#).

### **STEERING COMMITTEE**

**Craig Consigli**

**Theresa Laquerre**

**Mary Jo Rendon**

### **INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES**

The Instructional Coaches SIG is a forum for PreK-12 instructional coaches, teacher leaders, and coordinators whose roles include coaching teachers on how to meet the needs of multilingual learners. The meetings this year have been based on the School Reform Initiative's consultancy protocol. Small groups of peers discuss and problem solve one member's dilemma. These conversations have ranged from reading strategies in science to supporting new Afghan refugee students. Having professionals from different districts come together have led to dynamic, deep and supportive conversations. We are tracking conversations to share with members through the listserv who cannot make it. There is also a SIG contact list for members to connect outside of the SIG meetings on topics of similar interests.

These meetings are meant to be joined by anyone who wants to discuss and collaborate supporting teachers of multilingual learners and do not require a commitment to join every month. We welcome and are always excited to be

joined by new voices! For more information, visit our [web page](#).

## STEERING COMMITTEE

**Mary Kennedy**

**Moira Greenson**

**Molly Ross**

**Ivone Spencer**

## MATSOL ENGLISH LEARNER LEADERSHIP COUNCIL (MELLC)

MA English Learner Leadership Council (MELLC) is a group for Directors and Coordinators of English Language Education Programs in Massachusetts. The goal of the group is to create a professional community to support and guide EL educators in the administration of ELE programs at the district level through collaboration and advocacy. This fall, the meetings were held online and covered topics including immigration trends, multicultural mental health resources, family engagement, and updates from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

In October, Denzil Mohammad, Director of the Public Education Institute at [The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc.](#) shared recent [immigration statistics from Massachusetts](#) and updated the group on federal immigration issues. In November, we were joined by Johana Rodriguez and Irelsa Oliveras from the [Parent/Professional Advocacy League \(PPAL\)](#), a statewide, grassroots family organization that advocates for improved access to mental health services for children, youth and their families. They discussed PPAL's work to provide multicultural, and multilingual mental health support for families. In December, the group learned about family engagement initiatives at [Woburn Public Schools](#). Adrianna Mendes-Sheldon, Family Engagement Specialist, and Michael Baldassarre, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, shared the district's multifaceted efforts which include creating a strategic plan for family engagement, forming collaborative partnerships with community organizations, and finding creative ways to address the needs of families.

The fall meetings also provided an opportunity for the group to get updates from DESE. In October, we were joined by Komal Bhasin, Senior Associate Commissioner, and Sibel Hughs, Assistant Director of the Office of Language Acquisition (OLA), for an overview on fall initiatives and the move of the OLA office to the Center for Instructional Support. In November, the group met Allison Baltar, the newly hired OLA Director, who shared resources for SLIFE.

In addition to presentations, MELLC meetings always include time for networking and collaboration. Members participated in a consultancy protocol and topical breakout discussions. Learn more about the group on the [MATSOL website](#).

### STEERING COMMITTEE

**Laurie Hartwick**

**Kerri Lamprey**

**Wendy Anderson**

### TEACHER EDUCATORS SIG

The Teacher Educators SIG (also known as the Teacher Education SIG) meets on Zoom usually on the third Thursday of the month, 10-11:30 am. The SIG's activities are most relevant to professionals who work as full- or part-time university teacher educators, school-based instructional coaches, district EL leaders, or professional developers in the area of multilingual learners. The SIG is an active community that shares instructional strategies and materials for SEI endorsement and other teacher education classes, collaborates on research projects, promotes advocacy around educational equity for multilingual students in the state, and publishes and presents on teacher education-related issues in MATSOL Currents, at the annual MATSOL Conference, and beyond.

This past fall we worked on understanding the new WIDA 2020 standards, hosted Executive Director Phyllis Hardy from Multistate Association for Bilingual Education (MABE) as a guest speaker, and collaborated on re-envisioning the SEI endorsement course, starting with a list of new multimodal instructional resources. The steering committee for the fall consisted of Johanna Tigert and Christine Montecillo Leider. We are pleased to welcome Rachel Kramer Theodorou as the newest SIG steering committee member. The spring SIG meetings will take place on January 20, February 17, March 17, and April 21. For more information, visit our [website](#).

### STEERING COMMITTEE

**Johanna Tigert**

**Christine Montecillo Leider**

**Rachel Theodorou**

# Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Strategies for Teaching ELs in Community College

**Teresa Varriale-González**

[tgonzalez@qcc.mass.edu](mailto:tgonzalez@qcc.mass.edu)

**A** **GROWING** proportion of students attending community colleges in the United States are English Learners (ELs), or students who consider a language other than English to be their primary language, and who need support to access the curriculum in English. This is particularly the case in Massachusetts, which is experiencing rapid demographic changes in its student population. The purpose of this study was to investigate strategies and practices community college ESL instructors are using to attend to the needs of their ELs, and whether those strategies are culturally and linguistically responsive.



## WHO ARE ENGLISH LEARNER COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS?

The increasing enrollment of ELs in primary and secondary level (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2020) predicts a growing demand on community colleges for ESL instruction. This means that our community colleges need to be prepared to provide this population with the support they need to master the language and access the academic curriculum (Raufman et al., 2019). Several studies have shown, however, that ELs enrolled in ESL programs struggle to sufficiently improve their English proficiency (e.g., Finn, 2018; Raufman et al., 2019; Razfar & Simon, 2011).

Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Pedagogy, or CLRP, is a research-based approach that encourages teaching strategies that leverage the resources and lived experiences that ELs bring to the classroom (Villegas & Lucas, 2010). ELs have life and learning experiences that influence their learning. CLRP positions those experiences as an asset, rather than a deficit, by connecting new learning to the students' academic, cultural, and linguistic background (Ladson-Billings,

1995; Nieto, 2013). Thus, CLRP gives teachers tools to engage students in meaningful ways (Gay, 2018).

### **CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY**

Immigrant students bring their own life experiences and beliefs, patterns of cultural communication, and educational traditions. CLRP is a framework that recognizes learning as occurring differently across cultures; yet facilitates and supports achievement for all students (Gay, 2000; Villegas, 1991).

According to Hollie (2017), CLRP requires instructors to assume the role of facilitators by 1) recognizing the cultural capital and tools that ELs bring to the classroom, and 2) using the students' own cultural learning tools throughout instruction. CLRP includes a wide variety of instructional strategies that connect to different learning styles and incorporate multicultural information. For example, one CLRP strategy is translanguaging, which recognizes the students' native language and culture as an asset for teaching and learning by intentionally including them in classroom discourse and materials. (García, 2009) Other CLRP strategies include cooperative learning and encouraging students to leverage their cultural capital with projects that reflect their culture, language, and life experiences (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Drawing on Gay (2018) and Lucas and Villegas (2010), I define CLRP as knowledge and a set of beliefs, as well as actions and strategies based on four key components: 1) Cross-cultural knowledge and communication 2) Valuing of linguistic diversity through curriculum and instruction, 3) Trusting relationships, and 4) Student engagement. CLRP places students' cultures and languages at the core of the learning process (Rhodes, 2013). Research has shown that instructors who learn, understand, and recognize the importance of students' cultures, prior knowledge and experiences in curriculum and instruction can help their students achieve their academic goals, such as learning English (García & Li Wei, 2014; Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995). My study investigated the role of CLRP in supporting the needs of ELs in community college through a survey that addressed the following research questions: *What strategies and practices do ESL instructors at the community college level use to address the needs of ELs? Which of the strategies are culturally and linguistically responsive?*

### **MY EXPERIENCE AS A MULTILINGUAL NON-NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKER**

The idea for this study originated from my personal experience as a multilingual non-native English speaker, mother of a former EL student, and a community college faculty and academic advisor. Over the years, I realized that my stu-

dents were experiencing the same sense of alienation that my son and I went through when we moved to a new country. Failing to recognize the importance of students' cultural and linguistic background can create a hostile environment for learning. This prompted me to research approaches to ESL instruction that validate the experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse students as an asset for learning. With this study, I aim to increase teachers' familiarity with CLRP by examining the current use of this practice in the community college context.

## SURVEY

My study was conducted by collecting survey data from community college ESL instructors in Massachusetts. I identified all part-time and full-time instructors teaching both for-credit and non-credit ESL courses and invited them to participate in an electronic survey. I asked participants 1) their opinion about some practices associated with translanguaging, 2) how they incorporate students' cultural and linguistic background in curriculum and instruction, 3) how they gain knowledge of students, and 4) how they engage students in the classroom.

## PARTICIPANT PROFILES

Twenty-four ESL instructors from fifteen community colleges responded to the survey. The survey was sent to 45 instructors. Table 1 below shows the breakdown of participant demographics. Most respondents teach ESL for-credit courses, have between 20 and 30 years of experience teaching ESL, work part-time, hold a master's degree in areas including education and ESL, and are proficient in or have at least some knowledge of Spanish, French, Italian, and Portuguese.

*Table 1: Participant Profiles*

Faculty Position	Education	Country Of Origin	Main Language Spoken	Proficiency In Another Language/s	Course Assignment	Years ESL Teaching Experience	ESL Teaching Certificate/License (e.g., ESL, TESOL)	Experience Teaching ESL K-12
Full-Time 48%	Master's 80%	USA 80%	English 86%	Spanish 67%	For-credit 78%	>30 34%	Yes 33%	Yes 40%
Part-Time 53%	Doctoral 20%	Outside USA 20%	Other language 14%	French 46%	Noncredit 22%	>20 33%		No 60%
				Italian 17%		>10 19%		
				Portuguese 10%		<9 14%		

## PARTICIPANTS' EL POPULATIONS

Participants estimated the number of EL enrollments at their colleges to be about 100-300 per semester. Table 2 shows the breakdown by nationality and language.

Table 2: \*Participants' EL Populations

Country Of Origin	Native Language	Estimated Number of ELs
Spanish Caribbean 55%	Spanish 86%	100-300 Per Semester
Portuguese-speaking 45%	Portuguese 32%	
Spanish Central-South America 36%	Haitian Creole 23%	
Southeast and East Asia 36%	Arabic 18%	
Arabic countries 32%	Cape Verdean Creole 14%	
Haiti 27%	French 14%	
Eastern and Southern Europe 18%	Vietnamese 14%	
	Albanian, Chinese, Khmer, Russian, Ukrainian 5%	

\*Percentages are based on participants' estimation of the share of their ELs' backgrounds.

## FINDINGS

Results suggested two practices widely used by the instructors surveyed that are consistent with CLRP. Below, I explain the practices and specific strategies associated with each. I include illustrative quotes from participants.

### 1. WELCOME YOUR STUDENTS' LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

Most participants (62%) considered the use of the students' native language beneficial to the ESL classroom. As shown in figure 1, 71% of respondents strongly or somewhat agreed that it is acceptable to allow students speak their language in class (only 9 % strongly disagree with this statement). This indicates that most instructors were open to

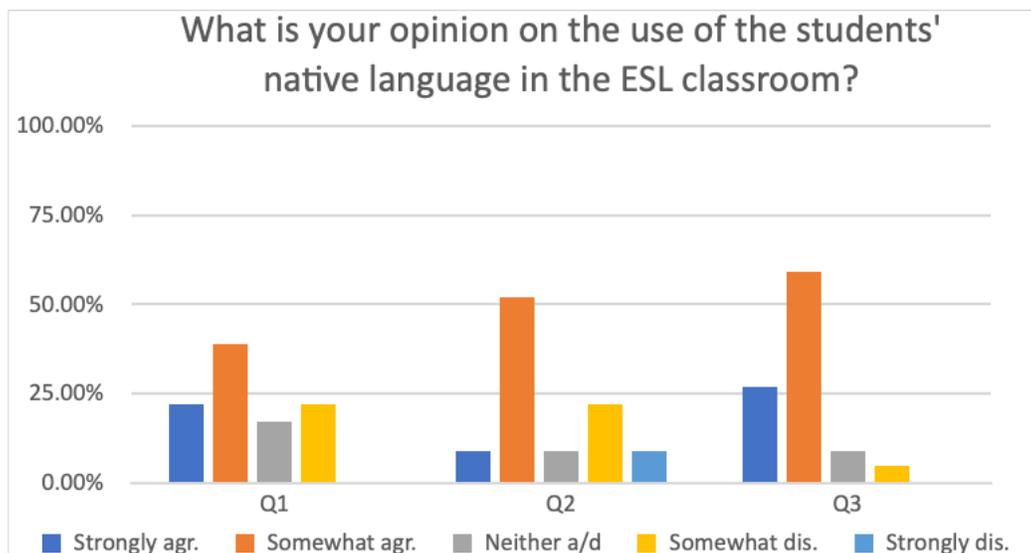


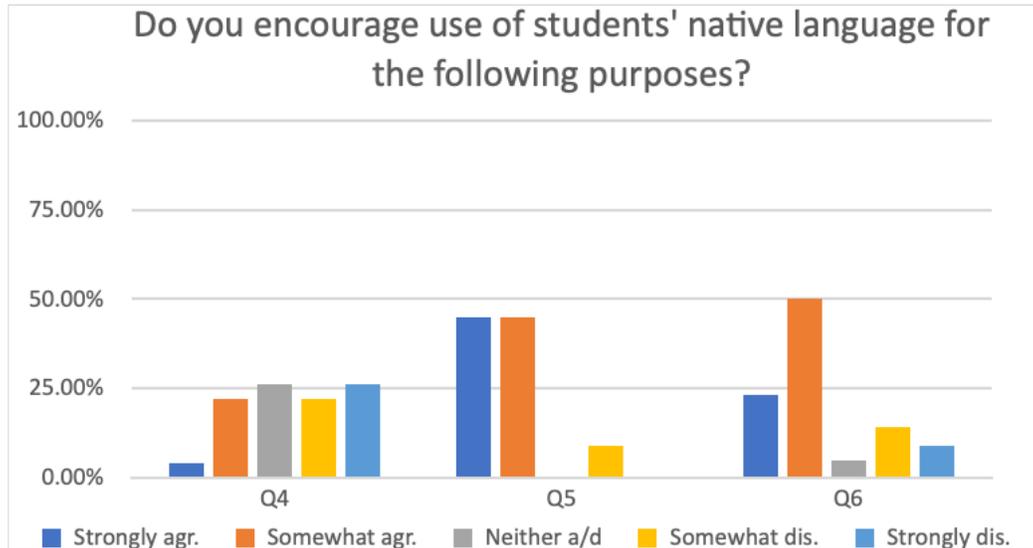
Figure 1: Translanguaging

Q1: The use of the students' native language is beneficial in the ESL classroom.

Q2: It is acceptable to allow students speak their language in class.

Q3: Incorporating the students' native language into the classroom can be very difficult in multilingual classrooms.

the CLRP practice of translanguaging. One of the participants explained that if an instructor has proficiency in a certain language, “showing similarities and differences and using students’ native writing systems for pronunciation can be helpful.”



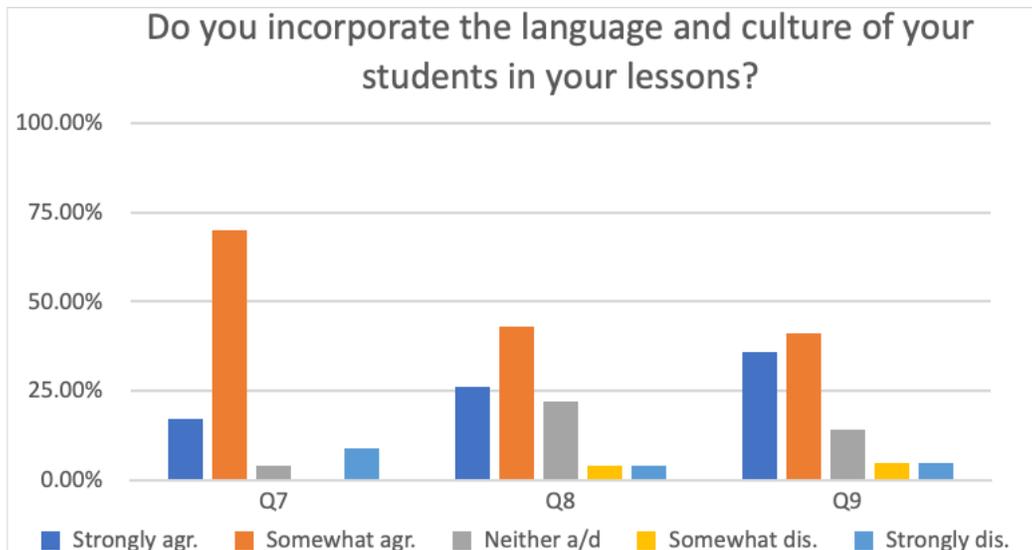
**Figure 2: Integration of students’ linguistic and cultural background in curriculum and instruction.**

Q4: I regularly provide opportunities for students to discuss content in their native language.

Q5: I allow students to speak their language to help peers during small group activities.

Q6: I allow students to speak their language to enable participation by lower proficiency students.

Additionally, as shown in figure 2, most participants (91%) recognized the importance of translanguaging to enhance social interaction between students during small group activities, help lower-proficiency peers understand vocabulary (73%), and “explain concepts when the students are newcomers with very limited English.” Another participant explained that while in most college-level ESL classes it is beneficial to have students speak the target language (English), “it’s also important that they can speak their native/first language with peers for further explanation, helping other students, and social interaction.”



**Figure 3: Integration of students' linguistic and cultural background in curriculum and instruction.**

Q7: I relate content to the linguistic and cultural background of my students.

Q8: I relate instructional strategies to the linguistic and cultural background of my students.

Q9: I plan activities to celebrate diverse cultural practices in my classroom.

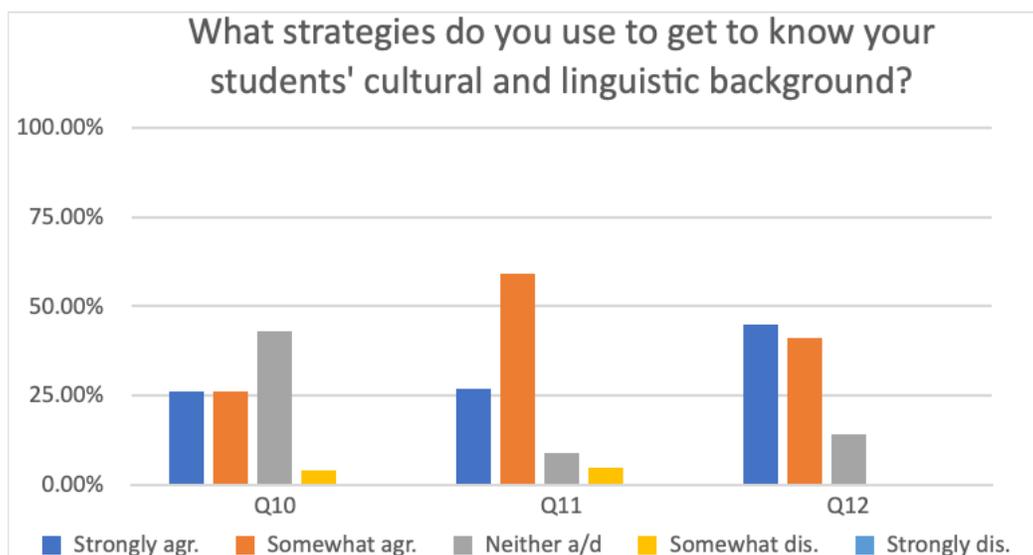
Moreover, as shown in figure 3, the findings indicated that most participants (80%) tried to relate class content and instructional strategies to the linguistic and cultural background of their students (See figure 2). One instructor explained that engaging students in activities and assignments “to describe aspects of their cultures and discussion of their cross-cultural journeys “plays a significant role in the ESL classroom. Another instructor said, “I encourage students to make personal connections to readings and to demonstrate these in discussions and writing assignments.” While some participants use reading material related to their students’ cultures and languages (including articles on history, immigration, and politics), others involve students in projects to celebrate culture and diversity. Many instructors support their lessons with technology such as videos, audio, blogs, and websites, as well as music. One participant explained that students, “can present their favorite songs [and] music from their native language and culture.” Most respondents allowed students to speak their native language

**The findings indicated that most participants (80%) tried to relate class content and instructional strategies to the linguistic and cultural background of their students.**

to discuss class content, help lower-proficiency peers, and increase social interaction. In addition, participants drew on students' cultures, languages, prior knowledge, and experiences to design class material, assignments, and activities. However, a few respondents expressed concerns about the use of translanguaging in multilingual classrooms because "it can isolate students with no shared-language classmates."

## 2. GET TO KNOW YOUR STUDENTS

The findings indicated that most participants use a wide variety of strategies to get to know their students and engage them in classroom and college activities. As you can see from figure 4, the majority indicated that they use surveys (54%) and spend time outside the class learning about their students' heritage (87%). As shown in figure 5, this includes learning some words and phrases in the students' native languages (79%). Most participants believe that asking for students' input when planning lessons and encouraging them to share their journeys through icebreakers, presentations, and other activities can foster student engagement, social interaction and "nurture an environment of relaxed acceptance of differences." One instructor said, "My students have contributed articles to an ESL newspaper, been interviewed on our college TV station, and been featured in a number of campus activities."

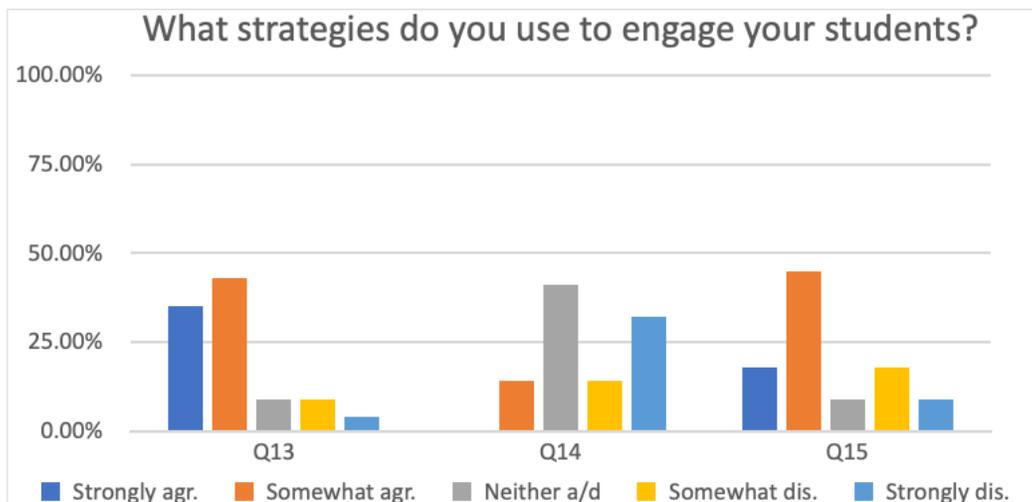


**Figure 4: Cross-cultural knowledge and Student engagement**

Q10: I use surveys to find out about my students' cultural and linguistic background.

Q11: I spend time outside of the class learning about the cultures and languages of my students.

Q12: I involve my students in activities to share their language and culture with the group.



**Figure 5: Cross-cultural knowledge and Student engagement**

Q13: I learn words in my students' native language.

Q14: I use mixed language in class.

Q15: I ask for student input when planning lessons and activities.

Furthermore, several respondents explained that it is fundamental to establish a trusting relationship with the students. “Everything starts with building a rapport of trust and mutual respect,” one participant said. Indeed, some respondents used instructor-student conversations as a strategy to get to know students, assist them and support their needs. One of the instructors said, “I have conversations with students, ask questions about their culture, language, history, and beliefs. I help them with technology, accessing resources, and referrals to services and agencies when needed.” Many participants demonstrated a sincere interest in learning about and understanding their students’ cultures, as well as learning and using some words and phrases in their students’ native languages. Moreover, respondents recognized the value of collaborating with students when planning lessons and in-class activities. Strategies such as these are consistent with CLRP research as means to promote student engagement and foster positive teacher-student and peer to peer relationships.

**Several respondents explained that it is fundamental to establish a trusting relationship with the students. “Everything starts with building a rapport of trust and mutual respect.”**

## WHAT NEXT?

The purpose of this study was to analyze community college level ESL instructors' teaching strategies and their use of CLRP in the classroom. The study also addressed instructors' perceptions of the role of ELs' cultures and languages in their daily interactions with the students. The findings suggest that most participants had a positive view of CLRP and claimed to use it in their classes. They emphasized the importance of incorporating students' backgrounds in all aspects of learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995), particularly in culturally and linguistically diverse contexts such as the community college ESL classroom. Specifically, the data revealed that participants built on ELs' cultural and linguistic strengths to develop curriculum and instruction and create a welcoming and inclusive classroom community. Moreover, by designing and using materials that reflect students' life, these instructors have created a learning space for ELs that is attractive, supportive, and actively engaging.

However, because of concerns that emerged from the survey such as those related to using only one of the students' home languages in the classroom, I believe that further professional development (PD) in CLRP could help instructors address the needs of every student, no matter what language they speak. As the number of ELs attending community colleges in Massachusetts continues to rise, it is critical to help

ESL instructors identify and implement strategies and practices that affirm and validate students' cultures and languages (Nieto, 2013). Effective PD should provide not only conceptual knowledge about CLRP, but also opportunities for instructors to collaborate and critically reflect on their practices (Colombo, 2007; Kose & Lim, 2011). Expanding knowledge about CLRP and providing specific examples of how to use such practices in ESL instruction would be beneficial to instructors and could help guide their instruction. Thus, PD should support instructors with meaningful instructional content such as multilingual pedagogies and culturally relevant teaching (Szelei et al., 2020). In addition, research could explore how CLRP influences student satisfaction and their learning. This study only examined the perspectives of community college ESL instructors, but it would be beneficial to gather data from both instructors and

**By designing and using materials that reflect students' life, these instructors have created a learning space for ELs that is attractive, supportive, and actively engaging.**

their students to understand how their perspectives on CLRP may differ or align. It would also be helpful to know whether the instructors would welcome more PD from their colleges. The findings revealed that many instructors recognized the benefits of learning about their students' cultures and languages and building their lessons upon them. In an increasingly multicultural and multilingual environment such as the Massachusetts community college, it should not be difficult for professional developers to support more instructors to enact CLR practices, especially when their value is already recognized and supported by instructors. Ultimately, the goal of all community colleges should be to implement practices more responsive to the needs of ELs and improve their academic outcomes. 

**Ultimately, the goal of all community colleges should be to implement practices more responsive to the needs of ELs and to improve their academic outcomes.**

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Teresa Varriale-González is a professor in the School of Public Service, Education, and Social Sciences at Quinsigamond Community College, and a Ph.D. candidate in the Education doctoral program at UMass Lowell, Leadership option. Her recent research projects include investigating the implementation of culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy to support English Learners in community college.

#### REFERENCES

- American Immigration Council. (2020).** *Immigrants in Massachusetts*. <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-in-massachusetts>
- Colombo, M. (2007).** Developing cultural competence: Mainstream teachers and professional development. *Multiple Perspectives*, 9(2), 10-16.
- Finn, H. B. (2018).** Articulating struggle: ESL students' perceived obstacles to success in a community college writing class. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 42, 101-106. <https://doi-org.ezproxyqcc.helmlib.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2018.09.001>
- García, O. (2009).** Education, multilingualism and translanguaging in the 21st century. In A. Mohanty, M. Panda, R. Phillipson, & T. Skutnabb-Kangas (Eds), *Multilingual education for social justice: Globalising the local* (pp. 128-145). Orient Blackswan.

- García, O., & Li Wei. (2014).** *Translanguaging: Language, bilingualism and education.* Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gay, G. (2000).** *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research and practice.* Teachers College Press.
- Gay, G. (2018).** *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice.* Third Edition. Multicultural Education Series. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Hollie, S. (2017).** *Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching and Learning: Classroom Practices for Student Success.* Shell Education.
- Kose, B. W., & Lim, E. Y. (2011).** Transformative professional learning within schools: relationship to teacher' beliefs, expertise and teaching. *Urban Review*, 43(2), 196-216.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995).** Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 465–491.
- Lucas, T., & Villegas, A. M. (2010).** The missing piece in teacher education: The preparation of linguistically responsive teachers. *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, 109(2), 297–318.
- Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2020).** *School and District Profile. 2019-20 Student Discipline Data Report.* <https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/ssdr/default.aspx?orgcode=00000000&orgtypecode=0&=00000000&>
- Nieto, S. (2013).** *Finding joy in teaching students of diverse backgrounds: Culturally responsive and socially just practices in U.S. classrooms.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Raufman, J., Brathwaite, J., Kalamkarian, H. S., & Columbia University, C. C. R. C. (2019).** *English learners and esl programs in the community college: A review of the literature.* CCRC Working Paper No. 109. Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Razfar, A., & Simon, J. (2011).** Course-taking patterns of Latino ESL students: Mobility and mainstreaming in urban community colleges in the United States. *TESOL Quarterly*, 45(4), 595-627.
- Szelei, N., Tinoca, L., & Pinho A.N. (2020).** Professional development for cultural diversity: the challenges of teacher learning in context, *Professional Development in Education*, 46 (5), 780-796, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2019.1642233>
- Villegas, A.M. (1991).** *Culturally responsive pedagogy for the 1990s and beyond* (Trends and Issues Paper No. 6) Washington DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education.
- Villegas, A. M., & Lucas, T. (2002).** Preparing culturally responsive teachers: rethinking the curriculum. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(1), 20-32.

# Pandemic Pivot: Mentoring in a Virtual World

**Catherine Glennon Murphy**

[murphycatherine567@gmail.com](mailto:murphycatherine567@gmail.com)



**S**EEKING WAYS to build authentic relationships in your school and welcome newcomers? A mentor program might be what your school needs. Mentoring newcomers in our elementary school has helped our new arrivals build relationships in a low-language-demand environment. Our mentors focus on developing social language and the confidence of their mentee. The pandemic of 2020 threatened to shut down our program, but our committee of volunteers pivoted in order to save the program, and upon reflection, developed protocols which we hope to continue in the years to come.

In March, 2020, the tenth year of our Fiske Mentor Program at Fiske Elementary School in Lexington was in full swing. The twelve newcomers at our school had been paired with volunteer mentors from our staff. Our newcomer families came from a multitude of countries, including Sweden, China, France, Israel, Chile, and Italy. Every fall our committee offers an orientation program for our newly minted mentors. The weekly mentor sessions focus on playing games in order to develop social language skills and to lower the newcomer's affective filter. After a newcomer has been mentored for a sufficient amount of time (typically one to two years), the natural progression is to graduate from the initial program and become a peer leader to a new student. We offer leadership training during the school day, and peer leaders are matched with a mentor and mentee when possible. This relationship adds a new dimension to the program as the mentee has a shared experience with their peer leader. This opportunity for a newcomer to work with a peer leader embodies the spirit of our district's core value "We All Belong".

The Mentor Program additionally aims to create a sense of community for our new families. One of the cornerstones of our mentor program is our community meetings, which allow much needed time for the people involved to get to know one another. In the fall of 2019, as we do every fall, we invited mentor-pro-

gram families into the school building to meet one another. After enjoying coffee and meeting their child's mentors, family members went into a separate room with committee members to learn about local resources and to help us better understand some of their needs. The mentors and newcomers, along with our peer leaders, remained in the gymnasium to play games and build community. We could feel the joy in the room as our mentors led the newcomers in a game of tag and the parents met one another and our administrators. The year was off to a great start.

In March of 2020 as COVID-19 outbreaks were occurring and it became apparent we were in a pandemic, the ESL team at Fiske was initially unsure of how to help our students to still feel connected to our community, all the while meeting their language acquisition needs. We had students who were absent, and we were wondering if and when the school would need to be shut down. On March 12, when the pandemic took hold and our school moved to a virtual model, our ELL services focused on keeping connected to our students and families. We reached out to families via Zoom to make sure they were getting what they needed, and we followed up when students missed our online classes. Our school leadership embraced one of our district core values, "You Are Enough," and we made sure to focus our lessons on social emotional learning. Our ELLs were, after all, surviving a pandemic in another language. It became clear that our mentor program was going to be more important than ever during this trying time. The underlying question as we began our virtual classes was this: how could we continue our mentor program under these circumstances?

With administrative support, we made the decision to continue the Fiske ELL Mentor Program in a completely virtual format. I reached out to both families and mentors and was pleased that everyone wanted to continue their work in this new way. Fortunately, we already had in place a robust Mentor committee consisting of myself, Erica Lawrence (ELL teacher), Jean Jayne (Speech Language Pathologist), Kathleen Dinsmore (Grade 3 classroom teacher), Lisa Williams (Grade 5 classroom teacher), Sara Fenzel (Evaluation Team Supervisor), and Deidre Dascoli (Speech Language Pathologist). The committee worried that our mentors, in the midst of making an enormous pedagogical pivot to remote teaching, could be overwhelmed. To set our mentors up for success, we quickly wrote a grant to our Parent Teacher Organization to create matching activity bags that we could send home for mentors and mentees. These bags included socks for puppet making, white boards and expo markers, and laminated bingo boards Diedre Dascoli had created on Boardmaker. Additionally, we ordered some craft kits to include in the activity bags. We created a robust slide deck

with remote activities for our mentor sessions that would last until the end of the year. These activities included conversation starters, dancing and singing web-site links, drawing activities, “Story Cube” slides, and more. Thus, our virtual mentor program was born.

When we moved the mentor program to a virtual format, we wondered how we could continue to build authentic relationships. Committee member and fellow ELL specialist Erica Lawrence and I devised a plan to pivot our community meeting to an online platform. We met online with other committee members to get more ideas about how to make this work. We decided to have our mentors create Google Slides celebrating their newcomer. In addition to celebrating our newcomers, we engaged in fun games online. For example, Lisa Williams led us all in an online scavenger hunt. Also, Erica Lawrence crafted a short video clip with photos of activities we enjoyed before the pandemic hit. We invited our principal, Brian Baker, to attend, and he logged on to say a few words of support and appreciation for everyone involved. We offered our virtual community meeting in the evening hours so that all family members, mentors, and administration who were interested could attend. Still, we were worried. How could we develop authentic relationships online?

Turns out, we needn't have worried. Lauren O'Connor, a special educator at Fiske, reports that “Mentoring Margaux was the highlight of my week! At first we met virtually over Zoom, and she was always very excited to show me around her house. She loved showing off her toys, her art materials, her room, brothers, and most of all her dog Cookie.” Lauren was also happy that she could bring her own infant daughter to the online mentor sessions. Undoubtedly, getting to know the home life of her mentee and sharing parts of her own life with her mentee has deepened their bond. Margaux's brother Baptiste was also a mentee and met separately with his mentor Sonny Wilde (grade 4 teacher) online. Margaux and Baptiste are now peer leaders in the Mentor Program. Margaux's father, Eric Bouyon, believes the mentor program made a significant impact on his two children during the pandemic:

The mentoring program has provided tremendous help to my 2 kids in our first years spent in the US. For context, my family arrived only a couple of months prior to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and as school classes were done in the hybrid model, they were facing some challenges to follow class in English via Zoom and were definitely lacking social interaction with other kids. The mentoring program, with all kindness and empathy from the mentors, helped my kids to be more agile and confident in English, allowing them to be more participative during school class.



Pictured are Lauren O'Connor and Margaux Bouyon engaged in an online mentoring session.

According to Kate Jones, a literacy specialist at Fiske and a mentor to one of our ELLs who resides in Boston, "This year of mentoring provided our mentees time and space to have important conversations addressing the unprecedented challenges." Another Fiske Mentor Program parent, Riccardo Calisti agreed that the mentor program has significantly impacted his daughter:

When Sofia arrived the first time at Fiske in August 2019, her English was weak; she was struggling a little bit even to understand when the teacher was talking to her. Since 2019 she spent 2 years in the ELL program sharing time with her mentors. In the 2 years Sofia has been always enthusiastic about the mentor program, she has been enjoying every minute she spent with her mentors and she never complained about having to arrive to school earlier or having to leave later (this says so much!!). During the virtual mentor sessions we could (because we stayed at home with her) perceive even more the way Sofia was enjoying the time spent with her mentors; we could hear her having "deep" conversations, telling jokes and making lots of fun activities while her confidence in her English skills, despite the pandemic, were improving day by day. After 2 years in the mentor program her English is now excellent and her reading, speaking and writing skills are on top.

We have heard from numerous mentors that virtual mentoring has been a success. Even before the pandemic, language could be a barrier to making connections. During the pandemic, the mask acted as yet another barrier to making connections, and so it became more difficult to hear students who often are hesitant to speak in their second language even without a mask. While we are in favor of using masks to keep us safe, they inhibit our ability to see facial expressions that register emotions like sadness and confusion. Having mask-free mentoring sessions in a virtual format was helpful in developing authentic relationships.

Running the mentor program virtually also gave our mentors a window into the family life of our newcomers. Family pets, siblings, and favorite stuffed animals came into the picture when, before, they were all left at home. Additionally, the community meetings seemed more equitable than meeting in person because people didn't have to find time in their days to commute before or after school. We saw multiple family members gathered on their family room couches, beaming with pride. For our final community meeting our mentors each made a Google Slide that celebrated their mentees and they spoke eloquently about how much they enjoyed their mentorship.

Although this virtual mentoring program seemed like a step in the right direction, there were some complicating factors. The virtual format meant that parents had to arrange meeting times, be present to help the mentee log on to the session, and help out if any technical difficulties arose. Despite these challenges, the parents readily agreed to help their children gain access to these meetings because of the immense social and emotional benefits their children were receiving every session.

We learned a great deal from our 2020 pivot, and there are several changes that we hope to maintain. Having virtual community meetings in the evening enables more parents and caregivers to attend because they can participate from their homes or workplaces. The end-of-year slideshow, where mentors created slides in honor of their newcomers, gave the mentors time to publicly praise their newcomers and celebrate their new relationship. We found creative new games to play, and we did it all together as a community. In the years ahead we will use these lessons learned during the pandemic to continue to grow our program. The most important lesson is that working together ensures that all students feel that they belong in our community. 

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Catherine Murphy** is an ELL specialist at Fiske Elementary School in Lexington, MA. Previously she taught at Framingham High School for ten years, where she developed a love of teaching newcomers. Catherine is passionate about teacher education. Each year she mentors new teachers both in and out of her ELL department. For many years she was a professional development provider in Lexington and taught a course "Teaching with Academic Conversations" based on the work of Jeff Zwiers and Sara Hamerla. Along with an ELL colleague Lonamae Shand, she developed a book club where they read *Unlocking English Learners' Potential* by Diane Fenner and Sydney Snyder. Catherine has also taught the RETELL SEI course and ESL to adults at SCALE in Somerville and at Bunker Hill Community College.

# Cultural Attitudes Towards Smiling, with Implications for ESL Instructors

**Joan Bartel**

joanbartel@officesoftskills.com



**D**O YOU smile at your students on the first day of class? Not all teachers around the world do so. This article presents some background on smiling as nonverbal communication: Who does it the most, how smiles are viewed in various cultures, and what implications this might have for ESL instructors in university and adult settings in the United States. Throughout this discussion, you are invited to reflect on your own subconscious smiling habits and preferences.

My interest in culturally appropriate nonverbal behavior was awakened during my university years when I studied abroad. Throughout my teaching years I continued to read about the subject as I lived and held educational positions in the cultures of Germany, the U.S., and Canada. Currently, in Canada, I teach a government-funded “Workplace Communication” course for internationally educated professionals, such as engineers and project managers. For them, finding suitable work is the primary motivation to enroll, as they begin to realize that their intermediate level of English is an employment barrier. I help them understand that smiling and other culturally appropriate interpersonal skills, also called soft skills, are just as critical for work and the prerequisite job interview (Bartel, 2018b; Krys et al., 2016). I ended up writing a book, *Office Soft Skills: Working with North Americans* (Bartel, 2018a is the current edition), to use in class. Selected examples from my teaching experience are provided to illustrate some points in this article.

A primer on types of smiles can be found in Krys et al. (2016). That international team of psychologists described three kinds of smiles that humans emot:

1. Enjoyment smiles during pleasure or success: Think of the grin of a

delighted child or, in our teaching context, a beaming student receiving their diploma on Graduation Day.

2. Dominance smiles that reflect social status or control and may include scheming, critical, and proud smiles: Picture actor Jack Nicholson playing The Joker, Batman's nemesis.
3. Affiliative smiles, which create and maintain social bonds without necessarily expressing intense enjoyment, as shown in Figure 1.

With all these types of smiles, there are positive health benefits. Medical research has shown that your body releases “feel-good” hormones, dopamine, endorphins, and serotonin, when you smile (Stevenson, 2012), causing a positive mood, even though a large, international meta-study found that the overall effect on feelings is small (University of Tennessee, 2019). But there is more to smiling than feeling or looking good. Smiling and observing smiles on others are influenced by one's culture. Some influential factors, as shown by researchers from the field of psychology, are described in the following sections.



Fig. 1 Affiliative smiles [source: iStock].

It is important to note up front, however, that, although a person's cultural upbringing plays a role in their attitude towards smiling people, cultures are not completely uniform. There is evidence for variability among different Western and East Asian cultures, for example (Tsai et al., 2016), and within a country (Krys et al., 2016). Cultures evolve over generations as well. Within every society, each person is an individual with a unique personality and life experiences. Therefore,

we should not make rigid assumptions of our students' attitudes based on their culture or country of origin.

### **CULTURAL VIEWS OF SMILES**

In this article, affiliative smiles are the subject of discussion. According to Krys et al. (2016), countries whose population comes from many sources – like the U.S. – are more likely to “endorse affiliative smiles” (p. 104) as a way to try to get along by showing good social intentions across cultures and languages. It seems that when people are together with others but do not share a language, facial expressions help bridge the gap. The researchers' conclusion supports observations on the American frequency of smiling (Khazan, 2016) and additional studies on the strong cultural value of smiles in this country (Tsai et al., 2016).

Krys' team of psychologists were not satisfied, however, with an exploration of American customs. They explained that most previous studies had been done in WEIRD nations; i.e., Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic. Earlier publications are likely to have been about an American – or other WEIRD – study, which can not necessarily be generalized to other countries and cultures (Krys et al., 2016; McCormick & Shields, 2016).

Krys' group felt there was a need for broader results and therefore studied 44 geographic areas around the world. They found a strong contrast to American smiling habits when they looked at societies where the future is uncertain and there is substantial corruption. In such circumstances “greater corruption levels decreased trust granted toward smiling individuals” and diminished positive perceptions (Krys et al., 2016, p. 110). In fact, a smiling person of authority, like a teacher on the first day of class, might be perceived with skepticism, as if an attitude of dominance could lie behind the affiliative smile. These results, like the others cited in this article, are based on statistical probabilities and do not mean that every individual from a given society shares this attitude.

Further non-American research has shown that people of one East Asian culture, namely Chinese speakers of Mandarin, are more likely to focus on tone of voice than to rely on smiles or other facial expressions to judge another person's feelings (McGill University, 2015).

### **SMILING, GENDER, AND INTELLIGENCE**

Gender also affects unconscious smiling. Since the 1980's, studies have shown that women tend to smile more than men and there is a greater expectation

for them to do so (Hall et al., 2000; Krys et al., 2016; McCormick & Shields, 2016); however, the latter two research groups caution that most previous studies were exclusively American and European. Internationally, Krys et al. (2016) found that female assessors were more likely to be positively influenced by smiles in people's pictures than male assessors.

Krys and his team (2016) then explored a new research angle, namely, whether there was any relationship between smiling behavior and the perception of intelligence. They found that, in general, around the world, in stable countries with little corruption and relatively predictable expectations of future events (like the U.S.), smiling does not correlate with perceptions of intelligence or honesty. However, the researchers "identified six cultures where individuals were perceived as significantly less intelligent when smiling" (Krys et al., 2016, p. 109), specifically Japan, Kerala area of India, Iran, South Korea, Russia, and to a lesser extent, France. (Here we see evidence that results differed within geographic regions and even between cultures of one country, India.)

**Studies have shown that women tend to smile more than men and there is a greater expectation for them to do so.**

In Russia, there is even a proverb, "Laughing [or smiling] for no reason is a sign of stupidity" (Khazan, 2016; Krys et al., 2016, p. 103). In France and Finland there are similar sayings, I have heard. Khazan, an American reporter of Russian heritage, has reported that her Russian relatives don't feel the need to smile for family photos. The American side of the family, however, all grin for the camera. In an example from my classroom experience, an East Asian student said he was a "smiley" child, which led his teachers to think he had below-average intelligence until he achieved top marks on a test.

### **SMILING AND PROFESSIONALISM**

Tsai et al. (2016) compared American and Chinese photos and found that the strength of a smile was culturally influenced. They looked at photos in the public websites of society leaders, namely, university presidents, politicians, and top-ranked CEO's and found that the Chinese leaders consistently exhibit more "calm" smiles than the American leaders, whose smiles can often be described as "energetic" or enthusiastic. Between those two extremes lay other countries, such as Japan and France. The researchers deduced that the reason stemmed from cultural values: The more a nation valued excitement and high-arousal

happy states, the more their leaders showed enthusiastic grins. The more the nations valued calm, the more likely their leaders showed calm smiles (Tsai et al., 2016). Congruently, others have found that, in general, East Asian cultures tend to relate happiness more with social harmony than with personal celebrations or excitement (Aaker & Smith, 2014; Oishi et al., 2013). As an example of smiling in public in America, consider the friendly greeters at some retailers (Figure 2), a custom at Walmarts all across the country.



Fig. 2 Greeting customers at a store entrance (source: Pikwizand)

When expanding internationally, Walmart had difficulty in Germany, where male shoppers tended to interpret female greeters' cheery smiles as flirting; it was seen as unprofessional behavior. As a consequence, the chain store stopped the practice of having in-store greeters there, and ultimately, for economic reasons, they left Germany altogether (Landler & Barbaro, 2006). Conversely, a German friend of mine settling in Canada struggled to adjust to a facial expression that would be perceived as being friendly at work (Bartel, 2018b). (Interestingly, for a variety of reasons, Walmart also could not establish its brand in Japan and South Korea, two nations on Krys' list of countries that associated smiling at strangers with lack of intelligence [Landler & Barbaro, 2006].)

As another illustration of expectations of professional behavior, one of my students from China expressed his frustration with job interviews. The interviewers, he said, "smile and laugh with you as if they were your best friends – but they still don't hire you." He had anticipated the straight-faced, calm behavior of Chi-

nese interviewers and did not understand that professionalism in American business meetings does not preclude smiles (Bartel, 2018b). In class, I demonstrate the different nonverbal behaviors among managers from various countries using profile photographs from the business networking site LinkedIn; like Khazan's American family, the North American managers, who might be the hirers in an interview, are usually smiling. That lesson once prompted another student, from India, to say he would try to "fake a sincere smile" to improve his chances of success.

**Students from China and some other Asian and European countries may not expect instructors and other professionals in their home countries to greet them with an enthusiastic smile.**

In summary, students from China and some other Asian and European countries may not expect instructors and other professionals in their home countries to greet them with an enthusiastic smile. Those expectations will probably be challenged in the U.S.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR ESL TEACHING**

How might these studies influence our ESL teaching practice? The following are some salient points that motivated me to write and share this article. Since results of the cited studies undertaken by psychologists are based on statistical generalities, my conclusions are leavened with the qualifiers "some," "may," and "might."

- Generally speaking, a person's culture has an influence on their customs and comfort level with smiling. However, cultures are not monolithic; individuals within a culture will differ. We should not pre-judge any student or expect them to be a model representative of their first country's culture.
- If an instructor does not smile much at the start of a course, whether online or in-person, some students will think, based on cultural attitudes in their country of origin, "This teacher has a professional attitude. I can expect an intelligent session here." But others will wonder if they will like the course because the instructor did not look friendly or engaging. Both those reactions are natural and normal – in different cultures. The first one is the perspective of some Europeans, Middle Easterners and Asians; the second one is typical for North Americans.

- In my experience, most people who come to the U.S. to study or work already know something about the culture here. Nevertheless, research shows that some male students from China, Japan, Korea, Iran, and Russia (and maybe France and Germany) might not be favorably impressed by an enthusiastic smile on the instructor's face on Day 1. The same may be true for refugees, if they come from unstable societies. For these populations, it may take some time before they start smiling back at you. They may need to get to know and trust you first. For them, you might need to prove yourself a worthy, intelligent teacher in other ways than by smiling.
- In these times of #MeToo, it might be useful to have a class discussion about the fact that women, and men, can smile while maintaining their professionalism. In fact, they are expressing a positive cultural value of Americans (Krys et al., 2016). Support for conducting a sensitive conversation on gendered assumptions around smiling might be available from your school or institution's sexual harassment counselors or Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion office.
- While instructors are conscious or unconscious models of smiling behavior, we can also encourage students to practice facial expressions themselves. This is important, for example, for adult students who aspire to a job, or university students headed to graduate work. They need to become aware of the social role of a smile at the start of an interview. Portraits from LinkedIn reveal cultural attitudes and values of facial expressions of managers and authority figures. In North America, they may smile and still be considered professional, although that combination is not prevalent all around the world, for example, in East Asian cultures (Tsai et al., 2016). Students can be given a chance to rehearse their nonverbal behavior in dialogues; practicing this behavior is a way for them to gain a sense of control (Bartel, 2018b).
- Consider as well the impact a student's smile may have on you. If you are an assessor, examiner, or interviewer, reflect on whether your views and judgements are influenced by a student's smile or lack of it, according to your gender and cultural background and theirs.

**Students can be given a chance to rehearse their nonverbal behavior in dialogues; practicing this behavior is a way for them to gain a sense of control.**

- It is also important to think about whether we should be enforcing a “smiles only” policy in class. My answer is no, certainly not in the sense of Walmart greeters. Awakening awareness of the nonverbal behavior of smiling does not mean coaching students to unthinking mimicry of American models. While smiling generally has positive health effects, it is also true that people who are required to smile constantly and “effortfully,” i.e., not of their own free will, can suffer negative health consequences (Grandey et al., 2019).

To summarize, smiling, as a nonverbal communication behavior, is culturally influenced. The purpose of our lessons should not be to remake our students, who come with their own unique background and preferences, in our own cultural image. What we ESL instructors can do is provide them with insights and give them a better understanding of the what and why behind the expectation to smile. Once they understand American smiling habits, our students have some control over choices on how to react to cultural expectations. **C**

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Joan Bartel, M.A.**, used to live in Massachusetts, where she taught ESL at Harvard. Now she is a contract professor at Humber College in Toronto, Canada. She is the author of *Office Soft Skills* and *Soft Skills for Business Emails*.

## REFERENCES

- Aaker, J., & Esfahani Smith, E. (2014).** Not everyone wants to be happy. *Scientific American*. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/not-everyone-wants-to-be-happy>
- Bartel, J. (2018a).** *Office soft skills: Working with North Americans*. Wayzgoose Press.
- Bartel, J. (2018b).** Teaching soft skills for employability. *TESL Canada Journal*, 35(1), 78-92. <https://doi.org/10.18806/tesl.v35i1.1285>
- Grandey, A. A., Frone, M. R., Melloy, R. C., & Sayre, G. M. (2019).** When are fakers also drinkers? A self-control view of emotional labor and alcohol consumption among U.S. service workers. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 24(4), 482-497. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000147>
- Hall, J. A., Carter, J. D., & Horgan, T. G. (2000).** Gender differences in nonverbal communication of emotion. In A. H. Fischer (Ed.), *Gender and emotion: Social psychological perspectives* (pp. 97–117). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511628191.006>
- Khazan, O. (2016, May 27).** Why some cultures frown on smiling. *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2016/05/culture-and-smiling/483827>

- Krys, K., Vauclair, C., Capaldi, C. A., Lun, V. M., Bond, M. H., Dominguez-Espinoza, A., Torres, C., Lipp, O. V., Manickam, L. S. S., Xing, C., Antalikova, R., Pavlopoulos, V., Teyssier, J., Hur, T., Hansen, K., Szarota, P., Ahmed, R. A., Burtceva, E., Chkhaidze, A., ... & Yu, A. A. (2016). Be careful where you smile: Culture shapes judgments of intelligence and honesty of smiling individuals. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior*, 40(2), 101–116. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10919-015-0226-4>
- Landler, M. & Barbaro, M. (2006, August 2). Wal-Mart finds that its formula doesn't fit every culture. *The New York Times*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/02/business/worldbusiness/02walmart.html>
- McCormick, K., & Shields, S.A. (2016). Gender and emotion. In H. J. Miller Jr. (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of theory in psychology*. (pp. 354-355). SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781483346274.n122>
- McGill University. (2015). Cross-cultural communication: Much more than just a linguistic stretch. *ScienceDaily*. [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/02/150224102843.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/02/150224102843.htm)
- Oishi, S., Graham, J., Kesebir, S., & Galinha, I. C. (2013). Concepts of happiness across time and cultures. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 39(5), 559–577. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167213480042>
- Stevenson, S. (2012). How smiling affects your brain. *Psychology Today*. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/cutting-edge-leadership/201206/there-s-magic-in-your-smile>
- Tsai, J. L., Ang, J. Y. Z., Blevins, E., Goernandt, J., Fung, H. H., Jiang, D., Elliott, J., Kölzer, A., Uchida, Y., Lee, Y.-C., Lin, Y., Zhang, X., Govindama, Y., & Haddouk, L. (2016). Leaders' smiles reflect cultural differences in ideal affect. *Emotion*, 16(2), 183–195. <https://doi.org/10.1037/emo0000133>
- University of Tennessee at Knoxville. (2019, April 12). Psychologists find smiling really can make people happier. *ScienceDaily*. [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/04/190412094728.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/04/190412094728.htm)

# Improving Our Assessment Practices for ELs

**Kristin Lambert**

klambert@nrsd.net



**CASL-2. CTOPP-2. CELF-P2.** As a new English learner teacher, I sat through IEP and student support meetings and nodded along, hoping I looked like I understood as my colleagues talked about their data. I wasn't sure how to use this information to help my students, because I was learning a new language, too – the language of special education. (While I loved my teacher training in ESL, it had not prepared me for the highly technical terms of other disciplines.) I was especially floored when after the meeting, teachers would say: This data shows where the student is struggling. Is it because they're learning English, have a disability, or both?

Feeling at a loss, I started taking classes in Lasell University's Teaching Bilingual Learners with Disabilities program. I learned that this is one of the most complex questions we can ask about our students. But I also learned that fair assessment practices can help us find the best possible answers. Good data prevents us from misunderstanding English learners' abilities and needs. It helps us select the supports that will benefit them most, ensuring their access to education.

Here are ways we can improve our assessment practices for ELs. I highly recommend building a bridge with your special education colleagues and taking a look together. All practices are drawn from the work of Professors Claudia Rinaldi and Maria Serpa in the 2021 Lasell University course, "Special Education Assessment for Equity and Inclusion."

- **Learn about your school's assessments.** Standardized test companies provide information online about how they determine the reliability of their tests. (One way is that they test a group of students called the "norming group" and look for consistency in results.) To make sure a test is reliable for your student, check that many aspects of their background are present in the test's norming group. For example, if the test's norming group only had fluent English speakers, we know this test is not proven reliable for an English learner who is not yet fluent. Also consider the number of students in the norming group before making generalizations about results.

- **Find out if the test scores use the bell curve or J-curve model.** When standardized tests give results based on a bell curve framework, this guarantees that students will be “below average,” “average,” or “above average.” “Average” is not a category that reflects the reality of our learners. We need to choose assessments that give results using a J-curve framework, where every child has the opportunity to be successful and no one is guaranteed to fail. We should also use observation and comparison to true peers with similar experiences.
- **Learn about the student’s home culture.** Evaluators and teachers need to watch out for cultural bias when they assess. Behaviors that may be seen as unusual or negative in American culture may be highly valued in a student’s home culture. We need to look out for cultural bias in assessment questions and in our own observations. Misinterpretation of cultural behaviors can lead us to make incorrect conclusions about a student’s learning or potential disability. To counteract this, we need to meet families and observe students in their natural environment, the home.
- **Learn about the student’s home language.** Knowing more about the home language can help us understand common challenges students have when they speak, read, and write in English. For information about Spanish, Portuguese, and Khmer, check out the [LDLD Project](#).
- **Write your report with English learners in mind.** When evaluators present their findings, the report needs to give detailed information about the assessment’s strengths and limitations for English learners, so that readers can accurately interpret the results. Report language should be positive toward students, and summaries should contain information about both student strengths and areas for growth. Parents must be included as members of the team and be encouraged to share their insights about these areas as well.

By improving our assessment practices, we can create fair assessment data – data that can help us answer our most challenging and most important questions accurately. Now at meetings, I acknowledge that I am a special education language learner. Instead of nodding along, I ask questions of my own, and I speak with more confidence about ESL research and best practices. 

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Kristin Lambert, M.Ed.**, enjoys teaching elementary and middle school ESL at the Florence Sawyer School in Bolton. She recently completed Lasell University’s certificate program, Teaching Bilingual Learners with Disabilities. This article comes from material learned in the coursework.

# Instructional Application: Teaching English to Cape Verdean English Language Learners

**William Moreno**

[williamresende7@outlook.com](mailto:williamresende7@outlook.com)



**THIS ARTICLE** focuses on teaching English to high school students in Cape Verde. Understanding how English is taught in Cape Verde can help teachers and professors teach Cape Verdean students studying here in the US. As an English as a foreign language teacher (EFL) with three years of experience in Cape Verde, and currently completing my graduate degree program at Bridgewater State University, I have a desire to contribute to the knowledge base within my community of professionals. I hope to help both EFL and English Language Learner (ELL) teachers serving Cape Verdean and other ELLs.

Massachusetts has over double the Cape Verdeans of any other state in the US (Walsh, 2019). According to Sugarman and Geary (2018), in the 2015-2016 academic year, 3,539 English Language Learners (ELLs) in MA indicated Cape Verdean Creole as their primary language. The Portuguese-derived Cape Verdean language is one of the top four languages spoken by ELLs in MA public schools. Hence, considering the linguistic and learning context in Cape Verde can bring insights to educators of Cape Verdean ELLs in the US. Here, I will first describe the existing linguistic and learning background in Cape Verde. Then, I will discuss the specific topics of linking and reduction to suggest mini pronunciation lessons for intermediate and advanced level students in high school and college.

**The Portuguese-derived Cape Verdean language is one of the top seven languages spoken by ELLs in Massachusetts public schools.**

## DIGLOSSIA AND LEARNING ENGLISH IN CAPE VERDE

It is essential to discuss the linguistic situation in Cape Verde in terms of the native and official language use, as learners can make use of transfer from either language when they are speaking English. As Rosa (2010) mentions, there is a situation of diglossia in Cape Verde in which two languages (Portuguese and Cape Verdean) are used alternatively, depending on the context.

Portuguese is used in formal situations such as school and it is the language of instruction in Cape Verde, while Cape Verdean is used in informal settings. Portuguese and Cape Verdean are very similar in vocabulary, but they differ in pronunciation, grammatical complexity, and structure.

In Cape Verde, students learn English through instruction of grammar. The Grammar Translation Method is perhaps the most used teaching method, whereas listening and speaking activities are not implemented very often. Consequently, students are often not taught aspects of pronunciation. Due to little exposure to some aspects of pronunciation in English, EFL students in Cape Verde struggle to pronounce certain words.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF PRONUNCIATION

To define pronunciation, we must understand the terms *intelligibility*, *comprehensibility*, and *accentedness*. According to Derwing and Munro (2005), *intelligibility* refers to the extent to which a listener understands the message. *Comprehensibility* relates to listeners' perception of the level of difficulty to understand a message. In contrast, *accentedness* relates to the listeners' perception of the difference between the speaker's accent and the first language (L1) community (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010).

Unlike grammar and vocabulary, researchers began focusing on pronunciation in English classrooms only at the end of the nineteenth century (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). One of the most complex issues in designing a pronunciation curriculum, as Celce-Murcia and colleagues indicate, is the learners and their background (e.g., L1, motivation, resources, learning context). Norton (2013) suggests that ELs

**There is a situation of diglossia in Cape Verde in which two languages (Portuguese and Cape Verdean) are used alternatively, depending on the context.**

have different identities such as age, gender, linguistic ability, socio-economic background, learning interests, and styles. Although this article does not focus on these aspects, it is important to acknowledge that each of them impacts the learners' acquisition of a language. According to Ortega (2013) and Gottlieb (2016), language transfer also affects language acquisition. According to the authors, transfer means the linguistic aspects, including pronunciation and grammar, that can be transferred from one language to another.

**In the case of Cape Verdeans, Portuguese and English share the same alphabetic letters, but English has more vowel and consonant sounds than Portuguese.**

There are many challenges in teaching pronunciation to second and foreign language learners. The challenges may be greater if the first language (L1) and second language (L2) have little to no similarity in stress patterns and letter-sound correspondence. Regarding letter-sound mapping, if two languages share the same or similar alphabet letters and sounds, it is easier to pronounce written words in the L2. However, if two languages contain the same alphabetic letters but have significant differences in the phonemic inventory, then learners may face a more challenging time of learning the pronunciation. In the case of Cape Verdeans, Portuguese and English share the same alphabetic letters, but English has more vowel and consonant sounds than Portuguese.

There are specific pronunciation challenges to Cape Verdean students learning English in Cape Verde, such as the -ed verb ending, flap *t*, dark *l*, linking and reduction, stress, rhythm, and stop consonants. Frequently, students who leave Cape Verde and come to the US to study face issues with these aspects of pronunciation. However, here I will focus on linking and reduction because these cause problems for Cape Verdean learners who often don't realize when a word starts and ends, or when and why words such as articles are reduced.

## **LINKING**

Linking is the smooth connection of sounds (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). There are different types of linking, including vowel-to-vowel, consonant-to-consonant, and consonant-to-vowel linking. However, below I will focus on the latter two types of linking.

## CONSONANT-TO-CONSONANT LINKING

When a word ends in a consonant sound, and the next word begins with that same consonant sound, we usually produce only one of those sounds. This is called consonant-to-consonant linking. Some example phrases include *stopped\_talking*, *last\_time* (do you hear one or two /t/ sounds?), and *same\_mistake* (do you hear one or two /m/ sounds?). Linking can also happen if a word ends in a stop consonant and the next one begins with another consonant sound. Some example phrases are: *drop\_the bomb* (*droʔ the bomb*), *good\_job* (*gooʔ job*), and *drink\_water* (*drinʔ water*). In the first example, the last sound in *drop*, /p/, links with the next word's initial sound, /ð/. The same happens in the other two instances: The last sound of a word links with the initial sound of the next word.

## CONSONANT-TO-VOWEL LINKING

In consonant-to-vowel linking, the first word ends with a consonant sound, and the next one begins with a vowel sound. A good example is the phrase *mom and me*. The last sound of *mom* /m/ links with the initial vowel sound in the following word, /ə/. In the same phrase, the previous consonant sound in the word *and* (/d/) can also link with the following consonant sound. Hence, if we link all three words together, it may feel like pronouncing a single word. For ELs, this can be difficult at first, but with consistent practice, they will feel more confident.

## REDUCTION

Reduction happens when we change or drop a sound. As Crawford and Moffie (2016) have stated, teachers should teach reduction because it is common in everyday speech and because teaching reduction “can spare learners a good deal of linguistic frustration” (p. 1). Celce-Murcia and colleagues (2010) indicate that reductions usually happen in unstressed words (also known as “function” or “grammatical” words). In contrast, stressed words (content or lexical words) are usually not reduced. Look at the following sentence, where the stressed content words are bolded: *I'm going to school*. The pronoun *I* is linked with the verb *to be*, and the phrase *I am* is in its reduced form, *I'm*. Similarly, prepositions are

**Teachers should teach reduction because it is common in everyday speech and because teaching reduction “can spare learners a good deal of linguistic frustration.”**

often reduced, and a good example in the example sentence is the preposition *to*, which is reduced to /tə/.

Some examples of content words that are not typically reduced are verbs (*dance, sing*), adjectives (*hard, pretty, huge*), adverbs (*very, fully, usually*), negation words without contractions (*will not, cannot, do not*), and WH words (*who, when, where*). However, a verb may be contracted with a following pronoun or infinitival *to*, as in *lemme* ("let me"), *wanna* ("want to") and *gonna* ("going to"). The category of function words includes prepositions, conjunctions, pronouns, auxiliary verbs, and determiners, such as *and, can, him, of*, etc. The most common reduction is when a fully pronounced vowel is reduced to the schwa sound (ə). For example, the full pronunciation of the word *can* is /kæn/. This pronunciation is used if the word *can* is stressed or emphasized. However, a reduced and more common way of pronouncing that word is /kən/, because it is an auxiliary verb. For example, if someone asks you *Can you speak English?* then they are very likely to pronounce *can* in the reduced form. However, if your answer is *Yes, I can*, then the word *can* is fully pronounced.

## **LINKING AND REDUCTION FOR CAPE VERDEAN ENGLISH LEARNERS**

The importance of linking and reduction becomes evident when a learner is faced with a real-life situation. For example, when fluent speakers of English (primarily native speakers) are interacting with one another, they do not pronounce every word fully and separately. Instead, they reduce the less important words (function words) and link sounds together. Therefore, a sentence like "what do you do for a living" can be pronounced /whacha do for a livin'/. If learners are not exposed to pronunciation in real-life situations, understanding the message will be difficult.

Because they are not often exposed to real-life situations when learning English, Cape Verdean student may have difficulty understanding fast and natural English, which might frustrate them. This may happen in classrooms when they are asked to listen to English audio, or outside classrooms when exposed to conversations with English speakers. Similarly, Cape Verdean students may also fail to reduce less important words or link words in a sentence. Hence, when Cape Verdeans speak English, their meaning may not be intelligible since they often try to pronounce words fully and separately.

## **HOW I TEACH LINKING AND REDUCTION TO CAPE VERDEAN STUDENTS**

The first step in learning anything is to understand its purpose. Hence, I always explain that we do not isolate sounds or pronounce every word entirely in real-

life spoken English. Then, I bring examples to show how linking and reduction occur both separately and together. An example of a sentence to study reduction might be “My teacher likes to sing for fun.” Here, students can be exposed to reductions of the words *to* (tə) and *for* (fər). For linking, an example sentence might be “I love it when you sing out loud.” In this case, *love it* can be linked, and we can also link *sing out*.

Once students have gotten the core concept of linking and reduction, different activities can be assigned. For example, my favorite activity involves selecting a passage, asking students to highlight linking and reduction and then read those sentences aloud. Additionally, having students sit down in pairs or small groups, create a dialog, and use linking and reduction while reading the dialogue or acting it out as a role-play are important activities to improve students' listening and pronunciation skills. Students can also be asked to bring songs to class to identify linking and reductions before, during, and after singing a song. Also, when I speak and notice that I have used linking and reduction, I will point them out to my students. For example, I ask them, “Did you notice how I pronounced the word *to*? or “How did I connect the sounds in the phrase *but I*?”

**My favorite activity involves selecting a passage, asking students to highlight linking and reduction and read those sentences aloud.**

### MINI LESSON ON LINKING AND REDUCTION

Since it is common to reduce and link words together in conversation, learners often need to practice reducing and linking simultaneously. Below, I discuss a lesson on reduction and linking in stages.

#### STAGE 1

Students are asked to work with a partner and analyze the dialog below (see Figure 1). First, the teacher reads the dialogue so that the students can listen attentively and pay attention to aspects of reduction and linking. Then, the students identify what words can be reduced and explain why. Later on, they describe what words or phrases can be linked together and what type of linking is happening (vowel-to vowel, consonant to vowel, or consonant to consonant). Teachers go from desk to desk and see where students need guidance. Then, students share their answers.

## STAGE 2

The teacher reads the text aloud and asks students to pay attention to details such as reduced words or phrases and examples of linking. The teacher reads the text one more time, but this time asking students to repeat after them. However, a proper reading pace for the students' proficiency level should be considered. If there are linking or reduced words/phrases that students could not identify, the teacher should point them out by using the analysis provided below.

### ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT

The figures below represent examples of linking (Figure 1) and reduction (Figure 2). There are some instances where linking and reduction occur at the same time, but the figures only show linking and reduction, respectively.

*Figure 1: Linking (linked words are marked with an underscore)*

A: Hey, John, how\_are you?  
B: Good, and\_you?  
  
A: I am good. I was not\_expecting to see you here so\_early.  
B: Oh, I had\_to borrow some\_books from the library. It is for\_a project that\_I am working\_on, and I came\_early because my schedule this\_afternoon\_is pretty hectic.  
  
A: I feel you. It\_is\_our last semester, so things tend\_to\_get hectic\_indeed.  
B: Right. You know, as much\_as I would love to\_stay\_and chat with\_you, I have\_to go now. We will catch\_up later\_in class.  
  
A: No problem. I have\_to go too. Peter\_is waiting for\_me. I told\_him I would give\_him\_a ride. Good\_luck with your project. Bye!  
B: Thank you. Bye!

*Figure 2: Reduction (reductions are in parentheses)*

A: Hey, John, how are you? (jə)  
B: Good, and (ən) you?  
  
A: I am (əm) good. I was (wəz) not expecting to (tə) see you here so early.  
B: Oh, I had to (tə) borrow some (səm) books from (frəm) the library. It is for (fər) a project that I am (əm) working on, and I came early because (kəz) my schedule this afternoon is pretty hectic.  
  
A: I feel you (jə). It is our (ər) last semester, so things tend to (tə) get hectic indeed.  
B: Right? You (jə) know, as (əz) much as (əz) I would (wəd) love to (tə) stay and (ən) chat with you, I have to (tə) go now. We will catch up later in class.  
  
A: No problem. I have got to (tə) go too. Peter is waiting for (fər) me. I told him (əm) I would give him (əm) a ride. Good luck with your (jər) project. Bye!  
B: Thank you. Bye!

In a nutshell, to increase the chances of intelligibility when interacting with other speakers of English, it is crucial to know how to reduce and link words together. Exposure to grammar alone has proven to be inefficient in preparing Cape Verdean students to deal with the demands of learning English as a foreign language. There is a need to expose Cape Verdean students to such features to make them better listeners and better speakers of English. 

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**William Patrick Rezende Moreno** was born in Cape Verde. He is an English teacher, currently a resident instructor at Boston Higashi School, a school for students with the autism spectrum disorder. William loves teaching because he can share his knowledge and learn from his students at the same time.

### REFERENCES

- Celce-Murcia, M., Brinton, D., & Goodwin, J. (2010).** Teaching pronunciation: A course book and reference guide. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Cambridge University Press.
- Crawford, S. & Moffie, H. (2016).** Activities for teaching reduced speech. *TESOL Connections*. Retrieved from [http://newsmanager.commpartners.com/tesolc/downloads/features/2016/2016-06\\_reduced%20speech.pdf](http://newsmanager.commpartners.com/tesolc/downloads/features/2016/2016-06_reduced%20speech.pdf)
- Gottlieb, M. (2016).** *Assessing English language learners: Bridges to educational equity: Connecting academic language proficiency to student achievement*. Location: Corwin Press.
- Norton, B. (2013).** *Identity and language learning: Extending the conversation*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Multilingual Matters.
- Ortega, L. (2013).** *Understanding second language acquisition*. Routledge.
- Sugarman, J. & Geary, C. (2018).** *English learners in Massachusetts: Demographics, outcomes, and state accountability policies*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.
- Walsh, M. (2019).** Cape Verdeans: Boston, Brockton, New Bedford. Retrieved from <https://www.slideshare.net/alvaroelima/cape-verdeans-boston-brockton-new-bedford>

# Reading & Writing with English Learners: A Framework for K-5,

by Valentina Gonzalez and Melinda Miller

Seidlitz Education, 2020. 146 pages. ISBN 978-1732194878

## Reviewed by Elena Murphy

**T**EACHERS HOPE their students will find joy in literacy, but sometimes there doesn't seem to be a clear path to it in the curriculum. In their new book, *Reading and Writing with English Learners: A Framework for K-5*, co-authors Valentina Gonzalez and Melinda Miller, Ph.D., say that with the right blend of explicit instruction, guided practice and a certain amount of autonomy to read and write about texts that are relevant to them, English Learners (ELs) can experience that joy.

As a language arts teacher of second, third and fourth grade at different times, Gonzalez realized she “needed to meet [her] students where they were, not serve them from a random place in the curriculum” (21). What she and Miller use as their framework is “balanced literacy”(17). This is not a scattered approach, with “a little of this and a little of that” (17), but one that is intentionally designed, combining direct instruction with opportunities to make meaning out of texts and, in turn, for students to create their own.

**As a language arts teacher, Gonzalez realized she “needed to meet students where they were, not serve them from a random place in the curriculum.”**

The authors say this book is a resource for ESL/ESOL-certified teachers and English Language Arts (ELA) teachers. As one who has taught in both settings and was an EL herself, educational consultant Gonzalez points out that professional development often happens “in silos”(7). In her experience, ESOL and ESL teachers stop receiving academic professional development about current practices of teaching reading and writing, whereas mainstream ELA teachers, who may spend more time with their ELs than certified ESL teachers, don't learn how to

scaffold their academic teaching.

The overall layout of the book has chapters covering either reading or writing, and they progress from providing more guidance from the teacher (Read-Aloud, Shared Reading, Guided Reading) to less (Independent Reading). Each chapter is similarly structured with an outline of what the practice is, then what it is not. There are sample lesson plans, a representative classroom scenario, how experts' research supports the practice, and answers to anticipated questions from both ELA and ESL-ESOL teachers.

The authors recommend a workshop structure for teaching reading and writing. Each class can start with a mini-lesson, then the teacher provides guided practice and feedback. Though this may seem challenging given an average classroom size, Gonzalez and Miller recommend peer-to-peer practice and creating opportunities for individual conferencing. The mini-lesson itself is a tool to teach "a skill, concept or strategy to the whole group in one, short, focused time frame. In this way, all students hear and experience the same message" (27).

Maintaining motivation among ELs is a priority. One way is by having students choose what they read and write about. For instance, if an EL is interested in a certain subject, they may be motivated to read above their proficiency level. Students who select their writing subjects may also be more invested. Miller, a full professor at Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX, recalls that when she was in elementary school, she wrote books outside of the classroom. All the Writing Workshop elements were there: Choosing a subject, pre-writing, drafting, obtaining feedback, revising and publishing. At school, when she had less autonomy, she felt less drive, something she remembered when she became a teacher herself.

Miller says, "Writing Workshop is the perfect environment for students to learn at their own rate" (9). Chapters on writing include Write-Aloud, Shared Writing and Independent Writing, offering a road map for teaching while keeping the grad-

**Maintaining motivation among ELs is a priority. One way is by having students choose what they read and write about. For instance, if an EL is interested in a certain subject, they may be motivated to read above their proficiency level.**

ual release of responsibility in mind.

Another way to increase students' interest in reading and writing is by acknowledging their identities. "Multilingual readers don't leave their identity, their language, and cultures at home," Gonzalez wrote recently in her blog [Valentina ESL](#). To help students connect with texts, she and Miller include an Appendix with a Culturally Inclusive Book List.

**Gonzalez and Miller's book provides a framework for balanced literacy that, with time, will yield the accompanying joy that fits in any curriculum.**

In addition to the book list, there are three other Appendices: Activities, Remote Learning and The Role of Phonics. For remote learning, the authors recommend certain learning platforms, but also note that teachers will adapt their approach based on how they know their students. "Connection is first," Gonzalez and Miller say (130). Remote learning took on more significance these past two years since it may have been the only opportunity for some ELs to speak and hear English throughout the day. For its part, Appendix II: The Role of Phonics includes "explicit" and "systematic" ways of teaching how to decode words.

For ELs in grades K-5, the educational stakes are high as they are learning content as well as language at the same time (12), but Gonzalez and Miller's book provides a framework for balanced literacy that, with time, will yield the accompanying joy that fits in any curriculum. **C**

# Call for Authors: Spring/Summer 2022 Issue of MATSOL Currents

**MATSOL Currents** publishes a wide variety of items:

- Research and practice-based articles
- Teaching ideas
- Personal accounts
- Student narratives
- Reviews of books, websites, and instructional materials
- Reports from the field, e.g. from conference-goers

**MATSOL Currents is a particularly friendly venue for college students to submit work from their teacher education courses.**

We are always looking for new authors and will work with you to get your piece into good shape even if you haven't previously published anything. *MATSOL Currents* is a particularly friendly venue for college students to submit work from their teacher education courses. The spring/summer issue deadline for submissions is May 15. Submissions can be sent as either Word or Google Documents to [currents@matsol.org](mailto:currents@matsol.org). More guidelines for submissions can be found on the [MATSOL website](#).



# Call for Research Participants: Educators' Beliefs about Language and Policy: A Study of Multilingual Education in Massachusetts

**Jesse W. Rubio**

Jesse.Rubio001@umb.edu

**A S A PHD CANDIDATE** in the Applied Linguistics Department at the University of Massachusetts Boston and an instructional coach in an elementary school in Massachusetts, I am both personally and professionally concerned with the policies governing language in the education of multilingual learners. As such, I am currently conducting research addressing how educators perceive language use and policy in educational settings. This article presents existing research demonstrating the role of teachers in educational language policy.

When discussing policymakers in education, teachers are not often the first people who come to mind. However, research has shown that teachers are critical agents in determining which policies are implemented in classrooms and how. For language education, this means that teachers may implement the official language policies of their school, district, or state with fidelity (Henderson & Palmer, 2020), but they may also appropriate these policies according to their own experiences, beliefs, and specific classroom contexts (García & Menken, 2010).

In some cases, external pressures may also compel teachers to enact language policies that do not align with either their own beliefs or with official language policy. Such influences include accountability to standardized assessments, which has been shown in several cases to promote English-dominant policies even in schools and districts with official multilingual policies (e.g., Menken, 2008; Palmer, Henderson, Wall, Zúñiga, & Berthelsen, 2016), and parental pressure from English-speaking families (e.g., Johnson & Johnson, 2015; Oliveira, Becker, & Chang-Bacon, 2020).

Nonetheless, teachers are central policy actors in language education, and it is necessary to understand how teachers perceive language policy if it is to be successfully implemented. Now that multilingual education is possible in Massachusetts schools following passage of the LOOK Act in 2017, teachers' beliefs are particularly important in order to develop and implement policies that take advantage of this opportunity to implement multilingual practices in schools. To these ends, I am conducting a survey that determines how educators understand language in education and the policies that govern it, including multilingual policies. The survey is available to all Massachusetts educators—including teachers and administrators. This research will help policymakers and educators throughout the state and county determine specific spaces and means for enacting multilingual policies in order to successfully transform the education of multilingual learners.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please access the survey using this [weblink](#). It should take no more than 15-20 minutes to complete, and as a thank you for participating, you can choose to enter a raffle to win one of 18 Amazon gift cards valued at \$25 each.

## REFERENCES

- García, O. & Menken, K. (2010).** Stirring the onion: Educators and the dynamics of language education policies (looking ahead). In O. García & K. Menken (Eds.), *Negotiating language policies in schools: Educators as policymakers* (pp. 249–262). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Henderson, K. I., & Palmer, D. K. (2020).** *Dual language bilingual education: Teacher cases and perspectives on large-scale implementation*. Multilingual Matters.
- Johnson, D. C., & Johnson, E. J. (2015).** Power and agency in language policy appropriation. *Language Policy* 14(3), 221–243.
- Menken, K. (2008).** *English learners left behind: Standardized testing as language policy*. Multilingual Matters.
- Oliveira, G., Lima Becker, M., & Chang-Bacon, C. K. (2020).** “Eu sei, I know”: Equity and immigrant experience in a Portuguese-English Dual Language Bilingual Education program. *TESOL Quarterly*, 54(3), 572–598.
- Palmer, D., Henderson, K., Wall, D., Zúñiga, C., & Berthelsen, S. (2016).** Team teaching among mixed messages: Implementing two-way dual language bilingual education at third grade in Texas. *Language Policy*, 15(4), 393–413.

## **MATSOL BOARD AND STAFF**

### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Priya Tahiliani, President

Christine Montecillo Leider, Vice-President

Mary Hughes, Treasurer

Mary Clark, Clerk

Moira Greenson

Jody Klein

Theresa Laquerre

Melissa Latham Keh

Stephanie Marcotte

Molly Ross

Yuiko Shimazu

### **STAFF**

Helen Solórzano, Executive Director

Jason Fei, Program & Member Engagement Coordinator

Teresa Kochis, Program Assistant

Emily Graham, Registration Coordinator

### **MATSOL CURRENTS**

Johanna Tigert, Editor

Mary Clark, Assistant Editor

Dawn Bentley

Ron Clark

Sharifa Djurabaeva

Elena Murphy

Nasiba Norova

Christina Terranova

Rachel Theodorou

## **Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages**

2 Canton Street, Suite B-223 Stoughton, MA 02072 617-820-5099 [www.matsol.org](http://www.matsol.org)

Copyright © 2020 by Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.