



Advocate for Equity!

by Kara Mitchell, PhD

I recently completed a comprehensive policy analysis of Massachusetts General Law, Board of Education Regulations and various policy tools created and distributed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The results of this analysis are depressing, concerning, and hopefully a cause for substantial advocacy action for educational equity on behalf of bilingual learners and their teachers. The following discussion represents a portion of my investigative results and will hopefully provide policy-level advocates with useful information about what needs to be changed and why.

Chapter 69 in Massachusetts General Law begins as follows:

It is hereby declared to be a paramount goal of the Commonwealth to provide a public education system of sufficient quality to extend to all children including a limited English proficient student...and also, including a school age child with a disability...the opportunity to reach their full potential and to lead lives as participants in the political and social life of the commonwealth as contributors to its economy (M.G.L.c.69§1).

This declaration of “sufficient quality” for “all children,” including bilingual learners, as a “paramount goal” exemplifies how rhetorical equity and educational quality is called for in Massachusetts’ policy. However, through my comprehensive analysis, I discovered the rhetorical promises in state law are truly merely rhetoric and the policy context within which bilingual learners are being educated in Massachusetts substantially sanctions and structures discrimination and inequity.

For instance, Chapter 71A states, “All children in Massachusetts public schools shall be taught English by being taught in English and all children shall be placed in English language classrooms” (M.G.L.c.71A§4). It further declares that, “English learners shall be educated

through sheltered English immersion during a temporary transition period not normally intended to exceed one school year” (M.G.L.c.71A§4). Finally, this provision is also made regarding the curriculum and instruction of bilingual learners: “English learners in any program shall be taught to the same academic standards and curriculum frameworks as all students, and shall be provided the same opportunities to master such standards and frameworks as other students” (M.G.L.c.71A§7).

These three provisions call for bilingual learners to be taught only in English through “sheltered English immersion”[SEI] for one year and to be held to the same standards and curriculum frameworks as all other students. However, the only aspect of SEI from the definitions provided in

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Massachusetts General Law that can clearly be implemented relates to the language of instruction. SEI is to be in English.

Massachusetts' law is vague in defining SEI and there are no State Board of Education approved regulations that provide further definition or guidance regarding the creation and implementation of SEI. Despite lack of attention in state law, the DESE does address these issues within some of its policy tools. For instance, the Chapter 71A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document released in the summer of 2003 by the DESE defines the elements of an effective SEI classroom as, "In effective sheltered English immersion classrooms, instruction and curriculum are designed to permit active engagement by LEP [Limited English Proficient] students throughout the school day" (MA DESE, 2003, p. 7). The document then goes on to describe the need for language and content objectives, frequent opportunities for bilingual learners to interact, discuss, and apply new language and content in English, methods of making content comprehensible, and vocabulary instruction.

While everything this document suggests represents useful approaches to working with bilingual learners, it is problematic that the explicit stated purpose of SEI instruction is student engagement rather than English language development and academic content learning gains. Additionally, the definition of SEI in this document reduces the acquisition of English as a second language to vocabulary development only calling for "instruction that emphasizes English vocabulary by combining the teaching of vocabulary and the teaching of content" (MA DESE, 2003, p. 7). The descriptors of SEI supplied in the Chapter 71A FAQs document are insufficient to ensure quality curriculum and instruction for bilingual learners because mastery of academic English is more than vocabulary acquisition and grade level content gains require more than the active engagement of bilingual learners.

The most explicit definition of SEI is provided in the Coordinated Program Review (CPR) Procedures document, which is an information package that provides guidance to districts in preparation of the DESE conducted review of

bilingual learner programs (MA DESE, 2008). In this document, SEI is defined as a program that ensures the progress of bilingual learners in "developing listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing in English, and in meeting academic standards by providing instruction in the two components of SEI. They are 1) English as a Second Language/English Language Development, and 2) sheltered content" (p. 2, emphasis in the original). This definition requires explicit attention by school districts to the development of both content knowledge and English language proficiencies for bilingual learners. However, the paragraphs that follow this statement establish a method of providing such instruction only for "students who have, at least, an intermediate level of English proficiency" (p. 3).

The CPR Procedures document suggests that ESL instruction should help bilingual learners "'catch up' to their student peers who are proficient in English" and must be part of all academic programs for bilingual learners (p. 3). Next, the document defines sheltered content instruction as "approaches, strategies and methodology that make the content of the lesson more comprehensible to students who are not yet proficient in English" (p. 3). Then the stipulation is made that this kind of instruction is designed only for bilingual learners who have at least an intermediate level of English proficiency.

If as described above, SEI is composed of both ESL and sheltered content instruction, but sheltered content instruction is designed only for students at the intermediate level of English proficiency, what happens to students at the beginning levels of English proficiency? How can beginning level bilingual learners be "taught to the same academic standards and curriculum frameworks as all students" (M.G.L.c.71A§7) when the state mandated program (SEI) is not designed to provide access to academic content learning for beginning bilingual learners?

State policy does not contain anything specifying how and from whom beginning level bilingual learners should learn academic subjects. Yet, the message is conveyed that SEI provides quality curriculum and instruction so that all bilingual learners will be able to meet the same academic standards as their native English-

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speaking peers. However, the reality is that beginning level bilingual learners are discriminated against due to the absence of a policy mandated quality program designed to support their mastery of grade-level academic content.

In fact, it appears that the state of Massachusetts may be in violation of federal law. In 1974 the Supreme Court ruled in *Lau v. Nichols*:

Basic English skills are at the very core of what the public schools teach. Imposition of a requirement that, before a child can effectively participate in the educational program, he must already have acquired those basic skills is to make a mockery of public education. We know that those who do not understand English are certain to find their classroom experience totally incomprehensible and in no way meaningful (Lau v. Nichols, 414 U.S. 563, 1974).

Even though Chapter 71A of state law calls SEI “curriculum and presentation designed for children who are learning the language” (M.G.L.c.71A§2), as SEI has been regulated and implemented in Massachusetts, it is only for bilingual learners who have “at least, an intermediate level of English proficiency” (MA DESE, 2008, p. 3). It appears that the protections offered through *Lau v. Nichols* to bilingual learners, especially those at the lowest levels of English proficiency, are being denied to bilingual learners in Massachusetts.

In various places across the policy tools, the federal regulation is cited that allows for programs for bilingual learners to “temporarily emphasize English over other subjects...by focusing first on the development of English language skills and then later providing students with compensatory and supplemental education to remedy deficiencies in other content areas that they may develop during this period” (MA DESE, 2003, p. 17). However, recent research in Massachusetts shows that most bilingual learners in the commonwealth require more than five years to gain the level of English proficiency necessary to enter mainstream programs (ELL Sub-Committee, 2010). Though this research does not clarify the amount of time required for beginning level bilingual learners to reach intermediate levels of English proficiency and therefore have access to sheltered content instruction, it is a concern that not a single policy document specifies a method for supplementing the academic content instruction of bilingual learners

who have received a temporary emphasis on English. This absence is another clear instance of legally sanctioned discrimination against bilingual learners, especially those at the lowest levels of English proficiency.

The issue of how to teach grade level content to students who are not yet proficient in academic English is one of the main arguments for the use of native language instruction and bilingual education techniques (Brisk, 2006; Crawford & Krashen, 2007; Curiel, Rosenthal, & Richek, 1986; Ramírez, 1992; Rolstad, Mahoney, & Glass, 2005; Slavin & Cheung, 2005; Thomas & Collier, 2002). However, the implementation of Massachusetts state law severely restricts districts and teachers from using languages other than English in classrooms.

Through MATSOL’s advocacy work in conjunction with other organizations in the state like META, some allowance for flexibility in terms of utilizing native language instruction in classrooms has been legislated and affects ~30 of the lowest performing schools in the state. This is a significant opportunity to improve the content and academic language instructional opportunities for students at the lowest levels of English proficiency in those schools! Please consider getting involved in supporting innovative and high quality programs in these schools and document the success. With that documentation, we can hopefully keep pushing for a high quality education for bilingual learners across the state.

My comprehensive analysis of state policy shows time and time again that bilingual learners in Massachusetts are experiencing legally sanctioned discrimination because of extremely poor policy that consistently structures inequity. It is our job to change this! While I am no longer in Massachusetts, I am eager to support your advocacy work and have many tools to do so (for instance, the rest of my policy analysis).

Let’s keep fighting the good fight together keep advocating for equity! 

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Teachers' Pedagogical Knowledge To Support ELL Learning

Information and Communication Technology - Capacity to Deliver

by *Barbara Freeman and Paul Freeman*

There was a time not too long ago when the promise of information and communication technology [ICT] typically outran its capacity to deliver. Now, with the prevalence of broadband and mobile networks, the reverse situation applies (Castells et al., 2007). Self-directed instructional programs and classroom tools are burgeoning at such a fast rate that the teaching profession is not keeping pace. We are slow to fully harness the power of technology to assist student learning. To some extent, a knowing and doing gap is present. For example, while we are aware of interactive whiteboards, they are not yet routinely embedded in our classroom practice. Teachers with “pedagogical automaticity” (Pollock, 2007, p. 60) using ICT—those in whom all the dimensions of great teaching are as natural as breathing—are a minority. Such is the pace of development of ICT tools (such as clickers to comprehensive web-based interventions targeted to specific populations, such as HELP Math for English language learners) that teachers are not keeping pace with the capacity to use the tools to optimal effect. Teachers’ pedagogical knowledge is essential to this task. To illuminate this central idea, we draw on lessons learned during many years of working with HELP Math. Teachers’ Pedagogical Knowledge to Meet ELL’s Needs

Arguably, the principal beneficiaries of the ICT revolution could be the most at risk populations, such as ELLs and students with special needs. However, in general, teachers are doing well working with the wide range of students who inhabit the middle and upper ground of schooling (Hanford, 2010). Providing the scaffolded structure necessary to support ELLs in their learning is deeply challenging for the teacher. Although ELL students share a common need for extra and specific supports (e.g., addressing gaps in background knowledge and academic vocabulary), not all students will develop content knowledge and skills at the same pace. Students differ in their ability—and their confidence in their ability—to convert resources into learning; an individual’s responsiveness to student-directed instructional resources is a function of

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many relational factors, including for example, students' personal heterogeneity (e.g., demographics, socioeconomic background, academic competence, self-efficacy, motivation, expectations) and academic starting level (prerequisite knowledge, language ability, structural schema) (B. Freeman, 2010). Individual students may also progress at different rates depending on the kind of content being acquired (e.g., math, social studies) and the learning objective of the lesson (e.g., factual knowledge, problem solving) (B. Freeman).

Teachers in mixed-ability inclusive classrooms have to manage such diversity, and that poses a significant challenge, a challenge that teachers need to deal with minute-to-minute. A comprehensive, intelligent intervention (one which adapts to student needs), such as HELP Math, is an important way of taking weight off teachers' shoulders while working with ELLs, especially when the intervention embeds specific research-based instructional strategies into the content and can be customized to target instruction to meet class, small group, or individual students needs (see Figure 1).

Yet the existence of sophisticated ICT tools, as with any other sound pedagogical device, is no guarantee that they will be used effectively or even at all. In order to prepare teachers to help ELLs achieve academically, professional development needs to address what Elmore (2007) calls the "instructional core": the critical relationship between teachers and students as they engage and interact with instructional materials and the ICT tools used to deliver them (p. 222). Proactive engagement of this type requires teachers to access a wide-range of professional knowledge, including, specialized content knowledge (i.e., specific to the subject, such as math; Ball et al., 2008), pedagogical content knowledge (Schulman, 1987), and knowledge of learners and their attributes (Schulman).

Pedagogical knowledge pertains to wide-ranging principles and strategies of classroom management and organization. Just as an effective sports coach possesses knowledge of the game, an understanding of players' strengths and weaknesses, and a capability to bring the best of practice to the players (individually and as a team), so it is that the school's chief instruction-

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Figure 1. HELP Math intervention software. Copyright 2010 by Digital Directions International, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

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al coach—an office that should be held by the principal—should ensure that teachers acquire pedagogical knowledge to the level of pedagogical automaticity. A body of evidence has demonstrated that students' academic performance is directly related to teachers' pedagogical content knowledge (Ball et al., 2008; Hill et al., 2008). In the general context of implementing ELL resources, pedagogical knowledge would include among others, knowledge of educational assessment (e.g., diagnostic, monitoring, RtI) and integration of digital tools for optimal learning. In the particular example of HELP Math, formative research shows that teachers optimize the effectiveness of the program when they set clear goals for integration; embed content from the HELP digital library in their lesson plans; know how to use the grade-level and adaptive diagnostic-prescriptive assessments; utilize the custom lesson and curriculum features; understand how HELP's embedded scaffolds (e.g., sheltered instruction, read-alouds) and active supports (e.g., key terms hyperlinks, Spanish audio) enhance student learning, and train their students to use these tools; and monitor students' progress. ICT tools, like HELP Math, which are evidence-based, free up teachers' time by comprehensively addressing content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge (to the extent that the instructional material embeds instructional strategies). Such interventions create space for teachers to attend to the individual needs of diverse learners.

Improving teachers' pedagogical knowledge in order to optimize the use of ICT with ELLs requires professional learning that is ongoing, delivered over an extended period (Timperley et al., 2007), and provided in close proximity to the classroom (Elmore, 2007). One powerful learning model designed to strengthen the critical relationship between teachers and students as they work with instructional resources is the use of instructional rounds (City et al., 2009). Instructional rounds, akin to the medical-rounds model, refer to the practice of teams of administrators and teachers paying extended visits to multiple classrooms to observe and reflect on the practice they see and to cultivate a shared understanding of the nature of quality teaching and learning. The classroom must no longer be the teacher's fortress, but a porous room through which colleagues will ceaselessly travel.

That is because a highly effective method for teachers to improve their practice, and acquire pedagogical knowledge, is through observing other teachers. When, for example, a teacher observes a colleague successfully integrate a mini-network of five computers where ELLs can access support from a supplemental program, it often makes more of an impact than other professional development techniques. With respect to HELP Math, we have observed that where teachers work in isolation and treat the program as 100% of the teaching—as powerful as that is—the effectiveness is less than when two or more colleagues collaborate and use it as a fully integrated intervention.

Conclusion

Providing access to ICT instructional materials for ELL students and, importantly, access to ongoing professional development that provides a rich understanding of how best to use those resources, is essential to the improvement of student outcomes (Ball et al., 2008; Hill et al., 2008; Timperley et al., 2007). Continuing professional learning practices, such as instructional rounds, helps teachers gain pedagogical knowledge, which, with practice leads to pedagogical automaticity. As Elmore (2007) maintained, “there is no other way to enhance capacity ... than by deliberately investing in the knowledge and skill of teachers and students to do the work of learning” (p. 222). 

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Seeing Things as We Are: A Lesson in Ethnocentrism

by Peter Gardner

Several years ago, I was teaching an advanced ESL class at a college in Boston, Massachusetts. Two weeks into a thematic unit dealing with intercultural communication, we were focusing especially on cultural differences in values, beliefs, and behaviors and the misunderstandings and conflicts that often arise from these variations. We had returned several times to the dangers of ethnocentrism: the inevitable tendency to observe, interpret, and evaluate the world according to the assumptions and standards of our own culture. We discussed how this viewing of reality through tinted lenses often leads to a belief in the naturalness and rightness of the culture with which we are most familiar and the strangeness and inferiority of cultures that appear foreign.

The students had just read an essay by a graduate student from China about the culture shock that she experienced when first moving to the U.S. to pursue her studies in an environment with unfamiliar norms and practices.¹ In addition to the informal attitudes and behaviors she encountered in the U.S., especially in educational settings, one of the cultural differences that struck her most was the direct and assertive communication style of people in the U.S. vs. a more indirect and modest style of speaking in China.

To illustrate this cultural difference, she recounted a personal experience, near the beginning of her studies, of going to visit her advisor, Dr. Green, at her home, on a hot summer day. Shortly after the author's arrival, Dr. Green asked if she would like something to drink, and, even though she was thirsty, she declined, saying "please don't trouble yourself." Dr. Green asked her if she was sure she didn't want anything to drink, and once again the author politely refused. Dr. Green then went into the kitchen to get something to drink for herself, and the two continued their discussion. The author was thirsty and confused, not understanding why her adviser hadn't asked her a third time if she would like a drink and then insisted that she accept it even if she had declined several times. This type of indirect, courteous speech and standing on ceremony would be the norm in China.

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Upon reminding my students of this anecdote, Avi, an Israeli student, exclaimed, "That's crazy. Why are the Chinese so dishonest and unconfident? In Israel, if we want something, we say yes, and if we don't, we say no. We don't beat around the bush."

Seeing an opportunity to shed light on the pitfalls of ethnocentrism and stereotyping, I asked Shota, one of the Japanese students in the class, what he thought of the "polite but thirsty" story in the essay. He replied that in Japan his response would have been similar to that of the Chinese author and that he often felt uncomfortable in his college classes in Boston, with U.S. students expressing personal opinions loudly, disagreeing with classmates and teachers, and behaving in a manner that would seem selfish, immature, and rude in Japan. He stressed the values of polite listening, humility, and respect for the group in his native culture.

This led to a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of direct vs. indirect communication styles, depending on the context, and the need to respect cultural differences and to avoid negative value judgments and stereotypes.

At the end of the class, having listened attentively to the discussion and not having said anything since his first remark about the Chinese, Avi turned to Shota and jokingly said, "Then I must be the one who's crazy!"

The class laughed at Avi's self-deprecating remark, and he and the other students left the room with a new appreciation of the words I had quoted earlier by the French writer Anaïs Nin: "We don't see things as they are; we see things as we are." 

Peter Gardner is a professor in the Liberal Arts Department at Berklee College of Music and also directs the ESL Program. He has published extensively on ESL pedagogy and intercultural communication and is the author of *New Directions: Reading, Writing, and Critical Thinking*.

Endnotes

1 The essay, "Polite but Thirsty," by Yaping Tang, originally appeared in *MATSOL Currents* (Fall/Winter 1995-1996, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 1, 10). The essay also appears in the first chapter, "Intercultural Communication," of the advanced ESL/EFL text by the author of this piece: *New Directions: Reading, writing, and critical thinking* (2nd ed.) (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005.)

Stepping Into The Global Classroom: ESL and Social Networking

by Alexander Sarousi & Renee Abramson

Student and Teacher Exchange Program [STEP] is a 'virtual' ESL classroom where students and teachers exchange ideas, plan, share and implement best practices to better ensure our students' growth, enrichment and success. STEP started as an idea for reaching out to educators to learn from each other. It quickly became a global community of teachers and students. A teacher from a school of English language learners in Siberia, another from China, and a third from Turkey became involved in our social network. Others from Mali and Kenya, Gaza and India joined. The list keeps growing as we build our global STEP community.

We have just planned with Lena, an ESL teacher in Vilnius, Lithuania an exciting lesson for both sister classes using Compare/Contrast and a Venn diagram. We received an exciting lesson from Korea on prefixes and suffixes that our ELL classes implemented the same day. Our students saw that Korean students' favorite subject is Math. Our Siberian classmates love Math as well. Now they are sharing their secrets about what makes learning exciting and easy for them. Through STEP, we are not only opening up our students to the world; our global exchanges and ideas are creating better students.

STEP is many things. It is differentiated learning. It is the world's talented teachers sharing their best practices. It's students and teachers exchanging ideas. It's teachers bouncing ideas off of each other. It's students succeeding. It's tearing down walls of prejudice and political borders. There are no wars, castes or prejudice. Social networking? The technology is at our fingertips. It's the future of learning.

By implementing STEP, talented English as a Second/Foreign Language teachers throughout the world share their expertise with students from across the globe. Our 'world' classroom without walls has no political borders. It allows our students to learn from and mentor each other, mentor while using 'state of the art' technology in this virtual expedition of learning.

In creating this unique opportunity for lesson planning and student enrichment we utilize ex-

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isting technology. The online platform enriches the learning experience for students and meets them at a technological level that is a part of their everyday lives. Through the STEP process, we believe that we are better preparing our students for college, the workforce and beyond.

STEP grew out of asking ourselves, “Who are teachers of English language Learners? Who are ELLs? How do the teachers teach and what do students have to say about learning?” We realized that the teachers and students might not be in our school, district or state. By reaching out with a globally, we have been able to find a network of dedicated English Language Learners’ teachers who not only want to collaborate and reach students through technology, but through *their* technology: Social networking. 

Alexander Sarousi

B.S. Biology is an ESL teacher born in Israel comes into the classroom speaking 4 languages teaching ESL/EFL in MA and abroad. As an ESL teacher he comes in with a strong background in Science, Math and technology.

Renee Abramson M.Ed.

TESL adjunct ESL college professor and public school teacher has both American and Israeli citizenship teaching ESL/EFL in MA and abroad.

Do You See What I See?

By Faith Litchock-Morellato

“Professor Morellato, I think we should do *visualizations* in every class!” This sentiment was expressed during a recent class where students engaged in a visualization activity to help facilitate pre-writing for an upcoming narrative piece. Visualizations are no stranger to my ESL classroom, but lately the question for me has been, would this activity resonate in a classroom filled with engineering, construction management and architecture majors? The answer is an unequivocal—yes!

I have been employing visualizations (in both ESL/non ESL classes) frequently for the past five years. Like many teachers, I have been trying to answer the age-old question, how do I immerse my students in writing, while activating their background knowledge and demystifying the writing process? Especially (but not exclusively) for my ESL students, it is more than “writer’s block” that inhibits them from getting started on a paper. Their initial struggle with “thinking” in English gets them “stuck,” and can ultimately result in a frustrating experience.

How do visualizations help, and what do they look like? Starting with narration and, more specifically, setting description, evokes fond and vivid memories for many students across the board. I invite students to find a comfortable seated position, close their eyes and listen to the sounds of nature that waft through the room. While they are focused and in the moment, I ask them a series of “Wh” questions related to their favorite place. Occasionally, I infuse some examples to initiate and stimulate their thoughts. After they come out of what might be called a “dream-like” state, they are instructed to write down all thoughts that come to mind in a free-writing exercise. Students are then grouped in pairs and asked to share all, or some, of what they have written. Ultimately, they leave the class armed with solid material to proceed with brainstorming and transition into making an outline, series of drafts and final paper.

Since I have started making visualizations a regular part of my classroom practice, I have witnessed a change in student motivation and self-esteem where writing is concerned. Students who anecdotally proclaimed on the first day of

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class, “I don’t like writing” and “I can’t write” are now boasting about their abilities and finding that writing is well within their reach. I also have had students tell me that they have tried this technique at home. Moreover, they have used a spin on this activity to prepare for exams and de-stress. Talk about getting two for the price of one!

In short, I challenge you try this exercise even with your most skeptical critics. This activity could be altered to work with virtually any age group or level. Both you and your students will be pleasantly surprised by the outcomes. If you stop to ask your students what they are indeed seeing about themselves, you will most assuredly get the same response—“I finally see myself writing.” 

Faith Litchock-Morellato is an Assistant Professor of ESL and Composition at Wentworth Institute of Technology and holds a Master of Arts in Teaching ESOL from the School for International Training/World Learning. Ms. Litchock-Morellato has also taught English at Suffolk University, Salem State University, and North Shore Community College.

MATSOL Participates in TESOL Advocacy Day 2010

by *Helen Solorzano*

On June 23, 2010, MATSOL Vice President Kathy Earley joined 32 other TESOL members representing 25 U.S. based affiliates in Washington, DC for TESOL Advocacy Day 2010. This event featured a day of issue briefings and workshops, capped by visits to Congressional offices on Capitol Hill. The goals of Advocacy Day were not only to lobby on key issues for TESOL, but also to provide an interactive learning experience for affiliate representatives on elements of advocacy. By the end of the day, TESOL members had visited the offices of more than 75 representatives and senators.

Responding to recent Congressional action, TESOL Advocacy Day 2010 was focused on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), currently revised as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). To maximize the impact of TESOL Advocacy Day, key members of Congress serving on the education and appropriations committees in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives were identified for meetings. This year, Kathy Earley met with staff from the Massachusetts legislators to discuss TESOL’s recommendations for ESEA reauthorization and the impact of the current law upon English language learners in Massachusetts. To participate, each affiliate representative was required to do several activities in preparation. For example, participants had to set up their own individual meetings with their Congressional representatives. To assist with this, TESOL provided directions and guidance, as well as the list of specific representatives and senators to contact.

Participants were also sent talking points and background information on ESEA reauthorization so that they could begin to familiarize themselves with the issues in advance. To help make their Congressional meetings more effective, participants were also encouraged to find examples from their own programs to illustrate the talking points.

TESOL Advocacy Day commenced with a welcome from TESOL President Brock Brady, who was also joined by Past President Mark Algren.

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The morning workshop was led by John Segota, Director of Advocacy and Professional Relations, and was comprised of two briefings. The first panel featured congressional staff from the Senate discussing the “view from the Capitol Hill” on ESEA reauthorization and the key issues under debate. The second briefing featured Richard Smith, Acting Assistant Secretary and Director of the Office of English Language Acquisition at the US Department of Education discussing the Obama Administration’s proposal for reauthorizing ESEA.

Following these briefings, an interactive workshop was held on how to have an effective meeting with one’s congressional representative. This workshop was led by Ellen Fern and Audrey Bush of Washington Partners, LLC, TESOL’s legislative consultants. Participants were provided key information to prepare for their meetings and given the opportunity to role play. The purpose of the briefings and the workshop was to help the participants practice and prepare for their meeting on Capitol Hill that afternoon.

At the end of the day, the participants shared their experiences and what they learned over dinner. It was interesting to hear what other people experienced on their visit. Overall, all of the participants agreed this event was a very positive experience for them and for TESOL. 

Additional information about TESOL Advocacy Day will be available on the TESOL web site at www.tesol.org. If you are interested in learning more about your Congressional representatives, and the legislative issues TESOL is tracking, go the TESOL U.S. Advocacy Action Center at capwiz.com/tesol.

Introduction to Terms and Programs for New Educators in the field of English as a Second Language

by Christine Canning Wilson

Welcome to the ever-changing field of English as a Second Language. English as a Second Language is a very specialized field, with terms and acronyms, that sound similar, but have very different meanings. ESL refers to the English language development component of an English language learner’s instructional program. An English language learner is a student who is not yet able to learn ordinary class work in English. There are many terms that are used to describe this process. This article explains the basic differences for the purposes of understanding the various terms. BICS or basic interpersonal communication skills, is the language ability required to interact socially in every day situations and conversations; whereas, CALP or Cognitive academic language proficiency, is the ability to communicate appropriately in the language of academic content. For example, the capacity to talk about a neighbor who is ‘fighting in Iraq’ is quite different than writing an analysis about the historical reasons that the United States is fighting in Iraq. Content-based ESL is a method in which academic content, instructional materials, learning tasks, and classroom techniques are used to develop language, content, cognitive, and study skills. While English is the medium of instruction in content-based ESL classrooms, it is generally taught by an ESL teacher to English language learners. Sheltered English Instruction is similar to content-based ESL, however, it occurs in general English instructed classroom with native speakers of English and English language learners. In these classrooms, elementary classroom and secondary subject matter teachers are trained to make academic instruction understandable to English language learners. Each of these approaches are used for the purpose of teaching English and content. They are not ‘submersion’ approaches where a district puts an ELL in a regular English only program with little or no support services based on the premise that the students will pick up English naturally. A two-way developmental program, also known as Dual Language, is a bilingual program whose goals are to develop language proficiency in two languages. Dual language requires a critical mass of students

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in the two target languages (e.g., Spanish and English). Generally, dual language approaches begin in Kindergarten using a 90% in the native and 10% in the target language. By the third grade, students receive a 50/50 model of instruction. Maintenance Bilingual Education (MBE) refers to a program by which students continue to learn in their native language while learning English. The more common type of bilingual education is transitional bilingual education. There are two approaches of this model: early and late exit. Newcomer programs are separate, relatively self-contained educational interventions designed to meet the academic and transitional needs of newly arrived immigrants. Typically, the students enrolled in these programs either have never used English or have had interrupted schooling. 

Christine Canning Wilson is the CEO of New England Global Network LLC

MATSOL Annual Meeting and Special Interest Group Forum

More than 70 MATSOL members came together on October 30 for the Special Interest Group (SIG) Forum and Annual Meeting on *Successes and Challenges in the Education of English Language Learners in Massachusetts*.

by *Helen Solorzano*

The event started with a panel discussion by four speakers providing a range of perspectives on the topic, and was followed by break-out discussions in the SIG groups. First we welcomed Esta Montano, the newly appointed Director of the Office of English Language Acquisition and Academic Achievement at Massachusetts Department of Education. She spoke about students she remembered – the students who overcame the obstacles to succeed at school, and the many more didn't make it and ended up dropping out, joining gangs, going to prison, or worse, and how those students continue to motivate her work. She acknowledged the challenges faced by ELL educators in an era of shrinking budgets and often less than supportive administrations and communities. She reminded us that teaching ELLS involves more than academics. It involves knowing our students, their families and communities and understanding the immigrant history and trauma that our students or their families may have experienced. She stressed the importance of race, class and culture in our identities, and of validating our students' bilingualism and home language. She urged us to act as advocates for our students, challenging racist and xenophobic attitudes and creating new opportunities for them.

We were also honored to be joined by Floris Wilma Ortiz-Marrero, the 2011 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year. Ms. Ortiz-Marrero, a teacher at the Amherst Regional Middle School, is the first ELL teacher to receive this distinction. She spoke about the contradictions between what we, as ELL educators, know and the institutional requirements and systems to which we must conform. She reflected on the complexities of learning a new language, but challenged the notion of "Limited English Proficient" students as "limited," asking what it does to our students to label them as "limited." In a striking example, she showed a letter written to the Depart-



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ment of Education by one of her students after receiving a bilingual dictionary to use during the MCAS exam. He wrote that “It was a pleasure to have the dictionary, but while I was doing the test, I became gradually disappointed” because the dictionary did not include the scientific vocabulary he needed to complete the test. He concluded with “the MA state should ensure all dictionary contains fundamental word like the word that appear from the science book.” (Sic) She urged teachers reflect on our practice, always questioning our assumptions, and to advocate for policies and curriculum that support our linguistically diverse students.



Switching focus from children to adult learners, we heard from Claudia Green, the Director of Workforce Development and English for New Bostonians for the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA). The program grew out of an executive order signed by the governor in 2009 to develop an agenda for new Americans, viewing immigration as a two-way process with the commonwealth and immigrants both benefiting. Ms. Green described the mandate of English for New Bostonians at expand capacity for adult English learners with training, funding and advocacy. Currently, there are 23 different initiatives taking place in Boston. One of the important gaps they have identified is in the higher level adult ESOL students (level 6 or 7 and above), or transitional classes to prepare students for college study or to get better jobs. They are also working in partnership with Boston Public Schools on ESOL for parents and caregivers to help them learn to deal with school system and lottery system, and expectations of families for parent involvement in the schools. They are also trying to develop programs to reach out to parents when they enroll their children in school and direct them to ESOL classes. She also described the English Works campaign, coalition of immigrant community leaders, labor unions, business and civic leaders, educators, and advocates across Massachusetts who are working to provide immigrants with a pathway to economic self-sufficiency.

The panel concluded with an address by Roger Rice, an attorney with Multicultural Education, Training, and Advocacy (META). He outlined the legislative agenda identified a year ago with MATSOL and other groups regarding the public education system focused on 1) Strong account-

ability and standards, including enforced data collection on ELLS and accountability; 2) Programmatic flexibility for meeting the needs of ELLs; 3) Structures and procedures to involve parents of ELLs, and 4) the Educational Reform Act to close ELL achievement gap. He pointed out some successes: the legislature

created new pathways to open up the Question 2 mandate for English-only education, creating more accountability and access in two narrow areas: charter and turnaround schools (the bottom 10% performing). Last spring, a letter went out reminding school superintendants that budget problems could not be solved by cutting programs for ELLs. Mr. Rice pointed out that although META sometimes gets reports of problems in schools from teachers, they are limited in what they can do without a client – the parents of children affected. He lamented the abolition of bilingual parent advisory councils, which was a vehicle for immigrant parents to become engaged and provide input into schools.

All the presentations underscored the importance of MATSOL’s continued advocacy on behalf of our members and their students and families. 

- *Learning a New Land: Immigrant Students in American Society* by Carola Suárez-Orozco, Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco, and Irina Todorova. Harvard University Press
- *In the Process of What Works*, Powerpoint presentation slides from the talk by Floris Wilma Ortiz-Marrero. On the MATSOL web site.
- Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition, www.miracoalition.org
- Massachusetts New Americans Agenda, www.newamericansma.org



Ready to Write: A First Composition Text

(Third Edition). Karen Blanchard and Christine Root. Longman, 2003. 156 pages.

ISBN #0-13-042463-3.

Reviewed by Sally Bunch

The guiding philosophy behind *Ready to Write* is that students are capable of writing expressively and well from early on in their English language acquisition. Once they reach a high-beginning/low-intermediate level of proficiency, students can move beyond basic lessons on grammar and sentence building to using writing to communicate more meaningfully. Although Karen Blanchard and Christine Root have tailored this textbook toward adult learners with literacy skills in their native languages, high school populations could also benefit from the emphasis on solid paragraph development. Through a variety of reading and writing exercises, *Ready to Write* guides students from exposure to practice in a way that not only advances their language skills and vocabulary development, but leaves them with the confidence that they can use writing to communicate effectively.

The early chapters are designed to raise awareness of the structure of paragraphs. By first working with lists, students can understand that good paragraphs don't contain random information; there is a relationship between topics and supporting details, and they are put in an order that makes sense to the reader. The exercises in which students identify and later brainstorm missing topic, supporting, and concluding sentences in level-appropriate paragraphs are similar to those in one of my favorite high-beginning level reading texts, *Reading Power* by Beatrice Mikulecky and Linda Jeffries. When I used *Reading Power* with my high school students, I ended up gathering graphic organizers and creating writing activities to extend my units on each organizational form. Having *Ready to Write* available would have cut down on my preparation time.

Subsequent chapters are dedicated to different patterns of organization, including time order, order of importance, and space order, the last being helpful in inspiring students to write more descriptively about a place. In chapter 6, Blanchard and Root introduce the writing process: prewriting (by clustering ideas from brainstorming), writing, and revising, as well as a basic revising checklist that students can use in self-editing or peer editing. In other chapters students are instructed to refer back to this checklist; teachers may choose to develop their own checklist more specific to the writing task. The three-step writing process is then featured in the other chapters covering more academic structures, such as opinion, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect. Physical descriptions and both personal and business letters round out the variety of essential and meaningful writing tasks.

Although the subtitle of *Ready to Write* is "A First Composition Text," the lessons stop short of providing students with the tools and practice for writing a multi-paragraph essay. For this reason, high school teachers who need to prepare their students for this objective, whether it be for standardized testing or the demands of English in other mainstream classes, may find this text useful, but not sufficient.

However, *Ready to Write* meets the language acquisition needs of both high school and adult populations for several reasons. First, students are provided with opportunities to work with a range of interesting and relevant topics, such as learning English and issues around dating and parenting, and to interpret information from charts, news articles and other texts. Also, in addition to the overall progression in difficulty of the book's units from understanding paragraphs to summarizing and responding to test questions, the exercises within each unit build on each other to effectively guide students, from reading a model to identifying its components, choosing missing components in other exam-



ples, and eventually generating their own paragraphs and editing them. Other activities that include using transitional words, brainstorming details in pairs or groups, and editing sample paragraphs balance the creativity and mechanics of good writing. Finally, the text features clear instructions on a plain black-and-white layout; though there's an amusing Peanuts comic reprinted at the beginning of each chapter, students are not overwhelmed with glossy graphics and potentially confusing sidebars.

By introducing the different ways effective writing is organized, *Ready to Write* offers emerging English language learners a text that respects both their readiness to use the language to express their ideas and their need for support to express them clearly. I could see myself using it as a base to which I could add more challenging reading, writing, and vocabulary-building work, as appropriate. 

Sally Bunch has taught ESL at the Washington Irving Middle School in Boston, Malden High School, and in several adult education programs. Her email address is sbunch@tiac.net.

“Ethnic Theory of Plane Crashes”

A chapter from *Outliers*.

Malcolm Gladwell. Little Brown, 2008. 309 pages.

ISBN 978-0-316-01792-3

Reviewed by *Eileen Feldman*

Malcolm Gladwell's provocatively titled chapter about his ethnic theory of plane crashes is important for ESL teachers to ponder, criticize, and finally consider in curricular design. It states that styles of communication between first and second pilots and between pilots and air controllers are factors in whether emergencies result in rescue or disaster, since each of the pilots is supposed to inform and check the other for safety. The character of their conversations originates from their cultural legacies, ignorance of which has contributed to airplane accidents. Familiarity with other cultures' ways of addressing authority is a key to successful performance.

Gladwell's theory draws from past human factors research. Among others, he cites Earl Wenner of Boeing, who noted that “ah..running

out of fuel” does not convey an emergency situation to the air controllers, who are trained to listen for the word “emergency” in a rapid rate of speech without “ah.” Such an ambivalent pilot message is labeled “mitigated speech,” which diminishes and sweetens the actual meaning. Linguists Ute Fischer and Judith Orasanu categorized strategies used by co-pilots for persuading pilots to change their actions: commanding, obligating the crew, suggesting, querying, stating preference, hinting. In emergencies pilots need a blunt command from the co-pilot. Recordings from accidents reveal hinting preceded the disaster.

Dutch researcher Geert Hofstede has constructed several indices to measure the role of authority in world populations. One index yields an individual initiative vs. collective score; a second indicates populations' ambiguity tolerance vs. rules orientation; a third scores populations on their power distance (between pilot and copilot or between pilot and controller). America falls on opposite poles from many countries with whom we collaborate in transportation and trade.

What can be done to bridge these gaps in communication? At Delta David Greenberg has trained pilots and airline staff to consider and react to different cultural legacies in the workplace as part of performance review. MATSOLers too should take responsibility for training future international workers how to speak and listen with cultural/linguistic education to prevent future airline, health, industrial, and laboratory accidents.

Although Gladwell does not write scientific treatises, his observations are supported anecdotally and his references can aid further teacher research in the field of mitigated speech. 

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What I Believe 1: Listening and Speaking about What Really Matters

Elizabeth Böttcher. Pearson Longman, 2008. 132 pages. ISBN: 978-0-13-233327-6 (student book); 978-0-13-233328-3 (audio CD); 978-0-13-233329-0 (teacher's manual and answer key)
Reviewed by Sara Hamerla

What I Believe is a powerful way to promote listening and speaking skills while engaging students in thinking about a purposeful life. The goal of the book, based on the public radio series *This I Believe*, is to provide fluent speaking models for intermediate-level English language learners. *What I Believe 2* is available for high intermediate students; this review is limited to the first book. The textbook has 12 Units, each highlighting a different and interesting person. All are successful people, with a wide range of careers and interests. Some, such as Bill Gates and Temple Grandin, are famous; others, like Mel Rusnov and Jane Hamill, are not. Each individual explains in his or her own words what is most important in life. Color photos of the diverse faces establish an instant connection to each person.

Exercises in finding the main idea, vocabulary and writing are included. In addition to the goal of improving English language development, the book guides students through discussion of core values and beliefs. The individuals who are the focus of each unit are all adults, so this book would be appropriate for students high school aged and older.

The teacher guide shows the relationship between the individuals and topics such as "Making the most of each day." It also aligns this with aspects of language, pronunciation, function, and speaking tasks. This helps the teacher to connect appropriate units to other elements of the curriculum.

Each unit asks students to connect to the topic and then listen carefully to the speaker talking in his or her own voice. Activities in each chapter are subtitled: Listen for Main Ideas, Vocabulary for Comprehension, Listen for Details, Build Fluency, Get Ready to Speak, and Writing. Activities are scaffolded and interactive. For example, many speaking tasks ask students to work with a partner to interview or make a role play.

At the 2009 MATSOL conference, featured speaker Carol Numrich from Columbia University addressed the importance of providing listening experiences. In her presentation, "Moving Toward a More Authentic Listening Practice," she emphasized the need for educators to select "native like" English audio materials. Numrich recommends setting authentic purposes for listening and designing authentic tasks. Any materials, such as audio tracks, videos clips, music with lyrics, or poetry, used by ESL teachers to promote active listening, should be used also by native English speakers in real life. She suggested that we seek out interesting materials by searching the internet. However, if you find that your technology or time is limited, then *What I Believe* would be a good place to start. The spoken essays are most likely the type of authentic material that Numrich would promote.

As a middle school teacher listening to the fascinating individuals speaking from the heart in *What I Believe*, I am inspired. I am now interested in finding or creating audio materials of adolescents speaking in their own words. Listening to people explaining their life purpose is engaging and motivating to all students. *What I Believe* provides valuable material that serves our several purposes as language teachers. 

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