

NOTES for ESL

The Newsletter of the ESL PSA
of the B.C. Teachers' Federation

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President's Message *by Marc Tremblay*



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Dear Colleagues,

As we move rapidly to the close of another year, I hope this message finds you well and enjoying your work with ELL students across the province.

With continued attacks on public education, democracy and basic human rights, both locally and globally, we educators have a lot of work to do. We hope that this newsletter provides you with respite from the madness, if only for a short while, and an opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals. I would like to suggest why it is important for ELL teachers to keep connected to each other.

If we were to simply focus on the time-eating demands of our profession, we might mention the following: record keeping, meetings, increased student-teacher ratios, counseling our students, and dealing with academic and socio-emotional stress. We could add to that list the loss of what was once very visual support for teachers both in the academic and social communities. All of these items add to individual stress and a sense of isolation. But we can overcome these perceived burdens by connecting with colleagues in our ELL community.

President's Message continued...

Here are a few suggestions for making connections:

Collaborate and share with fellow ELL teachers. This cooperation can help you relax and trust in yourself and your judgment, so you can do what you believe optimizes student learning.

Form a local chapter. As I have mentioned several times, why not consider forming an ESL PSA chapter/LSA (Local Specialist Association) It's easy to do. The meetings need not be formal; they can be held anywhere and anytime – sometimes during school hours, often after the final bell or over a meal. The important thing is to share our experiences and help each other grow professionally.

Give a workshop. Tired of going to workshops? Give one yourself. ELL teachers have much to offer and people will show their appreciation.

Attend an ELL conference. ELL teachers are not all alike. We vary just as widely as our community does. But despite our clear differences in method, style and personality, we are part of a grand family where we can feel understood.

At our last ESL PSA conference it was a personal treat for me to breathe the empathic air for the whole day: to feel understood professionally in a way that is rare for me outside the company of ELL teachers.

Our webpage, blog and Twitter account are aimed at reaching out to our tech-savvy colleagues. Our **list-serve** is designed to inform ELL teachers – and other interested people – throughout the province and elsewhere of what the ESL PSA is up to (the conference, our newsletter etc.) Our website is common ground for information and contacts. Our efforts to increase our membership represent a step in our goal of creating a vibrant

and collaborative community of ELL teachers. Reaching out to these professionals results in helpful information sharing. The bridges we build to each other can carry us to new and exciting experiences and to richer professional lives. Let's keep building.

I would like to leave you with some accomplishments of the ESL PSA this past year. On October 19, 2012, we hosted our 22nd Annual ESL PSA Conference – **“I'm More Than a Colouring Person” Empowering English Language Learners**. Dr. Margaret Early opened the conference by delivering a most powerful keynote address. Held in West Vancouver for the first time, the conference was a great success and attracted over 270 participants from all over British Columbia. March 1 and 2, 2013, was spent at the New Teachers Conference in Richmond, an annual event hosted by BCTF. Providing some information for this group of young teachers is critical for the PSA. It is the new and young teachers who struggle when sent into schools without the knowledge and understandings they need to work with ELL students. These teachers want to help and are terribly eager and dedicated, but stress themselves beyond reason as they are not always given the appropriate teaching and learning tools they need to succeed. As in the past our role there is to support this conference by offering sessions and hosting a display table where our newest colleagues can learn more about our PSA. A sincere thank you to Barbara Mitchell, member at large of the ESL PSA, for presenting her workshop *English in Motion*. I had the honor of introducing Barbara to her participants and noticed how well attended her session was. Congratulations Barbara!

I hope that you have a wonderful summer with time to recuperate and rejuvenate. See you all at the ESL PSA Conference in October.

Marc Tremblay

Editor's Introduction by Ross Powell

Words, words, words Hamlet (II. ii. 192)

The theme of this issue is 'developing academic vocabulary'. This is a critically important aspect of our work: vocabulary is one of the 5 pillars of reading, and, the clear correlation between vocabulary and academic success is so well documented. I attended a conference session this past year which reflected the need to develop academic vocabulary. I know that the No Child Left Behind legislation in the USA is a mess, creating many problems and solving few, but some NCLB data is revealing. The NCLB act stipulates, amongst other things, that schools must meet goals in language development and in content area success. In one high ELL state highlighted by the session host, 16 of the 19 districts achieved required improvement goals in language development, but they failed to achieve required improvement goals in academic achievement. The session host's conclusion was that the data revealed the teachers in the academic classes were not emphasizing academic language enough in their instructional practice. All teachers who teach ELL's, and that's most of us who teach in B.C. schools, need to develop practices which ensure our students develop the specialized vocabulary needed for greater comprehension in all academic curricular areas.

We are fortunate to have two articles submitted by two B.C. experts on ELL pedagogy. Sylvia Helmer, a frequent contributor to our newsletter, has submitted a review of Jeff Zwiers' text *Building Academic Language: Essential Practices for Content Classrooms*. She explores Zwiers' thesis that we need to help our students develop all the 'capital' our students need to be successful in school. Vicki McCarthy, retired ELL teacher, administrator and teacher trainer, has submitted an article exploring how we can provide ESL students with teaching and learning situations that emphasize essential "content specific vocabulary" within appropriate contexts, and help them build on this vocabulary.

The theme of the next issue will be assessment of ELL's. If you've got something great on authentic ways to assess oral language, reading proficiency or writing, or best practices for assessing our students' understanding in the content areas, pass them along.

Big changes are in store for me next year. I'm taking a position at Simon Fraser University as a faculty associate working with pre-service teachers. It's a two year secondment, after which I'll be returning to a school somewhere in the district. I'll still be able to be the newsletter editor for the ESL PSA, much to Analisa's relief.

cheers- RP (powell_r@surreyschools.ca)



23rd Annual ESL PSA Conference
Friday, October 25, 2013, at West Van Secondary

Elevating Their Voices: Connecting Communities

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Steven Talmy, Department of Language and Literacy Education (UBC)

Do Your Learners Have Enough 'Capital' ? by Sylvia Helmer, UBC

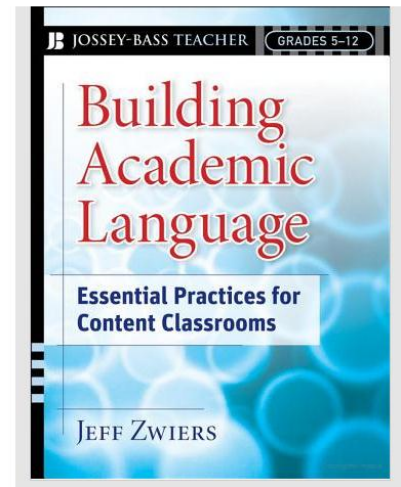
It is common to think of vocabulary gaps - and perhaps lengthen the new word lists - when students are struggling with academic language in content areas. However, a good first step is to consider the prior learning experiences of the students in an effort to find out where those gaps really are. The idea of different kinds of *capital*, first coined in the 1980s, points out that just as money is unequally distributed in our society, so is the currency of learning. In Jeff Zwiars' book, *Building Academic Language: Essential Practices for Content Classrooms*, he describes four kinds of capital to consider: social, cultural, knowledge and linguistic. In this brief overview, consider how much of each type of *capital* you have and, using this lens, reconsider struggling learners in your classes. Where is it they actually need to succeed?

Social capital includes interactions with adults, siblings, peers, listening ability, empathy skills and knowing the appropriate behaviours and responses in various social and more formal settings.

Cultural capital is the sum total of life experiences that are part of your socio-cultural world. This includes travel experiences, wealth [SES], your parents' level of education as well as your own, experiences with the arts, music, sports and games, your race and religion, as well as your literacy experiences growing up such as reading and being read to.

Knowledge capital is the sum total of your social and cultural experiences plus other aspects of growing and learning such as watching TV, access to technology, conversations about reading and learning as well as being asked to think about and respond to that learning. This includes both formal and informal 'schooling'.

Linguistic capital includes the quality and quantity of language used by parents, peers on TV, on computer, in discussions, in the community, and in school. Learners with high linguistic capital know what to say and how to say it - or write it - for various social and academic occasions.



If you were to give yourself a score out of 10 for each type of capital, how would you score? The bigger question is how would some of your

consider how much of each type of *capital* you have and, using this lens, reconsider struggling learners in your classes.

struggling learners and in particular, ELL students score? I do not need to remind anyone who works with ELL students that their experiences are often quite different from what we consider 'mainstream' Canadian. It is our obligation to learn more about what capital learners bring so we can help them acquire the capital

they need to be successful. Simply lengthening the vocabulary list is not enough. Building background knowledge and experiences is equally critical for school success. Victoria Purcell-Gates put it extremely well. I will close with her quote:

How can we understand why so many do not learn what the mainstream schools think they are teaching unless we can get 'inside' the learners and see the world through their eyes? If we do not try to do this, if we continue to use the mainstream experience of reality as the perspective, we fool ourselves into believing that we are looking through a window when instead we are looking into a mirror.

http://books.google.ca/books?id=WYOSgSslBAgC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

Building Academic Vocabulary: Content, Context and ELL Learners

By Vicki McCarthy, PhD

Research has long demonstrated that students with a larger and more specialized vocabulary demonstrate greater comprehension, and, subsequently better achievement in specific academic curricular areas. Since mastery of academic vocabulary supports school achievement, we want to provide ELL students with teaching and learning situations that emphasize essential “content specific vocabulary” within appropriate contexts, and help them build on this vocabulary. Why? So that we are not limiting, but increasing future life choices for education for English learners.

Content specific, academic vocabulary can present challenges for some ELL’s who may:

a) be unfamiliar with the terms within some subject areas, b) recognize a word in text but not when they hear it orally, c) lack experiences with the contexts in which this vocabulary is used and, d) may not know how to support their own learning.

ELL students need purposeful and direct teaching to build their academic vocabulary; it is neither increased by reading alone, though reading non-fiction text is helpful; nor is enough academic vocabulary learned incidentally. Thoughtfully planned teaching and learning activities will best ensure goals for building academic vocabulary are met– take a step back and think first about how best to support ELL students learning.

What academic vocabulary do the (ELL) students need to know?

Content specialist teachers and ELL specialist/resource teachers often collaborate to support ELL students; this same collaborative approach is helpful when selecting, introducing, building and reinforcing academic vocabulary. Teams can better consider the needs of the ELL

students, the content and the best context for learning.

The academic content

- Determine the essential vocabulary students need to know to grow academically in the content area. The list should be reasonable, subject specific and organized so students can build vocabulary incrementally through multiple opportunities for using it over time in different ways. (For example, reading text, writing with teacher modelling, discussions in groups of various sizes, problem solving, reflecting on learning, all using the same academic vocabulary)
- Keep classroom expectations high, but at the same time make sure the goals for learning

academic vocabulary for ELL’s are attainable.

Academic vocabulary is context bound so think about how students can use it *actively* while thinking about learning (For instance, while conducting an experiment, participating in a debate, or interviewing a peer). Some experiences may be culturally unfamiliar and this repeated practice will help support their learning.

- Decide how to teach ELL students to abstract this vocabulary. Along with using it actively, also learn about vocabulary from text and writing. Read text together for meaning highlighting academic vocabulary, write notes from text with teacher modelling using this vocabulary, and have students work toward doing all of this independently. (As an example, read an experiment in a text aloud with ELL students highlighting the important academic vocabulary and its meaning, and then conduct and model writing an experiment using this vocabulary.)
- Have a plan ready for measuring success, both teacher and student driven. The more students take ownership of their learning, the better for

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them. ELL students also benefit from frequent feedback. Provide succinct, productive (not negative) feedback.

How is this academic vocabulary best taught to the students?

Students will be most effective learners if the context for teaching and learning is thoughtfully considered. Check for understanding frequently, scaffold learning wherever possible, and adjust the teaching situation as beneficial.

The context for teaching and learning

- ELL students learn best through explicit instruction presented within the context of authentic classroom activities; where a clear purpose for learning is provided, activities are planned to focus on how the vocabulary is used contextually, learning is monitored, and instruction is meaningfully adjusted as needed.
- The best teaching occurs when it is intentional; for instance, the teacher thinks aloud during the activity/lesson, modelling the use and meaning of the academic vocabulary, engaging the students in actively learning this vocabulary, and later circulating amongst students who are actively thinking about their learning to reinforce academic vocabulary.
- Equally helpful for ELL learners are activities, projects or lessons organized to highlight or reinforce academic vocabulary within a mixed ability peer group. More capable peers within the group support learning and provide leadership for ELL students who are learning the vocabulary; at the same time they reinforce their own learning by articulating what they know out loud.

Defining words out of context (lists of words and definitions) does not enhance learning. Students may learn a word and its meaning but may not be able to use this vocabulary within an appropriate context to communicate. Many words have multiple meanings that change with the context and the content under study.

How many ways can the word 'draw' be used?
What about 'mass', 'run' and 'obstacle'...

Reinforcing Academic Vocabulary

Strategies used to reinforce vocabulary can support intentional teaching and give ownership to students, for instance:

- Student-created word walls or bulletin boards with a focus on essential vocabulary are helpful, as is the use of graphic organizers to define, compare, contrast, or classify vocabulary and show meaning.
- Students also benefit from using technology resources for creating and saving graphic representations of vocabulary, for building word walls or bulletin boards, for representing text visually through Wordle or vocabulary cue cards and for adding translations in first languages as possible.

These strategies will not replace intentional and direct teaching, but rather help build vocabulary through repeated practice.

How will we know when the vocabulary has been mastered? What's the plan if it isn't mastered by all or a few?

Take your cue from the students. Are the ELL students ready to move on, or is revisiting vocabulary that needs reinforcing in order? Can the students use the vocabulary given an opportunity to do so independently in a new situation? How well do they apply what they have learned? Are the students able to reflect on their learning?

Learning and mastery

- Success will be measured by the students; when ELL students have mastered what their teachers want them to know, the students will be able to demonstrate that they can use the vocabulary. Vocabulary that is not mastered needs a new approach. This is not a reflection on teaching but some combination of issues of method, practice and students - time to regroup and try plan B.
- In cases where students have not mastered the vocabulary, or in situations where there are large numbers of beginners who need more time and reinforcement, it may be appropriate to offer short term intensive small group work to increase learning. This can be accomplished through: a) small group ELL resource teacher

support, and/or b) through organizing small groups for peer to peer mentoring.

In all situations, additional support must be positive and focus on mastery, not on pointing out student deficits which will only serve to be discouraging.

We want to provide every opportunity to build as much academic vocabulary as possible to support ESL student achievement.

Vicki McCarthy is a Past President of the ESL PSA, has been an ESL and Classroom Teacher, ESL and Special Ed Consultant K-12 and a school Principal. She has taught university ESL courses and coauthored Instruction and Assessment of ESL Students: Promoting Success in Your Classroom.



Links by Liz

Submitted by Liz Seitz, Member at Large from Kelowna

I often run into teachers who either forget these resources are available or haven't heard of them. They are awesome for vocabulary practice and can be modified so easily to enhance the ELL learners in a classroom.

- Wordshake asks the players to make words from a 4 X 4 grid of 16 letters. The rules can easily be modified to include any words made from letters, even not touching. The voice has a British accent and some of the terms are not 'Canadian' (paper money are 'notes' in one matching game)

<http://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/fun-games/wordshake>

- Freerice.com provides vocabulary practice, but the levels can be set to the individual playing the game. Words are also pronounced for them if they have a head set.

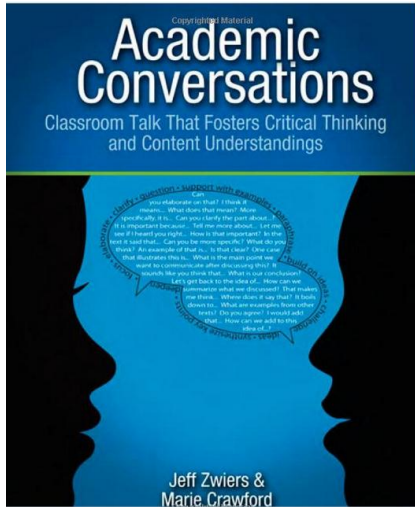
<http://freerice.com/#/english-vocabulary/1386>

- Kidbibs has many features, some better than others. For those who like to have students do semantic mapping, go to Learning Tip #38: Getting the Details to fit together while reading, writing, studying.

www.kidbibs.com **click on the pencil** to see tips!

- The visual thesaurus is useful for students at various levels of proficiency
www.visualthesaurus.com

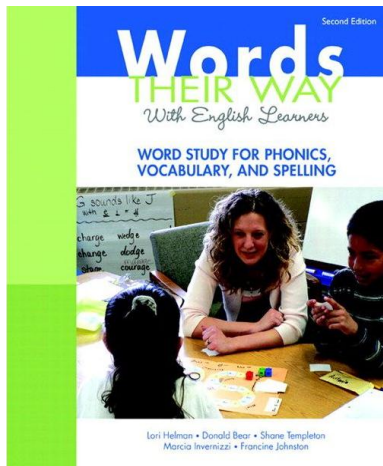
- West Virginia dept of education. This site has lots of strategies.
<http://wvde.state.wv.us/strategybank/VocabularyStrategies.html>



Academic Conversations -

Jeff Zweirs and Marie Crawford collaborate to provide structured strategies where students are taught how to participate in academic conversations. Specifically, Zweirs and Crawford provide instruction supporting students' ability to:

- Elaborate, clarify and question
- Support ideas with examples and evidence
- Paraphrase
- Build onto ideas
- Synthesize key ideas of the conversation



Words Their Way – with English Learners

You need to read through *Words Their Way* first and follow the instructions, but once you've analyzed each student's errors and learned what kind of speller each one is, you're set to provide a differentiated program suited to each student's needs. The assessment helps determine what type of word work is most appropriate: phonics, spelling, or vocabulary.

Once the word-sort cards are created, students can work alone, in pairs or in groups and can progress at their own speed. The program is suited for ELL's at all levels, but is most effective at the beginner levels.

Notice of 2013 ESL PSA AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the ESL PSA will be held on **Friday, October 19, 2012 at our Provincial Conference** at West Vancouver Secondary School.

The agenda includes an election of officers for the ESL PSA.

Plan to attend the AGM so you can have a say in the running of your PSA. Several positions are up for election, including both table officers (treasurer, secretary) and members at large. Join the executive and help us to support the work of B.C. teachers.

If you are interested in running for office or would like to nominate someone, please email Marc Tremblay at mt4919@gmail.com

Robert Marzano Six-Step Process for Vocabulary Instruction

Step 1 – **Describe** – Provide students with a description, explanation or example (not a definition) using common language

- Determine prior knowledge
- What do you *think* you know about this term?
- Use imagery and metaphor
- Consider including non-examples/antonyms

Step 2 – **Restate** – Students restate the description, explanation or example in their own words, and, their own language

- Discuss with a partner
- Student record (notebook or journal)

Step 3 – **Representations** - Students represent the term non-linguistically

- Graphic representation illustrating process
- Draw the thing
- Draw a symbol
- Dramatize the term
- Student record (notebook or journal)

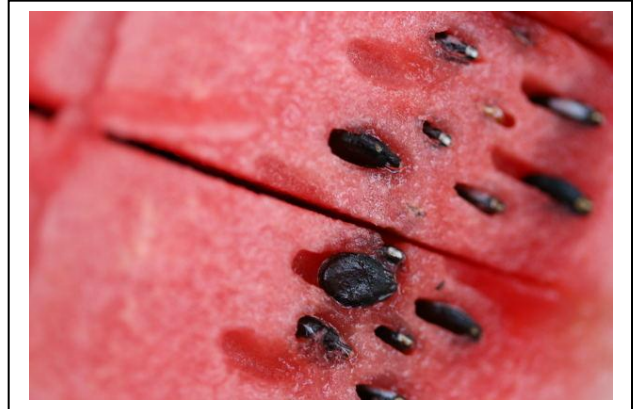
Step 4 – **Activities** – Engage students periodically in activities that add to their knowledge of the terms

- Identify synonyms or antonyms
- List related words
- Write reminders of common confusions
- Draw an additional graphic
- Write metaphors and analogies
- Compare, classify terms
- Student record (notebook or journal)

Step 5 – **Discuss** – Ask students to discuss terms with each other

- Think-Pair-Share about targeted terms
- Add to or revise student record (notebook or journal)

Step 6 – **Games** - Play games with the terms
There are lots of word games available. Make sure the focus is on practicing these known words in context, not simple how to spell them.



ESL PSA 2013 Conference Keynote Speaker Biography

Dr. Steven Talmy was born in the UK, grew up in the US, and currently lives and works in Canada. He has been teaching since 1990, and has worked in a variety of formal educational settings in the US, Canada, and Japan.

In 2005, he joined the Department of Language & Literacy Education at UBC, where he teaches graduate (M.Ed., M.A., Ph.D.) courses in: teaching English as a second language (TESL theory/research, SLA, L2 writing); qualitative research methods (research interviewing; discourse analysis of various types, particularly related to talk/social interaction), and sociolinguistics. He also teaches undergraduate (B.Ed.) courses for UBC's Teacher Education Office, the unit at UBC responsible for public school (K-12) teacher licensure. He co-founded (with Margaret Early) the Teaching English Language Learners B.Ed cohort, which has since morphed into the Teaching English Language Learners through Problem Based Learning (Elementary years) cohort, of which he is currently a coordinator.

His research interests include K-12 ESL, identity and second language learning/teaching, student resistance, language ideologies (especially about ESL), and the sociology of ESL education in North America. He has recently developed an interest in the sociology of SLA research, the origins of which can be traced to the sociology of scientific knowledge.

Vocabulary in Three Tiers

Tiered Vocabulary is an organizational framework for categorizing words and suggests implications for instruction. (The three-tier framework was developed by Isabel Beck and Margaret McKeown.) When considering which words to focus on, read through your content piece and divide the vocabulary into 'three tiers'. **Tier one** words are the high frequency words, the words the students are likely to know already or to learn on their own. **Tier two** words are words which have many meanings, appear in many contexts including academic contexts, and are important to the students' development of academic knowledge. These are the types of words to spend time working on – developing students' understanding of their etymology and morphology. **Tier three** words are rare words. They often only show up in one context, **but often this will be of an academic nature**. When this type of word shows up in the content piece the students will be reading, tell and show the students the meaning.

Consistent with constructivist learning theory, ELL's need to come to an understanding of the meanings of words themselves. This is best done by giving students multiple interactions with the words in multiple contexts, both in familiar contexts as well as in new contexts. Also, encourage ELL's to translate new English vocabulary into their own language, and to create non-linguistic representations for the words.



Newsletter Submissions

Send newsletter submissions to
powell_r@surreyschools.ca.

Articles can be of any length, but please 'get to the point' as they say, and don't be surprised if the editor has changed things somewhat once your article gets published. Please send along some art or graphic to accompany your article separately, with a credit to the artist/photographer where necessary. You must get permission to publish pictures of children. Opinion pieces will be labeled as such.

Send all articles in plain text; I'll turn it into a format that fits.

Three newsletters are published every year:
November/December, April, and June.

Next theme: Authentic Assessment of ELL's

Not all submissions will be published.

Call for Conference Presentations

The 23rd Annual ESL PSA Conference, *Elevating their Voices: Connecting Communities*, is being planned. We welcome your applications to present at our conference in October. We welcome submissions from both teachers and the wide range of support personnel who work with ELL students and their families.

While it is now past the application deadline, we know how busy teachers are at this time of year and are always willing to consider including yet another outstanding presentation. Go to the PSA site <http://ellpsa.ca/> and click on the 'Conferences' tab.

Looking for some Local Support? Form an LSA of the ESL PSA

No it's not death by acronym. A LSA (local specialist association) is a local affiliate of the PSA (Provincial Specialist Association). Groups of teachers from any district can get together and form a local specialist association. Administrative and financial support are available. The details are in the April 2012 Newsletter and the PSA Guidebook which is accessible online at: <http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/PSAs/Guidebook/PSAGuideBook.pdf>

It's an easy process, and will set up a rewarding professional experience for you and your colleagues.