

# THE ESL LINK

## Loving the Stranger

If you are like me, you'd like to know that what we are doing has good biblical foundations. It turns out that our ESL classes are designed to serve groups God regularly expresses special concern and care for: sojourners or foreigners, immigrants, resident aliens. This "special category" occurs in both the Old Testament and the New. For instance, in the Old Testament, positively, the sojourner also is to enjoy the Sabbath rest (Exodus 20:10); and negatively, there is to be no mistreatment of the immigrant:

Exodus 22:21-22

*"You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.*

*You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child.*

The New Testament also commands special care for the 'strangers', indicating an unusual possibility: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Hebrews 13:2). Our ESL ministries join our Lord in His concern for the "strangers".

Did you notice the reason for this special concern given in Exodus 22? It is worth noting: "for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt." Evidently, God's people can and should be more personally sympathetic with immigrants because of our own experience. Though that was

*Continued on page 3*

## Immigration Policy Changes – An Opportunity for the Church?

Canadian immigration policy has taken a dramatic turn in the last two years. Newcomers on the permanent resident track are slowly decreasing while temporary work permits are rapidly increasing. Family sponsorship of parents is giving way to 'Super Visas' where the older generation is able to have multiple, two-year visits over a period of ten years, but no path to permanent residence. Some paths to permanent residence such as the Canadian Experience Class also have new language requirements. None of these newcomers are eligible for any government settlement services. Finally, language requirements for citizenship became far more stringent as of last November, with candidates needing to pass tests or graduate from the federal language program at Canadian Language Benchmark level 4.

All of these changes signal a government policy that reduces the costs of settlement, particularly that of language training. Nevertheless, there are human costs, and some who began the

immigration process under less stringent language requirements have voiced concerns. In the Chinese publication, *Sing Tao Daily*, some immigrants expressed that reaching level 4 was unrealistic considering factors such as age, educational background or the necessity of raising children. One who had applied under the investor's category questioned the need for such a level of English expertise. Why make the language requirement of a business owner the same as that for a skilled worker?

Of the four language skills, listening was singled out for special concern. One woman reported that some of her friends had achieved level 4 but still hadn't managed to pass a citizenship interview with a judge. It is significant that those interviewed had East Asian first languages, which are vastly different from English, and that they had come from an educational system emphasizing written exams rather than oral skills.

As churches serving our newcomer neighbours, we must bear in mind how these policy changes affect those around us and then shape our ministries accordingly. What new needs can we meet while seizing fresh opportunities to share the gospel?

In light of the changes some of us at SOCEM met with Darcy MacCallum, a leader in settlement work, to consider opportunities for churches, particularly those involved in ESL ministry. Here are a few of the ideas that came out of that brainstorm:

### 1. New citizenship requirements

In order to obtain Canadian citizenship, candidates must prove their language proficiency in listening and speaking by either passing a recognized test such as the IELTS, or by taking full-time LINC classes and finishing level 4. Newcomers with non-European first languages who

*Continued on page 2*

## CITIZENSHIP MINISTRY?

Competing for the number one concern of recent immigrants to Canada is the citizenship test, which they need to pass after having resided in Canada for at least three out of their last four years. The test requirement applies to all applicants between 18 and 54. For many newcomers who want to pledge their allegiance, the citizenship test is too high a

hurdle to jump. In some extreme cases, newcomers would rather wait until they turn 54 in order to avoid this unbearable step of their life in Canada.

We now have the opportunity to extend our love to our newcomer friends by offering citizenship classes or, better still, blended citizenship preparation/ESL classes. The content of the citizenship classes in-

cludes many references to Canada's Christian heritage –good topics for conversation practice.

At present, the citizenship test is made up of 20 multiple choice questions based on the content from *Discover Canada*, a prescribed text from Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Prior to the 30-minute test,

*Continued on page 2*

## IMMIGRATION POLICY CHANGES *cont'd*

have not been exposed to English before arrival may take many years to achieve that level, if indeed they can reach it at all with the demands of supporting a family. In addition, most LINC classes do not have the resources for the intensive listening and speaking practice necessary to reach the required level.

Church programs can provide the small group practice needed to improve listening and speaking. If there are volunteers familiar with the IELTS exam, they could set up training for the test. The citizenship test itself could be the basis of a special class, and the government does provide study materials: 1. ([here](#)) ; 2. a Catholic School Board project funded by the government ([here](#))

### 2. Temporary workers and 'Super Visa' holders

Federal settlement services, including language training, are unavailable for those entering on temporary work permits or 'Super Visas'. This raises de-

mand for other free language programs. If a temporary worker brings a spouse, they may become isolated without the means of work or study to form relationships. Older parents may come on a Super Visa but could still become isolated, especially if they are brought over to watch children while parents work. ESL ministries meet both language and social needs. The English class can be the link connecting students to other groups in our churches. For example, Super Visa grandparents providing daycare for grandchildren may benefit from a Seniors group or even from a Moms & Tots program. An isolated spouse unable to work may make friends within other groups. Involving the whole church and not just those in ESL ministry maximizes exposure to Christians and Christ.

### 3. Canadian Experience Class

Those applying for permanent status under this category will likely be holders of a temporary visa and must have had work

experience in Canada. They tend to be professionals, but they could also be students at a Canadian university. A primary need of theirs may be learning the work culture they wish to enter, including the process of securing employment in the first place. We can tailor ESL classes especially for these purposes. Resources are available. Connecting these neighbours to a Christian who is already in their profession can be the first step in a mentoring relationship and an introduction into the Christian community.

The opportunities for connecting with newcomers and sharing the gospel have never been greater. As the government steps away from settlement work, the family of Christ has other opportunities to step in. **What is your church doing? Might you share with us so that we might learn and grow together?**

- Marion Chang

### Citizenship *cont'd*

citizenship applicants are asked, orally, a few general questions about themselves. The written part of the test presents a particular challenge to those who lack the English proficiency to study the text on their own or are not used to writing multiple choice tests. Citizenship applicants are interested in easily accessible help to enable them to jump this hurdle as quickly and easily as possible!

Some nuts and bolts of a successful citizenship class are:

1. The course requires at least 30 hours to cover the content thoroughly, though a 45- to 60-hour course would be less stressful. Four to six months

(one semester, at least) is likely best. The teacher has a wonderful opportunity to walk with the students as a friend throughout this time.

2. Adhere closely to the prescribed text (*Discover Canada*) when preparing your class materials. For every topic, introduce the vocabulary, present the content, and practise the multiple choice questions.

3. Use mock oral interviews and have successful test takers share their test-day experience. Let them know that you care about their fear.

In line with the ethos of all our ESL classes, the class is an opportunity for relationships and an appreciation of God's blessings in this country. Ex-

amples of especially good conversation topics include:

- The name "Dominion of Canada" as inspired by Psalm 72 referring to "dominion from sea to sea" - you may use the Bible to read Psalm 72;

- The "Underground Railroad", a Christian anti-slavery network that helped slaves to escape from the States - a good occasion to ask students about church or Christian organization efforts to benefit the society.

Remember: "...the teacher always is... the usherer in of the true kingdom of God." (John Dewey)  
- Teresa Chan

## GEORGETOWN MINI-WORKSHOP

On Saturday, April 20 we were invited by [Maple Avenue Baptist Church](#) in Georgetown to conduct a mini-workshop for a team going to Brazil for short-term work. Their main focus is construction but they will offer various other off-hour programs including teaching some English to the local Brazilians, who are mainly fishermen and beginners in English. We call it EFL, English as a Foreign Language, since English is being taught in a non-English-speaking context. That is a challenge already, and they will likely have only four or five sessions in the evenings. What can be done?

Tom McCormick led the session with participation by Simon and Jennifer Yung from Toronto and Carol Blake from Kitchener-Waterloo. Tom blended approaches for preparing missionaries to learn a language as they go elsewhere with other ESL methods. We decided the goals should include: (i) equipping the Brazilians with skills that would allow them to continue to learn English without the team, whenever they might find a friendly English speaker, (ii) using basic social exchanges (like greetings), with a focus on learning more, (iii) nouns (using a simple technique called "look and listen"), and (iv) more verbs (using another fun and simple technique called "TPR" (Total Physical Response)). The short-term team's focus, then, is on encouraging this on-going learning by modeling and imparting these 'techniques' along with some of the social skills to approach English speakers and ask for their help.

Many churches are sending short-term teams. Might your church want to add an EFL component? If so, do contact us if we might be of service. Please also share your experience and lessons with the rest of us.

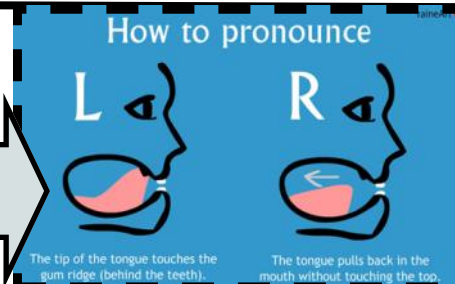
-Tom McCormick

### Notice in a farmer's field:

THE FARMER ALLOWS WALKERS TO CROSS THE FIELD FOR FREE, BUT THE BULL CHARGES.

Notice in health food store window:  
CLOSED DUE TO ILLNESS

Click on the picture for more info



The tip of the tongue touches the gum ridge (behind the teeth)

The tongue pulls back in the mouth without touching the top.

*Continued from page 1 Loving the stranger*

uniquely true for those Israelites who had in fact been slaves in Egypt, this is also true for you and me. The Apostle Peter is especially clear on this point. His first letter begins: "To those who reside as aliens [exiles, sojourners, pilgrims, depending on the translation] (1 Peter 1:1). Then, he refers to our current lives as "your time as foreigners here on earth" (NLT). Then again, Peter addresses us all as 'sojourners and exiles' (ESV), 'strangers and pilgrims' (KJV), or 'aliens and strangers' (NAS) saying, "Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11; NKJV).

Could it be that the fuller involvement of God's people with our ESL ministries, as well as other dimensions of care for the immigrants amongst us, has to do with each of us realizing and accepting more deeply our own status as 'resident aliens' or 'pilgrims'? Certainly, we are not to be conformed to this world (Romans 12), we are to set our hearts and minds on things above (Colossians 3), and "our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20). Do you long for and wait for "the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus" (Titus 2:13)? This is the "blessed hope", is it not?

May we all "rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, [and] constant in prayer" (Romans 12:12)...and may you continue to be faithful and zealously engaged in all He has entrusted to you. **Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus!**

-Tom McCormick

### Did you know?

"Dreamt" is the only English word that ends in the letters "mt."

The longest one syllable word in the English language is "screeched."

### In an office:

**AFTER TEA BREAK STAFF SHOULD EMPTY THE TEAPOT AND STAND UPSIDE DOWN ON THE DRAINING BOARD**

## Reaching International Students for Christ

Tim and Colleen Stevens have been working with International Student Ministries Canada (ISMC) since 2007. The focus of their ministry is to train future leaders, and encourage international students in their spiritual growth and proficiency in English. Since these students are in Canada for only a short time, a main strategy is to equip them to take the gospel back to their home countries.

At present, Tim and Colleen work with a number of churches in Toronto in their outreach to international students: Immanuel Baptist Church, Calvary Church (near Pape), Spring Garden Church and Willowdale Baptist Church. They aim to empower the church congregations to befriend international students by providing resources, encouragement, training and modelling. Some of the programs are Sunday Sermon Review with lunch, dinner or snacks followed by ESL and Bible discussion, and Friendship Partners where a family in the congregation is matched with an international student while he/she is in Canada. They hope that the churches can continue in these efforts even without their presence.

An example of success is with Immanuel Baptist Church in North York. They run an international student program in tandem with their Alpha program. All the participants share a delicious dinner together, then students may choose to attend either the ESL and Bible study that night, or the Alpha program. As the students improve their English and grow more in faith, they often move from ESL to Alpha! Tim has also been able to hand over part of the leadership there.

As Tim says, "We don't have to go to other countries to be Christ to Afghans, Azeri and Chinese. They are coming to us in Toronto now. We must take every opportunity to explain the gospel right where we are." Please pray for more volunteer leadership on Mondays and Tuesdays. Pray that each student would meet God in Canada and take the gospel back to his/her home country. Thank you!



Tim and Colleen Stevens first met in the chapel at Tyndale University College and Seminary in 1995. Tim was finishing a BRS and Colleen was beginning a CTESL. They married in 2002 and began ministry to the nations. They have two sons, Christopher and Andrew, aged nine and six.

## Waterloo Region ESL Ministries Connection

On Saturday, January 26th, 2013, 24 people representing nine different ESL ministries around Waterloo Region gathered at Hazelglen Alliance Church in Kitchener for a great morning of interaction and learning. Until then, we had usually gathered only once a year in November to hear and learn from those who had attended the SOCEM fall gathering in Toronto.

Our new venture, a sort of mini-conference, was the result of the vision of seven leaders to bring a small version of the SOCEM Gathering to our own area. It was advertised as "only a 1/2 day, inexpensive, excellent speakers, valuable & useful topics, great networking opportunity" and it lived up to all expectations. Everyone in attendance agreed that they would want to do it again and many volunteered to help plan the next session.

We had two wonderful speakers: Tom McCormick led a challenging and much appreciated session entitled 'Spiritual Foundations for ESL Ministry', which generated a lot of discussion and interaction. Then Marion Chang spoke on 'Hints, Tips, and Tricks for Good ESL Conversation Groups'. She involved the attendees in small group discussions of the various practical suggestions she presented and many were encouraged to consider new ideas and approaches for their classes.

There were also both formal and informal opportunities to get to know each other and share about our programs, and ideas for material and resources.

It was a morning well-spent! It was not difficult to organize, and we will likely do it again. If any other localities are interested in trying something similar and would like more information, please contact me, Carol Blake at carolb410@gmail.com. Many thanks to Tom and Marion and the SOCEM board for their assistance, encouragement, and participation!

- Carol Blake

