

# THE ESL LINK

## Mental Health and New Immigrants

Newcomers' mental health has received a lot of attention in our society of late. For example, there were two public conferences on such matters very recently: see [here](#) and [here](#). The government has released a [report](#) on newcomers' health in 2011, including mental health. In it we see that newcomers have come with good mental health to Canada but it declines over time as they begin the resettlement process and face discrimination, unemployment and other stress factors.

As ESL practitioners, we need to be knowledgeable about these issues. We need to be ready to respond to our students' needs as they share their life challenges. A practical and comprehensive guide can be downloaded [here](#). A list of service organizations can be found [here](#). There is also [a rich website](#) with many resources. Some presentation slides of a recent webinar on mental health and well-being of immigrants can be found [here](#) (scroll down to February 21, 2014 entry), and we also have the [slides](#) of a keynote address in one of our SOCEM Gatherings on immigrant mental health.

Finally, the [Opening Doors project](#) offers free workshops on topics in mental health, discrimination and migration. A brochure consisting of descriptions of their workshops is [here](#). They travel around Ontario delivering these workshops to different groups, including ESL groups. Consider contacting them!

## Mid-Winter Blues?

We are just past half way from Christmas to Easter; daylight savings time begins soon; spring is close enough to anticipate now after a brutal winter... and we are still in the midst of our ESL programs. Some of us may feel like the midpoint of a marathon; others may have hit their stride and gotten a second wind. Regardless, there is always joy set before us; and there is always something to endure as well. Maybe there is sickness; maybe financial difficulties; no doubt relational challenges of one sort or another. So we send this newsletter out now to encourage you, and to encourage you to pray for all the rest of us in similar circumstances. And yet... we have hope; we know we can "count it all joy" (James 1:2); we know that "suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Romans 5:3-5); we know He will never leave us or forsake us but will bring to

completion the good work he has begun in us and through us (Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 28:20; Philippians 1:6; etc.).

And yet...

...as we consider our own life-challenges, perhaps we are also recognizing more of the extra challenges of those amongst us who come from other nations, those without the English language skills needed for daily life, and those who so often do not know the personal support and comfort of our Heavenly Father -- and perhaps are also without hope in this world (Ephesians 2:12). May our knowledge of "the Father of mercies and God of all comfort" (2 Corinthians 1:3) add to the comfort and encouragement we offer to others.

In this issue of "The ESL Link"



we offer encouragement from various perspectives, for different circumstances. It includes articles about caring for students who are seniors, those with language impairments, those newly arrived and have settlement and job needs, and resources for immigrants with mental health issues. Another article encourages students to tell their life stories which helps with personal healing. May we be ready and resourceful in responding to the different needs presented before us.

- Tom McCormick

## Using Stories in ESL

As many of you know, using stories in an ESL class is engaging, powerful and facilitates discussions. Usually we give stories as reading materials. They can be fairy tales or folktales, and can be contemporary stories. The use of folktales from a variety of cultures conveys respect for each culture's wisdom, and if it is the same culture as some of the students', it will encourage

the students to participate. Folktales also talk about universal themes such as love, patience, courage and greed. These open up conversations as they relate to the students' lives. An example is the Korean folktale, [The Tiger's Whisker](#). (A good exercise is to ask students to write a 'chapter 2' for this story as a creative writing assignment, that is, what do you think happened next.) Large

collections of folktales can be found online, for example, [here](#) and [here](#). Contemporary stories, on the other hand, can be Chicken Soup stories, stories found on the web such as [the Starfish story](#), or the teacher's own life experiences. Apart from giving stories for students to read, teachers can also tell a story. It enhances listening skills, and can be used with a variety of activities such as

## Using Stories in ESL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

dictation or process writing (each student writes down keywords from the story, compares with a partner and tries to reconstruct and write a version together). Other benefits of storytelling and tips for performance techniques can be found [here](#), and more stories [here](#).

A popular and effective pre-reading/pre-telling activity is predicting the story-line based on the title, keywords, or pictures. We can also stop in the middle of the story and discuss possible endings. This can stimulate creativity, participation, and the integration of listening-speaking with reading-writing skills. Some tried-and-tested post-reading/post-listening activities include summarizing and re-telling the story or writing a sequel to the story. We can also use two different versions of the same story and ask students to compare and contrast the details. Student A can first talk about the main points of his/her story with a small group (or best, with another partner) who has the same version. Then he or she can re-tell the story to student B who has a different version, discussing together the similarities and differences

along the way. "The Stonecutter" is an example of such a story. You can find two different versions [here](#) and [here](#). Many more interactive activities for storytelling have been suggested. Take a look [here](#) and [here](#).

Finally, consider "digital storytelling". It is a multimedia project guiding students in telling their personal stories. It combines images, voice-over narration, music and sound effects to produce a 3- to 5-minute video using free software such as [Movie Maker](#) or [Audacity](#). It allows a student to practise writing skills and use 21<sup>st</sup> century computer skills. It greatly encourages creativity and is often therapeutic for a student. It is also engaging and promotes teamwork. Many resources can be found on the internet about this topic; for example, see [this site](#). Some chapters of an excellent "cookbook" on the how-to of digital storytelling can be found [here](#), while examples of digital stories can be found [here](#).

I hope that you will explore and try out some of the above!

Jennifer Yung

## WEEKLY HUMOR

- \* Two florists got married. It was an arranged marriage.
- \* When he proposed to her, she found it very engaging.
- \* It was an emotional wedding. Even the cake was in tiers.
- \* My wife tells me I'm a skeptic—but I don't believe a word she says.
- \* An invisible man marries an invisible woman. The kids are nothing to look at either.
- \* Two astronauts who were dating put an end to it because they both needed their space.
- \* He put lipstick on his forehead to help him make up his mind.
- \* He had a soft drink while catching up on the ironing. It was soda pressing.

## Welcome Centres - One-stop Help for Newcomers

Are you – or do you know – a Newcomer to Canada?

Moving to a new country, whether as an individual or as a family, brings many challenges. Some newcomers are fortunate to have pre-arranged housing and employment prior to arriving in their new Canadian home.

However, a large majority of immigrants are faced with the overwhelming reality of having to start all over. They no longer have the familiarity of 'home' and may miss potential settlement opportunities due to a lack of language skills and/or their foreign credentials.

In York and Durham Regions, newcomers and immigrants now have starting points called Welcome Centres to support their integration experience. Highly qualified staff are in place at each Welcome Centre to offer all the services needed to help an immigrant settle in Canada – all in one place! Including the two Centres in Markham, there are seven Centres located on major transit routes in Vaughan, Newmarket, Richmond Hill, Ajax and Pickering.

Immigrants settling in some rural areas can also access services through the Welcome Centres' Mobile Unit.

At each Welcome Centre, clients are connected to a Case Manager when they come through the door. The Case Manager is someone who becomes a familiar, "trusted" face providing information and guidance. These Case Managers are assigned to assist the immigrant through all phases of the integration process, linking them to the resources and supports within the Centre and the community.

Each Welcome Centre offers the following:

Settlement and Integration Services – assistance to help newcomers settle in Canada including Housing, Health Care, Social Insurance Numbers, Child Care, Community Services,

Government Resources and Basic Needs and more; Services for Women, Youth and Seniors; Interpretation Services;

English Language Classes – with computer-aided instruction (child minding and transportation allowance for eligible candidates);

Employment Support Services – designed to assist in developing the skills needed to find work including resume assistance, Job Search Workshops Program, Return to Work Action Plans, free internet and fax services, job search resources, accreditation and qualifications assistance.

Self -Employment Pathways for Newcomers – explore the idea of starting a business in Cana-

## We'd love to hear your feedback

We'd love to hear what you think of our newsletter and our website. Please send your comments to [eslministries@gmail.com](mailto:eslministries@gmail.com). Your suggestions will help us to continue improving. Thank you!

## Welcome Centres - One-stop Help for Newcomers

CONTINUED FROM PAGE TWO

da, find out if self-employment is the right path for you and enjoy workshops on business development. One on one business coaching is provided.

Beyond the existing programs, the Welcome Centres provide so much more. Not only has each facility become a place where they can access services, Centre clients have the opportunity to meet individuals and families who have come through a similar experience. Friendships are formed and a sense of community is established.

With their easy-to-find locations and multiple services under one roof, the Welcome Centres provide a place where immigrants can find a new start and welcome all that Canada has to offer. The services provided at the Welcome Centres are free of charge and made possible through funding by Citizenship

and Immigration Canada.

In Markham, there are two Welcome Centres located at:

8400 Woodbine Avenue, Suite 102-103  
(Hwy 7 and Woodbine Avenue)

7220 Kennedy Road, Kennedy Fields Plaza  
(Kennedy south of 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue)

We would be pleased to arrange a tour for individuals or groups. Please call Janice @ 289-846-3630. For more information about the services, locations and activities at the Welcome Centres, call 289-846-3645 or visit the Centres' website at [www.welcomecentre.ca](http://www.welcomecentre.ca).

-Janice Babcock

Note: Immigrant service 'hubs' in other areas in Southern Ontario are listed on [this site](#).

## From History?

Personal hygiene left much room for improvement. As a result, many women and men had developed acne scars by adulthood. The women would spread bee's wax over their facial skin to smooth out their complexions. When they were speaking to each other, if a woman began to stare at another woman's face she was told, 'mind your own bee's wax.' Should the woman smile, the wax would crack, hence the term 'crack a smile'. In addition, when they sat too close to the fire, the wax would melt . . . Therefore, the expression 'losing face.'

## Teaching Seniors

I have been volunteering to teach English to a group of Korean seniors at a local church. Here are a few things I learned in the process.

1) The Basics. My students are seniors but I found the lesson preparation and the foundations about running a successful class the same. Don't assume that you can skip preparation because your students are seniors.

2) Respect. We live in a culture where the value of the elderly is decreasing at an alarming rate. Truth be told, many believe, perhaps subconsciously, that seniors are hindrances more than anything else. What if the hour or so you spend in class with seniors is the only hour someone has looked at them in the eye as individuals with a past and with dreams and hopes for the future?

3) Repetition is welcomed, not frowned upon. Repeat often. Slow down. Enjoy the moment. Pace yourself. Give them time to process. Plan for silent moments...it is ok.

4) Draw from experience. The life experiences represented in your class is a wealth of resource. Get to know your students' lives and invite them to share their experiences. Use that when you plan your class.

5) Literacy. If you have a very low level

class of seniors, do not let this discourage you. Many may not have had the 'luxury' of going to school, and even if they did, they were pulled out from school after they learned to read and



write (for the women in particular). Take time to do your assessment and don't be afraid to start with the very 'basic', like the alphabet song.

6) Create a safe learning environment. Share your life with them. As situations warrant them, invite them to give you advice. Share, laugh and enjoy the time together.

7) Cultural understanding. This can be a challenge, but the beauty of it is, as a teacher, you are then given the opportunity to be a learner. Discuss the simi-

larities and differences in the cultures represented in your class and learn to appreciate and respect each other. Keep learning.

8) Dealing with shame and frustrations. It is hard for seniors to take on the role of a student. As your senior students revisit this role, they might feel a slew of emotions they are not accustomed to. Remember the last time you were a student as an adult and draw from the feelings from that experience. A couple of years ago I took a class and realized I had forgotten what it felt like to be a student - it was hard to ignore the overwhelming, humbling stress I felt as I was told to participate in class.

9) Goal setting. The students look forward to being able to do something specific with the language they are learning. Be pragmatic and remember to keep things simple.

10) Last but not least, love. Simply LOVE. Christ loves and therefore we love.

Sandy Ho

(Editor's Note: To find out more about teaching seniors, click [here](#) and [here](#).)

## Diagnosing Language Impairments

The other day in our ELD (English Language Development) class, a few of my high school students and I were having a discussion on the Indian folktale about the six blind men each trying to come to a conclusion of what an elephant might look like by only examining one physical attribute of an elephant. How ironically befitting the story was, considering the task I was given at the moment - developing a language assessment tool.

For decades, the field of language impairment or specific language impairment (SLI) had been actively researched, yet it is still an unknown territory to the majority of the language teachers. Even with the numerous empirical findings and researches suggesting SLI is a developmental challenge which only affects language and no other areas of cognitive functioning, a large number of these students are either being segregated into special education classes due to over-diagnosis, or being placed in regular ESL classes due to under-diagnosis. Considering how these two fields are intertwined yet far apart in application, misdiagnoses in a classroom setting seems almost inevitable.

Let's take Broca's Aphasia, a widely known language impairment, as an example. Broca's Aphasia is a language impairment that any undergraduate student studying psychology would know about. However, I assume only a handful of language teachers would have even heard of the term. Broca's Aphasia mainly affects the ability to speak. The common symptom of the impairment would

be leaving out prepositions and conjunctions or omitting words in a sentence. To an unsuspecting language teacher, this may well seem like a common ESL issue. However, to a trained neurologist, symptoms of Broca's Aphasia can be distinguished from lack of second language ability. If immigrant children are from a low socio-economic background, a visit to a speech specialist seems highly unlikely and their misdiagnosed language impairment will probably remain unnoticed. Since early intervention is crucial in minimizing the negative impact of language impairments, it becomes all the more detrimental when language teachers do not make timely and accurate diagnoses.

The solution to reducing misdiagnoses is developing language assessment tools the teachers can easily access in class. Working together with neurolinguistics specialists, an accurate and practical language assessment tool may be developed and made accessible for teachers in their classrooms. If only the six blind men had a fuller understanding of an elephant, wouldn't they have figured out much sooner what they were touching were just parts of the whole elephant?

Editor's note: Contact the author at [juhc0612@gmail.com](mailto:juhc0612@gmail.com) if you want to know more about this field or want to look at a sample assessment tool. If you are from Southern Ontario and could help with language impairment issues, we would like to hear from you.

New on [eslministries.org](http://eslministries.org)



Click on  
the link

### SCIENCE SHORTS

Low to intermediate level ESL lessons adapted with permission from the work of Dr. David Humphreys, emeritus professor of Chemistry at McMaster University. On his [Science Shorts](http://ScienceShorts.com) website Dr. Humphreys states his purpose as creatively demonstrating the credibility of the Christian faith through science and the laws of the universe. The lessons are designed for students who have little or no background in Christian thought or teaching. Our hope is that these lessons will be used to open their minds to the truth of God and His care and love for them.

I changed my iPod name to Titanic. It's syncing now.

When chemists die, they barium.

A soldier who survived mustard gas and pepper spray is now a seasoned veteran.

I know a guy who's addicted to brake fluid. He says he can stop any time.

How does Moses make his tea? Hebrews it.

I stayed up all night to see where the sun went. Then it dawned on me.

They told me I had type A blood, but it was a Type-O.

I used to be a banker, but then I lost interest.

Two blood cells met and fell in love, but alas, it was all in vein.