

THE ESL LINK

Assembly-Line English

This may be an anomaly, but this is not a joke. In the book *Factory Girls: From Village to City in a Changing China* (2008) written by Leslie T. Chang, a former correspondent for the *Wall Street Journal* in Beijing, we hear of a "method" of teaching English in a private language school in Dongguan, China that is idiosyncratic and dubious. The students were taught by specially designed 'machines':

"The guiding principle of Mr. Wu's school [which had 300 students] was that treating people like machines was the key to mastering English. After learning the alphabet and the phonetic sounds of the language, a student sat at a machine while columns of English words rotated past. The student read aloud each word and wrote it down without knowing what it meant, week after week, until he attained the highest speed. He then proceeded to another machine that showed Chinese definitions of words; next he advanced to short sentences. At each stage, he wrote the word or sentence in English and said it aloud without comprehending its meaning. When a student achieved the top speed – able to write six hundred English sentences in one hour – he graduated to basic grammar. Only then did he learn the meaning of the words, phrases, and sentences he had been repeating for months." (p. 250)

As the author says, the essentials of language learning – speaking, comprehension, teachers – are missing. Students became like the machines that taught them. I won-

We are excited about our upcoming 11th Gathering of the Southern Ontario Cooperative for ESL Ministries. This year, our conference will be held on Saturday, October 25, from 8:30 - 2:30 at Bayview Glen Alliance Church located on the north east corner of Bayview and Steeles in Thornhill. As before, there will be three workshop sessions (with three choices for each session) offered on various topics related to teaching ESL. Some of the topics include pronunciation, coordinating an ESL program, teaching seniors,

Gathering XI is coming!



using technology in ESL, ESL as hospitality, and ESL and evangelism. See the full descriptions of the 9 workshops

[here](#). In addition, there will be an all-day workshop on Getting Started, especially designed for churches who wish to start an ESL program as a form of outreach, and for first-time ESL teachers. There will also be an inspiring keynote address: "Christ's Ministry by the Whole Church". Come and expand your skills in teaching ESL and network with others involved in ESL ministry!

For more information and registration, please go to our website [here](#).

Rest in Action?

what an endless future awaits us, moment by moment.

What, though, about now, and the steps we must take to be faithful day-by-day? I began my own meditations around the summer-to-fall transition around the command to "strive to enter [the promised] rest" (Hebrews 3-4). Though that seems paradoxical – strive, rest? – it makes sense to my heart. "Strive" is a strong word, translated variously as labour, strive, be diligent, press forward, make every effort. That is what we are called to these days, and it seems more so in the fall season. And yet, such effort is 'to enter rest', like the Sabbath rest of the creation days (Heb 4:4). And more! It is a greater rest, as much greater as Jesus is greater than Joshua. And there is the key! Jesus put it this way:

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

So, as you re-engage this Fall season with the many facets of your seasonal duties and privileges, may you too come afresh to Jesus, reaffirm His Lordship-yoke, abide in His loving presence, and find your ESL ministries fruitful "far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21).

-Tom McCormick

der how many other 'self-designed', unorthodox 'methods' of teaching English are popular

in China. I think this ought to propel us to prayer, at least; and for some, perhaps, to go

into China and provide better teaching. - Jennifer Tong

Smartphone Technology and ESL Instruction: Testimony from a Practitioner

I call myself a language encourager. In many ways, however, I've been "old-school" or "low-tech". In the 1990s, I worked in the public school classrooms training teacher-trainers in a Central Quechua variety called Conchucos, on the backside of the Peruvian Andes. We had to do things from scratch in the communities, and then quickly encourage them into the 21st Century!

When in 2006 I began teaching English in CLB (Canadian Language Benchmarks) classrooms in Calgary, the teachers' attitude towards Smartphones was that phones were more a of menace than a method: just one more interruption in the classroom. Eight years later many of us are pushing students to use them MORE. Why? Here's the short rationale: More practice in listening and speaking.

Students need that for employment and cultural adaptation. I have found that students can take a test and show written grammar acuity and even decent reading comprehension. But the functional tasks of job or doctor-patient interviews, or the retelling of events leading up to a car crash, leave the CLB 4 or even CLB 5 speakers in a panic.

This month I interviewed my 12 CAEL (Canadian Academic English Language) Level 5 students from the University of Calgary. When it comes to their Smartphones they confess they are addicts and cannot seem to lay them down. So why not capitalize on this? When asked to prepare for a Compare/Contrast or Cause/Effect speech they quickly search the Internet on their smartphone and easily access what they need

"on the fly." They then send the URL addresses to their email accounts for more detailed editing later.

In my CLB 4 class I introduced them to www.englishaccentcoach.com. This fine program only needs a touchscreen and earplugs so that each student can self-test (e.g. for consonant blends or short/long vowel recognition). Then later I can log on and see the students' progress and percentages.

CBC Radio has also provided an amazing service to immigrant learners, ingeniously utilizing their local radio news broadcast archives (<http://www.cbc.ca/calgary/learning-english/>). Students can hear a slower version of the broadcast over and over again on their smartphones. Then they fill in the pre-made CBC worksheets for listening comprehension. They can even check

the answers for themselves (saving their teacher a ton of review work!).

Let's be honest: What is the real goal in language training? Is it not to wean the learner from the teacher so that they are truly "self-directed learners"? It's only THEN that I can comfortably assess their language skills and dare to include "degrees of fluency" and confidence.

These are meagre examples from a practitioner's point of view. Smartphones are here to stay: Embrace them in the classroom.

- Randy Easthouse

Professional Language Coach, ESL classroom instructor with: University of Calgary/ Continuing Education
www.improveenglish.ca



Perhaps you've wondered about British and American English - how different they can be; but have you ever thought about American and Canadian English? Apparently there are also (humorous) discrepancies in language between us and our neighbour south of the border.

See [7 Words You'll Only Hear in Canada](#) for more.

A study in a culturally loaded word **ISSUES**: humorous, insightful.

Ever paused to think why your students want to learn English? What answers would they give if you ask them? What answers would *you* give? Here are some suggestions. Be sure to read them critically: you don't have to agree!

[Ten Reasons to Learn English](#)

Perhaps you are starting a new ESL program this fall. Perhaps your established program is re-starting. Either way, each teacher inevitably faces the situation of having to get to know a new group of students. What should be our aims in the very first class? What activities can we do to achieve those aims? This article suggests breaking the ice, doing an informal language analysis, and needs analysis, and suggests a lesson plan with activities:

[Approaching a First Class with a New Group](#)

Derwing (2003) found that 95% of L2 immigrant respondents indicated that they would choose to speak like native speakers (NSs) if they could.

What is a Complete & Balanced Language Learning Program?

Have you ever wondered? Here is an overview designed first of all for helping missionaries plan their language learning. The chart includes the twelve *basic* components of a well-rounded language program. By “basic” we mean a language learner really does need to include them all, one way or another, and an ESL program, tutor, or teacher, as many as possible.

These can be used as a checklist to *diagnose* and assess your program. If something is lacking, consider whether you might want to *redesign* your program. A church-based ESL program may not want or be able to achieve a “*Complete & Balanced Language Program*”. Still, though, your program would be served by a consideration of the following components. The “soft aptitudes”

involve the ethos and ‘pastoral’ component of your program; the “hard aptitudes” involve the details of actually learning a language. Notice that the *linguistics components* occur to many of us as the nuts and bolts of learning English. Actually, many students (especially those from Asian countries) come with a vast knowledge of the linguistics components, but are unable to use what they know to com-

municate and live happily and successfully in Canada. In those cases, the gap most likely has to do with the *pragmatic components*, and also the 4 soft components. Take note that the 8 hard aptitudes actually come in 4 “flavors”: listening, speaking, reading and writing (called “communicative competencies”), and so actually there are 8x4 (=32) + 4 (soft aptitudes) = 36 constituents in total.

A Summary of the 12 components (Inspiration and Adaptations from LinguaLinks 5.0 [1999]; with gratitude.)

The “soft aptitudes”	The “hard aptitudes”
<p>Attitude: Displaying childlikeness (in Christ), as a disciple: love, joy, peace; humility; humor.</p> <p>Accountability: Meeting on a regular basis with someone to review your activities, progress, goals and plan the next steps in the learning process.</p> <p>Energy: Stewarding your physical resources so that you have the stamina necessary for the task.</p> <p>Pacing: Taking periodic, planned breaks for rest and relaxation: daily, weekly, etc.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Resiliency</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>A Spirituality and Resilience Assessment Packet</u></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>There are specific activities and techniques available for implementing each of these 36 constituents of a “<i>Complete & Balanced Language Program</i>”. We will be giving some guidance in the on-going SOCEM newsletters and are available to assist you.</p> </div>	<p>The following 8 components are divided into two types: 4 linguistic components of communicative competence & 4 pragmatic components of communicative competence</p> <p>The linguistics components of communicative competence are required to internalize the structures and elements of the language; how the language is properly formed. The 4 linguistic components are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sounds & Scripts: hearing & producing the sounds; reading & writing the symbols Vocabulary: learning the words: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, etc. Grammar: learning how words fit together to make sentences. Discourse: learning how sentences fit together into larger units. <p>The pragmatic components of communicative competence are required to use the language in real life situations to achieve your purposes; how the forms are properly employed, i.e. ‘filled’ with life through use. The 4 pragmatic components are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Functions: accomplishing communication purposes in a language, like greetings. Appropriate varieties: interpreting and using the appropriate varieties, like ‘hi’, ‘hey’, ‘hello’, etc. Interaction skills: knowing and using the mostly unwritten rules for interaction, including body language, eye contact, and proximity to others. Cultural framework: understanding all aspects of a culture, particularly the social structure, the values and beliefs of the people, and worldview assumptions. <p><u>Pragmatics: An Overview; An Annotated Literature Review</u></p> <p>Both the linguistic components & pragmatic components come in 4 “flavors”: <i>listening, speaking, reading and writing</i> (called “communicative competencies”). Listening and reading are receptive abilities; speaking and writing are productive abilities. So, taken together there are 8 x 4 facets to the “hard aptitudes.”</p> <p>You will want to provide projects to assist learners in each of these 32 areas.</p>

We'd love to hear your feedback

What you think of our newsletter and our website? Please send your comments to eslministries@gmail.com. Your suggestions will help us to continue improving. Thank you!

Helpdesk: What's on your monitor now ma'am?

Customer: A teddy bear my boyfriend bought for me in the supermarket

Why is it that when someone tells you that there are one billion stars in the universe you believe him, but if he tells you there is wet paint you have to touch it to check?