

THE ESL LINK

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What's Your Name?

A Bible translator in Papua New Guinea who had translated a large portion of the Bible was having difficulty finding a word to use for “soul”. One day an eight-year-old boy from this tribal group went missing. After an intensive search for several days, the boy was found in the woods, unharmed. He was asked how he felt when he was lost, all alone in the woods. Was he scared? His response: “The only thing I was afraid of was that I would lose my name”. This was an “aha” moment for the translator; she had found the word for “soul”.

What's your name: Raja, Abubakar, Lihua, Mordecai, Salama, Batachikkan... Could it be that the newcomers to Canada we teach are experiencing this fear—losing their name? Suddenly thrust out of all that is familiar to them: language, relatives, climate, culture, material possessions, food, dress, etc., so much of their identity is at stake. We have the privilege of affirming them in their identity by honouring their culture and affirming the things they hold dear; certainly to learn their names and pronounce them correctly. They don't want to lose their name—they haven't.

There's more. Can we help them see the deepest dimension of their name, their identity—the Creator-created dimension? “You know all the delicate inner parts of my body, woven together in my mother's womb, every moment you know where I am, your hand will guide me and your strength will support me...” (Ps. 139) This is their name. Many don't truly know their name: they don't know the One who made them.

There's still more. Remember the Christmas message: “God sent His Son to redeem us, that we might receive full rights of sons (and daughters). And since you are a son, God has also made you an heir.” A son/daughter of God, with all of His riches ours. Let's aim to share this name with them. It's theirs if they receive, by faith, The Name.

But there's yet more. Overcomers will receive a white victory stone with a name engraved on it, a name that only the overcomer and Jesus know. (Rev. 2:17). Can you imagine a more treasured, personal keepsake? The ultimate identity!

ESL teachers, enjoy your role of learning the names of your students and observing them learn their new names. What on earth can be more satisfying!

—Elmer Warkentin

FROM THE EDITOR

Most of us are aware that in our ESL classes, we not only teach English, but we “teach” culture as well. We interact with our students culturally, learning from their culture, but also showing them North American culture. In the process, there are a lot of learning points and challenges as we struggle to relate cross-culturally. This issue of the ESL LINK has a concentration of articles relating to cultural and intercultural issues. Read on to discover what “languaculture” is, more about teaching in the midst of the ‘cultural clash’ between individualistic and shame-based cultures, as well as specific techniques of relating cross-culturally, and more. We hope it will sensitize you to the issues and help you think about them and apply some of the insights. There is also an article and some information related to recent refugee issues, which continue to be at the forefront of our attention.



Welcoming Strangers

A Forum On Church Ministry To Refugees

"I was a stranger and you welcomed me" - Matthew 25:35

THURS, FEB 25 | 6PM – 9PM | THE PEOPLES CHURCH

Welcoming Strangers: A Forum On Church Ministry to Refugees

Thursday, 25 February 2016, 6 to 9pm
The Peoples Church, Founders Hall
374 Sheppard Ave E, Toronto

Perhaps you, like many of us, are wondering about what we can do in the face of the current refugee crisis. We believe that we can do more together. In addition to participating in the Forum above, we are open to organizing a Saturday seminar on refugees. If you are interested in attending or in contributing, please contact us at eslministries@gmail.com. If you are interested in simply getting together to learn more about the crisis or to brainstorm, please also let us know. As well, if you know others with special interest and/or expertise, or other organizations that SOCEM might partner with in helping these refugees, please convey that to us also, if you would.

New Life Ministry: A Ministry to Newcomers

At New Life Ministry (www.newlifegta.org) of Middle East Baptist Church (www.mebc.org) in Mississauga, we understand the importance and difficulty of starting a new life and integrating into a new country. Thus, New Life emerges as a resource for Arab newcomers, aiming to embrace them and help them to have a new beginning in Canada through offering a range of services and resources. With the recent global crisis of refugees, and the generous Canadian response to welcome many of them, New Life Ministry became a spearhead in the effort to integrate those newcomers into their new home. Significantly, as many newcomers to Canada/GTA are Arabic-speaking refugees, New Life's role is important as its members are fluent in Arabic and its diverse dialects, as well as well-acquainted with Middle Eastern culture.

New Life focuses on working in partnership with the sponsoring government and private agencies, organizations, churches and other groups, as well as reaching the newcomers directly through personal and individual connections. It offers a range of resources and services. One of these services is translation, both oral and written. New Life members can accompany the newcomers to complete administrative tasks such as OHIP registration, opening bank accounts, communicating with social workers etc. In addition, English lessons can be offered one-on-one or in a class setting for both adults and children, either directly or through partnering with organizations such as SOCEM. Tutoring for all elementary and high school students in different subjects is also available upon request. More importantly, New Life aims to connect the newcomers with established families from their native region and help them build social and cultural relations. This helps with their integration. Also, New Life Ministry offers Bible studies and worship in Arabic when possible and requested. On another front, New Life can offer cultural and social orientations to sponsoring organizations, churches and groups to familiarize them with the newcomers' culture.

In short, New Life's goal is to invest in the lives of the newcomers and give them hope in the new and challenging life they are starting in Canada. If you want to connect with New Life, please contact Joy Nacheff at (905) 949-4447 or info@newlifegta.org

—Ashoor Yousif

Recommended Online Pronunciation Sites

The following are some sites that help with pronunciation recommended by experienced ESL teachers.

A phonetics website that gives animated visuals with sounds for all the sounds of English. Highly recommended.

<http://soundsofspeech.uiowa.edu/english/english.html>

All the sounds of the world recorded by the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), each symbol linked to its pronunciation:

[IPA Chart with Sound files](http://www.ipa-chart.com/); International Phonetic Association (IPA) [Home page](http://www.ipa-chart.com/) [Detailed IPA chart](http://www.ipa-chart.com/) Very clear video-audio demonstration of how each symbol of the International Phonetic Alphabet is pronounced.

Online dictionaries that give the pronunciation of words:

<http://dictionary.reference.com/>
<http://www.howjsay.com/>

Sites with minimal pairs (e.g. lake vs rake). The first three have sound files:

<http://www.shiporsheep.com/>

<http://www.manythings.org/pp/>
<https://www.englishclub.com/pronunciation/minimal-pairs.htm>
http://www.speech-language-therapy.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=134:mp2&catid=9:resources&Itemid=108

Other sites:

<http://rachelsenglish.com/>
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/grammar/pron/>

Learning the Language of a New Life: A Few Musings

Over the past two decades, half a dozen congregations from several denominations in mid-Etobicoke have led adult English language classes for newcomers in the Dixon and Islington Roads neighbourhood. As Christian teachers in the Dixon Women's ESL Classes, we welcome and care for 'the resident aliens' among us, a biblical mandate (Lev 19:34; Deut 10: 18-19; Psa 146:9; Matt 25) that honours God. We collaborate with mostly Muslim refugees, offering three levels, starting with how to hold a pencil. For Islamic religious reasons, many of our students would not attend classes which include men, and so our classes are for *women only*. Our main objective is to encourage the participants, enabling them to take more responsibility in their families and community. Students and teachers alike know that the English language is *the* necessary medium for a constructive and flourishing settlement in Toronto. We are committed to this as we work together.

This ministry has turned out to be as much a learning experience for our (Christian) teachers as for our students. We come from dramatically different cultures: Toronto's more western, liberal, individualistic culture (the experience of half of our teachers) and the traditional, community-focused South Asian, Eastern Mediterranean, and Middle Eastern cultures. Two global cultures, almost opposites, have been distinguished: guilt & righteousness centred and shame & honour centred. The first culture focuses much more on **what we do**, promoting individual self-expression and fulfillment by doing what we think is right, while the second focuses more on who we are **seen to be**, protecting the reputation of others and seeking the esteem of the whole community. These generalizations seem to hold for most of the students and teachers and have helped us understand and appreciate each other. They have also been instrumental in helping us establish a welcoming ethos. This is partly why

Dixon Ministry ESL Classes have become the alternative of choice for so many students in our neighbourhood.

We often sense these cultural differences when we use newspaper articles, short stories, advertisements, job postings, government circulars, etc., in our classes. For instance, rarely does an edition of the newspaper lack an article reporting atrocities by violent Islamists: Boko Haram (Nigeria), Al Shabab (Somalia), ISIS (Syria, Iraq), Taliban (Afghanistan). Such articles have the potential for stirring up toxic shame and might drive students away from our classes. Instead, as we read the articles we provide students ample opportunity to voice opinions, express empathy for the victims, critique what has gone wrong and propose a way forward. On occasion, there has been forceful denunciation of one's own countrymen and religion, and its defenders. While we work on the vocabulary and grammar, we also talk about the responsibility to delve into the problems in order to find solutions. In doing so we are taking advantage of the gifts of free expression, objectivity, and defense for dissenting opinion offered by Canadian culture.

About once a month I use a biblical source for our English lesson. I know that the proverb, story, prayer, parable, or commandment is deeply appreciated since no one allows it to be erased from the board before everything has been carefully copied into their books. However, discussions often take a turn that I never could have anticipated; again, it is because of the students' different cultural perspectives which often resonate well with the Bible's ancient Middle Eastern (shame/honour) culture. Such discussions help to restore hope from devastated worth and dignity. For instance, last month we read Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan. The honour Jesus paid to the despised Samaritan gave them hope. Not only did the dynamic of the rescue of the besieged innocent traveller and the

elevation of the despised Samaritan make a good story, but the surprise was that God noticed the neighbourliness of the Samaritan. "You mean Jesus makes possible a relationship with God that survives death and *judgment*, and we can have it now, forever?" They were stunned with the prospect that one could receive *eternal* life.

As we teach English we are trying to learn our students' culture, perspectives and their longings for a re-made, respected family and country. We believe Christ alone gives this—a new heart, a church family, and heaven. May we be faithful to our Lord to live for him, share the Gospel that he receives and reinstate lost humanity with his glory.

—Jeff McCarrell, an on-call teacher at 'Dixon Ministry' in Etobicoke

Note from author: I hope this article will stimulate thoughts and responses that could be followed up in a workshop on "Language and Culture" at SOCEM's conference next fall.



To find out more about guilt-based and shame-based cultures, see:

[Dimensions of National Cultures / Countries](#)

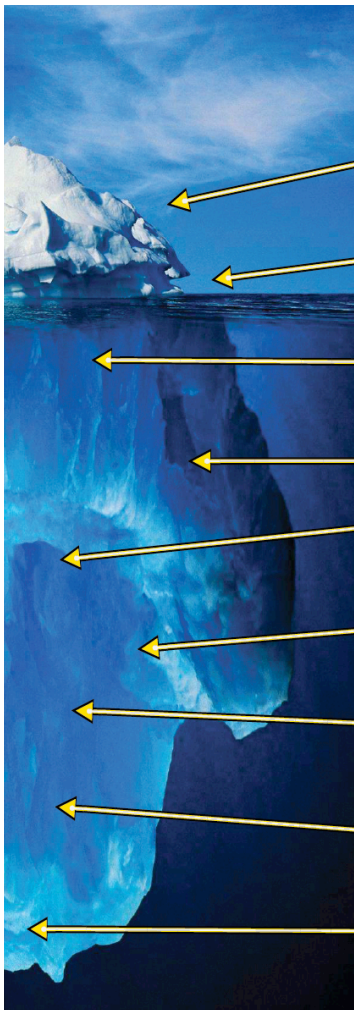
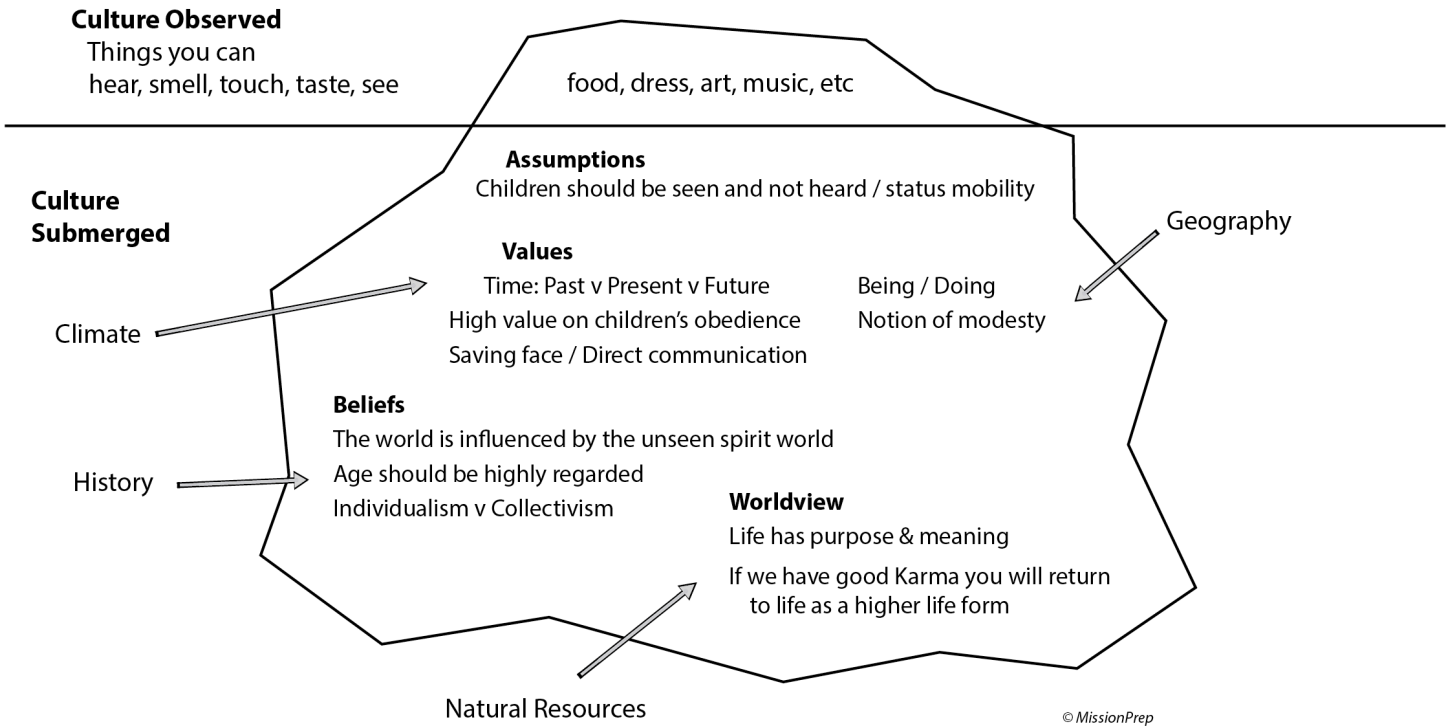
[Shame-Culture and Guilt-Culture](#)

[4 Keys to Evangelism in Honor-Shame Cultures](#)

[Typical Examples of cultural differences East Meets West](#)

Do you have beginning students who want to practise talking on the telephone? Here are a few common telephone situations and dialogues for role play: [Telephoning in English](#)

The Iceberg Model of Culture



The Iceberg Principle

Compliments of Greg Thomson

- ← Words that I have mastered in every respect
- ← Words that I use easily in my own speech
- ← Words I've already used once in my own speech
- ← Words I could recall if I needed them
- ← Words I easily understand out of context
- ← Words I almost understand out of context
- ← Words I only understand with the help of context
- ← Words I understand when I hear them again in the same place in the same story
- ← Words I recognize but don't understand

Culture is like an iceberg. While there are cultural differences we can see, hear, taste and smell, many 'invisible' assumptions are submerged. These are the values, beliefs and worldviews that make one culture different from another. Analogously, vocabulary acquisition is also like an iceberg. There are words that we 'master' and are sure we know. But there are also a great many words that exist in our 'subconscious' that we actually do have a relationship with though it may not seem like that is so, especially to the new learner. As we gain more and more experience with the new culture and are able to go beneath the 'water line' to the deeper cultural realities, we are also gaining more and more experience with the language and are able to retain and retrieve more and more words. The words 'beneath the surface', as it were, float toward the surface of greater mastery. The reverse is also true: as we get more experience with the language, we are able to participate more deeply in the culture. (See also "On LanguaCulture".)

On LanguaCulture

“Traditionally, people talk about ‘language’ as ‘influencing culture’ and ‘culture’ as ‘influencing language’ as though they are two ‘things’ that are separate from one another, even if they affect one another.” LanguaCulture, though, is a hybrid term combining ‘language’ and ‘culture’ to say that “there are no such separate ‘things’.” Language and Culture are much more intimately intertwined than that. There is no language which is not saturated with cultural knowledge, and there is no culture that has not been essentially formed in large part by the uses of language. For a fuller presentation of this perspective, and for the source of the quotes above, see the article by Greg

Thomson at the SOCEM site, “[Language Learning and Acquisition Resources](#)”. There are many practical implications that result from this different understanding, including the importance of integrating English language learning with the learning of Canadian culture(s), both in and outside the classroom. One very practical suggestion results from the recognition that languacultural learning benefits from attention to what are called “rich points”, the surprises that occur when one’s expectations do not match one’s experience. These are very teachable moments, rich with learning potential. So, we often ask those who come to our programs, “Is there anything that

happened this week that you didn’t understand or would like to know more about? Perhaps something someone said or did?” These are also moments when learners can feel the most vulnerable or bewildered or “lost”. These can also be very tender moments of relationship building and friendship. Some also use simple written materials to open up such “rich points” for discussion. The *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books as well as *Reader’s Digest* stories have proven useful. (When the mismatch between expectations and experience are extreme or touch on matters of personal identity, culture (or better, languaculture) shock occurs.)
—Tom McCormick

Learning by Observing

I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw. —Psalm 24:32

I was shocked the first time I saw someone from another culture slap their child across the face in order to discipline them. I judged quickly the inappropriateness of the action, classified this person as cruel, and someone I would never befriend.

When we encounter other cultures, we naturally judge what we see with our culturally tinted glasses which create blind spots. We teach missionaries entering new cultures to use the acronym ODIE to help minimize the potential mistakes that occur when we judge new experiences with our cultural bias.

O - Observe carefully by trying to describe what you see. Try not to answer the question “why” the action was done. Consider the situation from

as many angles as possible, using all 5 senses—with the Holy Spirit as the 6th sense as you seek to discern from God’s perspective.

D - Delay Interpretation by intentionally avoiding ‘jumping to conclusions’. Delay and take time to observe other similar situations. Try to apply the “rule of three”, which means come up with 3 alternative interpretations.

I - Interpret after you have observed the situation carefully. You must interpret, but hold your interpretation lightly by being open to changing your opinion.

E - Evaluate your interpretation. Evaluating can be done through a combination of asking someone who was there and saw what happened; asking someone from the culture who is trustworthy or a cultural outsider

who has had experience with what you observed.

Taking great care to confirm the accuracy of our interpretations helps to avoid cultural misunderstandings. I learned by asking others and found out that the “slap” I witnessed was a common practice in the culture but frowned upon by most. Waiting and asking others helped me to realize that it was not the crisis I had first thought. Additionally, it helped me move towards and befriend the person, for the sake of the gospel. This would not have been possible if I had immediately judged and confronted the situation and potentially built a barrier. Implementing the steps of ODIE can be a healthy way to put on new cultural glasses in a cross-cultural context!

—Ken Benson, Director, [MissionPREP](#)

Looking for opportunities to upgrade your ESL teaching skills? TESL Ontario has a series of webinars throughout the year. Click [here](#) to see their upcoming webinars and details on how to join. You will have to sign up for [tutela.ca](#) for free to be able to register. See in particular a webinar in February on “Understanding the Syrian Refugee Experience”.

Perhaps you have students who want to learn business English.

Here is a step-by-step lesson: [Pitch Your Product - Business English Lesson](#)

Avoid Cultural Clash: 6 Tips Every ESL Teacher Needs to Know

- 1. Many Idioms Come from Culture:** Calling an idea a home run doesn't make much sense unless you understand the national pastime of baseball.
- 2. Tread Carefully Among Taboo**
Subjects: Every culture has subjects that aren't acceptable to talk about in [mixed groups](#).
- 3. Make Comparisons When Possible:** Rather than going into exhaustive detail about a cultural point your students do not understand, try to compare it to something they do understand.
- 4. Keep Your Explanations As Simple As You Can:** When talking about [cultural topics](#), use language that is at the appropriate level for your students.
- 5. Welcome and Encourage Students to Ask Questions:** Sometimes we don't realize that something we say or do is related to our culture.
- 6. Don't Take It Personally:** Culture is such a deep part of who we as people are, and we often don't even realize that a certain belief or value is based in our culture.

For an elaboration of each point, see <http://busyteacher.org/23104-avoid-cultural-clash-6-tips-esl-teachers.html>. Refer to other articles on culture in this issue for other perspectives.

ESL Beyond the Classroom

Editor's Note: This is one of the well attended workshops in Gathering XII. A participant, who was also one of the presenters, gave a summary of the workshop from her perspective.

"ESL beyond the classroom" was not a new experience for many of the participants in this workshop. When asked to describe their activities in informal settings, several had inspiring stories to tell. One woman, a Salvation Army worker, told of extensive assistance she had given to new immigrants, going with them to immigration appointments, assisting in finding housing and jobs, as well as giving many other very practical helps.

Some told of leaving the classroom during a formal class, to walk about the building and talk about the facilities, or of going to a local store together to help the learner become more comfortable using English in an everyday setting. Others mentioned visiting Home Hardware, No Frills, Tim Horton's, the Public Library, Hospitals, visits in 'our homes' as well as special field trips like to a ranch.

As Tom McCormick, our lead presenter, explained, such activities are very beneficial to ESL students, because there is no doubt that language is best learned in context. Schoolroom activities tend to be rather "decontextualized" while outside activities are the settings where the learning is not only put into practice, but new learning also occurs. This is where "head knowledge" becomes integrated with social, emotional, gestural and other life skills and assimilated as a part of the students' essential competencies.

Another reason why the experience beyond the classroom is so beneficial is because supportive relationships are very conducive to learning. A friendly and supportive presence relieves anxiety and makes the learning process much easier, even fun. While the ESL learner may find new situations threatening, the presence of an experienced native speaker who is also a friend lends a sense of safety to challenging new encounters.

Cultures have many complex elements that may be better "caught than taught." The outside-the-classroom experience gives a learner a taste of using language within the context of the new culture, and yet with the safety net of an experienced guide.

There is no doubt that this workshop encouraged and inspired the participants to continue their efforts to befriend and assist new English speakers, yet with a renewed sense of purpose.

—Anne Sim

Perhaps you have students who are looking for jobs. Here are some short-term employment opportunities related to the 2016 census which might be of interest to your students. [Click here to find out more.](#)

Here is a [wiki page full of links to Settlement Sector on Language Training.](#)

"Peterborough's International English-as-a-Second-Language Centre, a volunteer-based, not-for-profit [organization], celebrated its first anniversary last week. [R]ather than sitting in a classroom and learning English in the traditional ways, students at the Centre learn in a more social environment—one where casual conversation and real life experiences play a major role." Its founder, Cynthia Hucks, is one of SOCEM's associates. Contact the Centre at eslcentreprtbo@gmail.com or (705) 876-8338, or check out its Facebook page [here](#). They are looking for help with basic ESL students like Syrian refugees. [Read more about the Centre here.](#)

Do you use videos in your lessons, or want to? [Click here](#) for an annotated list of possible sources of video clips or animations for ESL purposes. Tons of resources out there! [Ted Ed lessons](#) and [National Film Board of Canada](#) are just two examples.