

THE ESL LINK

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Amazing Love!

Easter is a special time of remembrances and encouragement. It's always a good time to remember the great love of God, the perfect obedience of Jesus unto death, and the glorious resurrection by the Holy Spirit. It's also always a good time to revisit why Our Great God and Saviour has done what He did... and why we do what we do as well. In case you might need a boost to press on or a means to encourage others to do so, consider: it is, of course, God's love for the world which motivated the sending and sacrifice of the Son (John 3:16, so well-known). Jesus did what He did because He too loved His own... to the end (John 13:1), making known the love of the Father for Himself and for us (John 17:23, 26).

And what amazing love! As Charles Wesley put it: "Amazing love! how can it be That Thou, my God, should die for me!" ([here](#); also [here](#)). Indeed, we love Him because He first loved us with such love, and so we also love others, reaching out through our ESL programs in various ways.

At our last SOCEM monthly prayer meeting, we sang together a lovely hymn, expressing another deep well of motivation and encouragement: "Oh! to

be like Thee, blessed Redeemer"
([here](#) and [here](#)). Consider:

*Oh! to be like Thee, full of compassion,
Loving, forgiving, tender and kind,
Helping the helpless,
cheering the fainting,
Seeking the wand'ring sinner to find.*

*Oh! to be like Thee, oh! to be like Thee,
Blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art;
Come in Thy sweetness,
come in Thy fullness;
Stamp Thine own image deep
on my heart.*

Perhaps you need the reminder, as I do from time to time, that ready or not, feeling like it or not, Jesus still says to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?" (Matthew 16:24-26).

Jesus indeed "humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8); and yet it was "for the joy set before Him [that He] endured the cross, (*con't p2*)

Save the Date

The annual SOCEM training conference, Gathering XIII, is coming up on October 22, 2016. Again we will have an inspiring keynote address and you can select 3 workshops from just over a dozen. There will be a "Getting Started" track for those starting out in ESL ministry. Make use of this opportunity to get equipped and to network with others!

If you would like to participate in a SOCEM "Getting Started in ESL Ministry" workshop this spring, please reply to us at eslministries@gmail.com.

We especially have in mind those who have recently begun working with refugees or plan to do so shortly.

(con'td from p1) despising the shame" (Hebrews 12:2). Jesus tirelessly intercedes for us still, having prayed that His joy might be made full in us (Hebrews 7:25; John 17:13). He also even commands us to ask in His name 'so that our joy may be made full' (John 16:24). Let us, then, 'pray and not lose heart' (Luke 18:1). He is with us as He promised (Matthew 28:20) and "in His presence there is fullness of joy" (Psalm 16:11).

Be encouraged:

"The joy of the LORD is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10); He is with us, "never to leave us or forsake us" (Hebrews 13:5). And so, let's "press on [to] lay hold of that for which also [we have been] laid hold of by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:12).

—Tom McCormick



David Burge
@iowahawkblog



Yes, English can be weird. It can be understood through tough thorough thought, though.

As news about the language needs of the refugees becomes more prominent, it is good to keep in mind what our communities are already doing in ESL for the refugees, and what the needs are. See the following articles for some perspectives:

[Veteran ESL teacher makes house calls for Syrian newcomers](#)

[Syrian refugee influx straining Halifax-area schools](#)

[30% of adult Syrian refugees in Nova Scotia can't read or write](#)



This Is Canada: Photo Of Crowd Welcoming Syrian Refugees Is Diversity In A Nutshell / huffingtonpost.ca

Our Ministry to Syrian Refugees

The influx of Syrian Refugees in general, and in particular the Armenian Orthodox people, have once again reminded us of and opened up century-old wounds of horrors of war, atrocities, displacement, persecution, deportation, mass killings and loss of property. As an Armenian Evangelical Brotherhood church we are privileged to be part of this outreach in helping to meet the basic needs of our people, alongside many great organizations and other churches.

We have mobilized our limited resources to meet several basic challenges, such as teaching English as a third or fourth language, providing household furniture, finding jobs, helping with adjusting to the Canadian culture, and above all meeting their spiritual needs.

The main catalyst of our holistic approach has been teaching the English language. So far we have discovered that through teaching the English language we are building bridges of friendship, which inevitably lead us into other areas of their lives as they slowly open up about their horror stories, hardships, difficulties, fears, frustrations, traumas of war, damaged properties, financial losses, and of course about their current struggle on how to survive in this country.

Unfortunately so far we have had two horrible cases. An old man committed suicide by jumping from the 8th floor of a building; and a case of domestic violence, which resulted in the imprisonment of the father. Parts of these tragedies basically have to do with post-traumatic disorders and other deep-seated spiritual issues.

My wife also met a distraught cashier at a Middle Eastern grocery store and invited her and her parents to our ESL classes. This young lady confided in her, a total stranger, and told her that her father was diagnosed with cancer. My wife then connected with her on Facebook in order to further help her in whatever way possible. Unfortunately, this newcomer family to Canada buried their father shortly thereafter. Three weeks after this tragic incident, this young girl contacted my wife and asked about ESL classes. At first, her mother attended with hesitancy and expressed that she was Orthodox. After a few weeks of attending, she became much settled and opened up to us, even asking my wife to visit her.

So far, as inexperienced volunteer teachers we are learning to obey the scriptures which command us to "LOVE THE STRANGERS IN THE LAND AS OURSELVES" (Lev. 19:34), and have compassion on them as Jesus did. Ultimately it is not WHAT we see but HOW we see them: we are to see them as people created in God's image and much loved by Him.

—Krikor Garabedian, pastor@houys.com

The Five Dimensions of Learning a Language: Principles and Applications

1. **Language is a human ability.** We all acquired our first language almost automatically. Understanding key elements of that first process will help in learning the next one. (*Childlike adults* are the best language learners.)

Applications for teaching: Language is best ‘pulled in’ rather than ‘pushed in’. Let learners drive their own learning in comprehension-based activities and facilitate a discovery process. Open multiple avenues of input by creating a multi-sensory learning environment. Do not require parroting or speaking prematurely; let the learner take in and play with the language.

2. **Language is a social activity,** more than an academic exercise. Many say that the main purpose of language is to communicate. This tells us where the emphasis should be placed when learning the new one. Relationships is a (perhaps *the*) key! (It should be said that, as in Genesis 1, language is also used to create a world, not strictly just to communicate. Artistic uses of language highlight this aspect of language.)

Applications for teaching: Act as in-class “social contact” and facilitate out-of-class social contacts. Set up interactive learning environments by ‘imitating’ real life social contexts like markets, hotel, airport, etc. Assign homework that requires talking to people.

3. **Language is a structured system.** It has rules. As we acquired our mother tongue, we all naturally assimilated the grammar rules. Adult learners can *both* assimilate

‘naturally’ *and* study intentionally.

Applications for teaching: This has to do with grammar and pronunciation and the meanings of words. Do NOT simply explain the rules and apply them. Let the learners have a lot of experience in the language first before and as explaining it to them. Also learn to analyze the language and diagnose incorrect usage. Be careful that such interventions are too disruptive of the social and relational activity of language use.

4. **Language is a personal production.** We each develop our own unique version of our native language. The same thing will happen with new languages. Being a bit ‘idiosyncratic’ is okay, though we also want to be sufficiently in-tune with the community to communicate and participate well.

Applications for teaching: Provide personal empowerment and a personal sense of learner ownership. Employ a variety of learning modes: for example, those involving the five senses, motor skills, various social situations, etc. For Asians, a visual mode with words written down on paper or on the board might be preferred by many. We try to respect the different learning styles of different learners and cultures while using a variety appropriate for all. Develop positive relationships with the learners, remembering that you hold their egos in your hand.

5. **Language is a cultural expression.** As you send and receive messages in your own language, the full meanings and assumptions are automatically there because you

have had years of experience with language use in your own culture. Culture for you is like the water a fish swims in. To achieve the same or similar fluency learners also need cultural experience integrated with language learning.

Applications for teaching: Remember that language is like an iceberg. Try to take the learners below the surface to feel the deeper meanings as used in the appropriate cultural situations. As far as possible, help the learners not to go back to their mother tongue meaning base, but to project themselves into the cultural milieu of the native speakers of the language they are learning.

—Jennifer Tong

Author’s Note: Most of this article draws from a longer article by Dwight Gradin entitled “Language and Language Learning Orientation for Learners and Teachers”. It can be accessed on the SOCEM website [here](#). The readers are encouraged to read the original article for fuller explanations of some of the points.

* Apart from communicating and creating a world, words also reveal. In fact, attended to with sufficient care, they reveal the Word and draw us into communion with God.

Want to add variety and depth to your conversation classes? Or think about multi-level conversation activities? [Significant Topics and Activity Templates for Great Conversation Classes](#) is excellent presentation material that gives a lot of good ideas. Self-explanatory details provided. Check it out (caution: big file).



Stouffville Multi-Church ESL Model – Part 1

As is typical of God's work, his Spirit is stirring his people's hearts to respond and he is bringing the resources together when a harvest is ripening. This was true of how the Stouffville multi-church ESL ministry started. People with teaching backgrounds, ESL training, and intercultural ministry experience began to connect with each other as we observed our rapidly changing demographic. An editorial in the local newspaper gave added impetus as it called on the residents of Stouffville to be welcoming to the newcomers. God used my own background in collaborative church-based training in the Greater Toronto Area and my participation in the Stouffville Christian Ministerial Association (SCMA) to ask, "Why not here? Why not us?" I presented the vision of a multi-church ESL program to the Ministerial Association. In spite of this being an untested new idea, they lent their moral support and several churches ran the announcement about a six-week training course to prepare for the start of the Stouffville ESL ministry.

In the spring of 2010, one evening a week for six weeks about a dozen prospective teachers from four churches gathered for training and planning for the beginning of the ESL ministry the following fall. Marion Chang, Mary Hogan, and Tom McCormick facilitated the training. Leaders emerged, plans took shape and by late summer Stouffville ESL classes were being announced through church bulletins, with posters and on cards, with congregations being encouraged to spread the word. Not all of those who came for the training followed through as teachers, but from the beginning there has been good interest with multiple levels of ESL classes at EastRidge Church (the host church) being

offered by teachers coming from several churches on Thursday mornings and evenings with attendance ranging from 30 – 60 participants. Many students have especially appreciated the joyful, accepting atmosphere and several have begun church involvement. Church involvement has been further encouraged by ESL being offered either during the regular Sunday church service or right after the service (we have used both models). There is a coffee time between the church service and the Sunday school (and ESL) classes when significant mingling can happen.

Awareness of the ESL program has been promoted in various ways, most notably at the host church booth at the annual Strawberry Festival. At the ecumenical service during the Strawberry Festival, the SCMA has often given half of the offering for the Stouffville ESL program. The annual EastRidge Church community chili cook-off, which is a fundraiser for the community benevolent fund, is another awareness opportunity. Every year that the ESL students and volunteers have entered (usually they have four entries, one for each category: hot, traditional, veggie, and original), God has used discerning judges to select one or more of their entries as the winners. This results in a group picture in the local paper and recognition for the program.

—Tim Jacobson

Editor's Note: Part 2 of this article continues next issue. The strengths and challenges of collaboration will be discussed.

ESL as a Church Plant

The English Conversation Café (ECC) was launched in 2013 with two facilitators and four students as an outreach of our home church, Midtown Alliance in Toronto. Through conversations on daily topics, we aimed to improve the students' spoken English and to establish friendships with them. Since then, God has expanded the ministry, giving us remarkable stability and a consistent number of students. Our facilitators have long expressed a desire to have further spiritual impact among the students, and with our newfound stability, we sought to take advantage. The question was 'how could we draw others into the realm of spiritual conversation more often without jeopardizing the direction and positive community impact we were having through the ECC in its current format?'

Since our home church was newly experimenting with setting up house churches, I suggested the same format to the facilitators: We would become a house church. After months of discussion, prayer, and experimentation, six facilitators decided we would launch this church in January of 2016. To form a house church we would need six people who were not Christians but had some spiritual questions they wanted to explore. I asked the facilitators to first invite those whom they had built the best long-term relationships. I prepared them to ask dozens to find our six. We very quickly had to stop making invitations because the first six students we asked agreed excitedly. It turns out that our lives, both as those who had helped them along with their English and as friends who took the time to get to know them outside of the (con't p5)

(con't from p4) conversation groups, had become a catalyst for spiritual curiosity.

As a house church our primary focus is worshiping God, but we make special effort to make exploring our understanding of God accessible to all who attend. In addition to carefully explaining the song lyrics we sing and using narrative portions of the Bible for storytelling, our most unique element is "The Big Question". Here we shed religious jargons and pose questions that help us think about God in easy to understand terms. In recent weeks we asked, "If there is a Creator, what would be expected of us as creatures?" This gives everyone an opportunity to participate in an open dialogue about God and gives us license to maintain the Scriptures as our primary means of understanding because we give them a platform to fully express their notions of God and the world.

It is an understatement to say that this church is still very young, but we already had several opportunities to share our personal hope in the Good News of Jesus Christ. During our recent Last Supper celebration we even had an opportunity to draw this new church into the subversive practices of our Lord Jesus by washing one another's feet - a strange practice that they were happy to participate in as they continue to get to know the Lord of the Church through the witness of the Body of Christ. This unique journey is off to a promising start and we look forward to coming along for the ride as Jesus continues to call the nations to Himself.

—Tom More

Spring is here!

Check out these [Spring ESL activities and resources](#)

with lessons for special days such as Earth Day, Mother's Day, Victoria Day.



What Is Missing? A Case Study

"Tell me, what are the primary needs of the newcomers in my ESL class?" The standard answers are reading, writing, listening and speaking. And those are the teaching objectives of ESL, but we may need some other goals to make it into a ministry. This is a case study about one of those aims.

Stephen arrived in Toronto at 15 to attend an international high school. The next morning, the TTC went on strike. His older brother was involved in sports activities at a local Anglo church for international students, so Stephen joined them. He had fun with the students and each activity included important thoughts on the good news of Jesus. They were friendly and helpful and Stephen got used to Canadian life.

He also examined Christianity. Ten months later, he gave his life to Christ. He grew, memorized chapters of the Bible and became a member of the ministry team. By the time he was 17 he co-chaired the international student ministry of 200 students with the Associate Pastor. But he was dissatisfied.

At the end of high school, although he didn't move geographically, Stephen left that church. His older brother and three key international students followed him. The church's ministry continues but remains at 50 students. Stephen and his friends attended a Chinese church with fewer programs. His brother and friends struggled, but slowly deepened in their faith and today are all in Christian leadership. Stephen completed university in three years, seminary in two and then did his Ph.D.

He retreated with his friends to celebrate the completion of his doctoral studies. Late one evening they asked him, "Why did you lead us away from that

church with all its great programming? Had you gotten into a fight? What had caused you to react to those friendly, good-hearted, people?"

He replied, "The program worked well. It was multi-layered, geared to our age group and provided transportation. They understood our social problems and really helped us. Their activities were interesting and their Christian message got through. But relationally, they kept their distance. They were interested in my ideas as a leader but not in me. You know, there were many friendly people in that church, but no one wanted to be my friend."

Let me ask a few more questions (you might also want to discuss the following questions with your ESL ministry team regarding the distinction between 'being friendly' and 'being a friend'. Reflect on your program and see if there is anything you need to change):

1. Why might friendship from someone in the host culture be important to an ESL Student?
2. What parts of the 'culture in your church' depend more on friendliness or friendship?
3. What biblical outcomes do friendliness or friendship produce?
4. Our secular culture fosters tolerance. What does that mean? Does it produce positive relationships?
5. Did Jesus model tolerance or acceptance; friendliness or friendship?

—Brian Seim

Field Tripping ESL Learners in the Community

What happens when you take ESL learners outside the classroom? There's a peak in interest in the class and in the lessons, a growth in connection among the class members, and an increased sense of belonging to the wider community.

Over the past number of years, I have taken adult learners in small, mixed-level ESL classes on field trips in the community. We have visited the public library, a farmers' market, a curling rink, the local fire station, a nature park, our city hall (including sitting in on part of a city council meeting), an outdoor nativity play, and a maple sugar bush.

On **every one** of these outings, we found that our hosts were happy and even excited to have us visit, and welcomed us warmly. They were interested in our class and in our students. The ESL learners really valued the opportunity to get an inside look at some aspects of our culture they had not previously experienced. They enjoyed listening to different English speakers and practicing their spoken English by asking and answering questions. And the successful interaction gave a great boost to their language-learning motivation!

Prior to each trip, using photos, clip art, video clips, and realia, we go over pertinent vocabulary in class along with some general information and/or history of what we will experience. We also explore the way these institutions and opportunities may occur in the students' home countries. Then we try to predict what we will learn, and generate some good questions that might be addressed or that we could ask if given opportunity, and we think of ways to thank the people who welcome us. In the ESL class meetings following the field trip, we reflect on the experience and what we learned, and discuss any follow-up questions the students have. The whole process generates real language practice before, during, and after!

Preparation and logistics for field trips do not have to be overwhelming. The hardest part may be having a good idea of where to take the class. (Hint: Here's a great blog post by Tara Benwell on

the ESL library blog: <http://blog.esllibrary.com/2015/05/27/ell-field-trips/>. She offers 25+ great ideas for field trips and ideas of ways to prepare for each one.)

Once the destination has been settled, good communication with the contact person at the site is essential. Most want to know the size of the group and some, such as the public librarian, ask about the CLB level of the class so they can prepare well. Beforehand, we ask students to sign up themselves and any friends or family members they want to invite. Preparing the students with any necessary advice regarding how to dress or behave makes everyone more comfortable. Meeting at the class location and traveling by car pools or public transit together gets everyone there at the same time.

Field trips are interesting and effective for students of all levels, and are great for mixed-level classes: everyone has authentic interaction with native speakers. In fact, they are often one of the highlights of a semester. Some students may have approached their first field trip with uncertainty or even trepidation, but after going on one, everyone looks forward to the next one!

—Carol Blake

Carol Blake graduated with a Masters in Linguistics and a TESL certificate from the University of Toronto in 1982. For the last 30+ years, she has been involved in teaching various aspects of English and language learning in first language, second language, and foreign language situations. Currently, she lives and teaches in Kitchener.

Editor's Note: This article was originally published in the TESL Ontario blog at <http://blog.teslontario.org/fieldtripping/#more-1634>. Republished with permission.

There are more special events and 'field trip' ideas, like visiting a nursing home, baking muffins, summer picnic, and Easter plays. See [Special Events wth/for ESL Students](#) at the SOCEM site. Might you have your own ideas to add? If so, could you send them to eslministries@gmail.com?

Cross-Cultural Tips

If the Western style of conversation is compared to a tennis game or a volleyball game with the exchanges going back and forth with different patterns depending on the number of participants, what do you think the Eastern style is like? Bowling. Surprised? This article talks about the very different cultural conversation styles and is very thought-provoking. It may help in understanding your students, helping them with 'conversation', and may let you reflect on the characteristics or shortcomings of your own style. It is also good discussion material in your conversation classes. See [Conversational Ballgames](#) for the text, and [here](#) for the text with reading activities.

Upcoming workshop!

A Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages training workshop called "**Teaching English as Christian Mission**" is being offered at SIM Canada, 10 Huntingdale Blvd, Scarborough, on **June 4** from **8:30 AM – 12 PM** followed by lunch. The cost is \$30, inclusive of lunch. The facilitator is Gail Tiessen, Professor Emerita of Providence University College and Seminary and author of the Joy Two Publications material which uses a Bible-based approach to teaching English. Register at <http://www.sim.ca/tesol-training>; pay at the door. This workshop is co-sponsored by SOCEM.

