

THE ESL LINK

IN THIS ISSUE

Easter ESL Resources — 2

Speaking of Habits... A Reading Exercise for Intermediate and Advanced Students — 3

Teaching Canadian Culture — 4

Congratulations to Samantha Mudiappahpillai who gave birth to a baby girl Sylvia in January 2018!

Sam is the artistic hand behind the scene in formatting the ESL LINK into the beautiful issues you see each season. SOCEM wish

to express our heartfelt gratitude to Sam, and wish her all the best with this new addition in her family.



Friends, Gardens and Hilltops

Brian Seim

I've pondered 'good' ministry for years. Perhaps it is about carrying out my obligation to the best of my ability? Fulfilling duty is good. As an ESL teacher, doing it well ensures that students are learning in systematic, sequential ways. Or maybe it is about ministering with a joyful spirit and a friendly attitude? The joy of the Lord is my strength and song. When it overflows it has a way of making even a class in the dead of Canadian winter seem a little warmer. Friendliness is more 'a nice slice of our culture'. Duty, care and joy all seem part of good ministry, but is that all that is needed? I've taken the whole of last month to think about 'the Garden' and 'the Hilltop', which gives me new insights on good ministry.

In Eden, God walked with Adam and Eve. Although he oversaw the universe, he joined them in the garden, built memories and character, perhaps humorous times as they named the animals. While they remained independent with a free will, God was their friend.

Likewise, Jesus was busy in his years of ministry before Calvary. However, the men and women who walked with him became his friends. He set unparalleled standards in teaching, healing, and shepherding, but took time to walk with his friends as well. As he set his face toward Jerusalem, they actually deepened their friendships. A few weeks before the crucifixion he raised Lazarus from the dead. Jesus spent the night before his death with the eleven (and told them, 'There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.' John 15:13 NLT).

In Creation and Crucifixion, friendship was at the heart of the Holy One's practice. God's approachability might be the reason why sinners became friends. Abraham was a friend of God. As Jesus bantered with Matthew as an equal, it seemed to create the pathway to follow him. Mary Magdalene's value shone through relationship. God takes time to befriend people.

How might an ESL teacher be like that? One ESL teacher (*cont'd on p2*)

Ever thought of doing ESL outside the classroom?

See [here](#) for an alternative ESL program that combines theatre training with ESL: "A fun, creative, and engaging way to learn English as a second language".



(cont'd from p1) helps students while they make housing decisions. Others help parents navigate school processes or eat with them often. Still others open up their lives to the students and treat them as equals. My wife befriends through hospitality. Dr. Andrew Lau made a wise observation as an international student: 'While many were friendly, nobody wanted to be my friend. I really needed one.'

My ministry is to faithfully teach and joyously be. And to minister sacrificially, let me first become a friend.

Quick Quiz

Black and _____?
Bride and _____?
Body and _____?

We may not think about them consciously but there are many "word pairs" in our daily speech that consist of words that always come together in a certain order. These are good ESL materials. See [here](#) and [here](#) for good lists of word pairs that you can incorporate into your lessons.



Easter ESL Resources

Beginners' level

<http://www.bestofthereader.ca/Ebooks/Holidays-print.pdf> (pp. 14, 15)

http://bogglesworldesl.com/easter_worksheets.htm (an assortment of fun activities like crossword, rhyme, word search)

Conversation questions

<http://iteslj.org/questions/easter.html>

http://teflpedia.com/Easter_conversation_questions

Readings

http://www.eslholidaylessons.com/04/good_friday.html (with lots of accompanying exercises)

http://www.eslholidaylessons.com/04/easter_sunday.html

<http://ciaofromdebbie.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/WhatIsEasterReadingComp.pdf>

Specifically Christian Content

[Good Friday, Easter Part 1, Easter Part 2 Lessons \(The Virtues series\)](#)

[ESL Easter Lessons from SOCEM website;](#)

see also <https://sites.google.com/site/eslministries/Home/esl-bible-study/free-to-use-materials>

http://www.abcteach.com/free/rc_easter_uppermiddle_b.pdf

(a reading about the church calendar around Easter)

Free Christian scripts, good for putting on Easter drama: <http://bobsnook.org/>

Video clips from The JESUS Film with discussion questions: <http://www.mentorlink.org/index.php/resources/days-with-jesus/>

Stories that illustrate the meaning of Easter 350 Push-ups

North American cultural stories to do with Easter (good as warm-ups or lead-ins to Easter story)

[Easter stories... Chicken Soup for the Soul](#)

Others

Good Friday handouts:

<http://www.faithfulfriends.org/GoodFriday1.pdf>

<http://www.faithfulfriends.org/GoodFriday2.pdf>

Easter card:

<http://www.faithfulfriends.org/eastercard3.doc>

Speaking of Habits...

A Reading Exercise for Intermediate and Advanced Students

Jennifer Tong

There have been many who noted the importance of habits to success, judging from the proliferation of books on this topic in the market (See, for example, [11 Life-Changing Books to Help You Build Better Habits](#)). The start of a new year is also a good time to think about forming new habits to help our growth and development. As an ESL teacher, did you ever think about habits and language learning? Below is a piece I have written that will help our students think about this. The content is relevant to them and it will make a good reading exercise. Here is how it can be used:

Consider prefacing it with pre-reading questions such as: (i) What are some things you do naturally every day or every week? (ii) What are some things you would like to do regularly? You could also pre-teach the vocabulary in the article.

Then you could ask them to read silently and get the gist of the meaning. Perhaps devise comprehension questions to accompany this step, or true or false questions. Other activities include vocabulary exercises like matching the vocabulary with definitions, or testing the use of words in other contexts. You could ask your students to take turns to summarize the paragraphs in their own words.

If students show that they understand the article, you could then go on to post-reading discussion questions such as (i) Do you agree that habit formation is important in language learning? Why? (ii) Which of the five points do you find most convincing? How would you apply it in your life?

Here is the article:

Habit Formation and Language Learning

What do 'habits' have to do with language learning? When you stop to think about it, you may discover perhaps endless associations. Have you ever

experienced how a teacher corrects your pronunciation and you keep reverting to the pronunciation that you're used to? Somehow it seems very difficult to change. Have you attempted to improve your English by watching or listening to English news? If you are not intentional, chances are you will choose to hear news in your first language. Do you practise conversing with English-speaking friends? It takes a lot of repetition to make this something you do naturally. Yet the more you do these things regularly, consistently and unconsciously, the better the chance you become a fluent speaker.

All of this speaks to the power of "habit", and its importance in language learning. If this is the case, perhaps it is worth asking: what helps us to form habits that 'stick'? Assuming that we know what habits are good to develop in language learning, how can we form them effectively?

In the article [How Long Does It Take to Form a Habit?](#) the author gives five tips that will help us form good habits successfully. Let's look at them one by one and apply them to language learning.

1. **Define small, specific goals.** It is much better to plan to "do laundry and vacuum every Saturday morning" than to say you want to "be more organized in your home". Similarly, to study outside of class, it would be much more effective to say you will "review what was learnt in the previous lesson for 15 minutes a day" than to "try to study at home." Another goal you may set is to "watch the news in English every evening".
2. **Make it easier for yourself.** This is about overcoming the barriers that stop you from forming the habit. An example is you want to eat healthier

meals but you are too tired to cook after work. So you end up ordering unhealthy meals. To solve this problem, you may pre-cook meals for the weekdays during the weekend or you may research healthier take-out options. Similarly, perhaps you find you don't have a good memory for parts of your language lessons. Try then to break a task down into smaller units; for example, commit to remembering three new words a day instead of five. Try mnemonic techniques; for example, creating acronyms. With some thoughtful creativity, you are likely to come up with ways to overcome the barriers.

3. **Find an accountability partner.** If you want to get into the habit of going to the gym regularly, you may want to tell a friend about it or even ask him or her to send you reminders or encouragements. The partner can also be someone who has the same goals. So in language learning, it is good to find a 'buddy' who can keep you accountable for making progress in learning. He or she can be your language helper, a friend who is coaching you in your language learning, or a classmate. It is good to be asked, "Have you done your homework for this week?" "How are you getting on in using the language outside of class or in asking questions?"
4. **Use external and internal reminders.** External reminders can be to-do lists, post-it notes, alarm clocks or phone messages. For example, you might set the alarm for the duration of time you have to study each day. Or post new words you are learning on the fridge. Or associate correcting a pronunciation error with looking into the mirror each morning. Internal (*cont'd on p4*)

Teaching Canadian Culture

Mary Hogan | This article is a reprint from its original appearance in *ESL Link*, Volume 3.1 in 2012.

For those of us who were born and raised in Canada, it is sometimes difficult to define Canadian culture. Other than hockey and maple syrup, there aren't a lot of things that distinguish us as a culture. However, people from other cultures don't seem to have that problem. When I asked a group of students from various countries how they would define Canadian culture, without hesitation they began to talk about our culture in terms of how they saw us as people. With a whiteboard full of adjectives and longer descriptions, I summarized their words with four adjectives/adjective phrases: friendly, gentle, polite and respectful of privacy. I took each of these and thought about how we could teach newcomers to Canada about these qualities—what we expect of them and how they can feel accepted in our society.

The first characteristic they identified was friendliness. When I asked what made them see us as friendly people, they said we smiled and initiated conversation with them. It was often about the weather. Newcomers to Canada need to understand the importance of "small talk". They need to understand that we use small talk to not only be friendly but also to assess how friendly others are and if they are safe people. An excellent exercise is teaching them how to comment on the weather and respond when comments are made to them. I have them make a list of weather words and with a partner comment on the weather. Their partner must respond in a friendly manner. The whole class can also assess how friendly they think they are. The same can be done with traffic, time waiting in line, etc.

Closely connected with friendliness is the characteristic of gentleness. They told me that Canadians were soft people—neither aggressive nor abrasive. That led me to think about the importance of teaching people from other cultures about language pillows. There are many ways to soften language. Expressions such as "could you please" or "I was wondering" are softeners when asking for something. "I'm sorry, he's not home right now" is a much softer way of responding on the

telephone than "He's not here". Words like "quite", "just", etc. are small words that soften speech that is too direct. Students always love this lesson.

The third quality they identified in Canadians was their politeness. Lessons on "Please", "Thank you", "Excuse me" and "Sorry" and when we use them and expect others to use them are always helpful. For example, we use "Excuse me" to get someone's attention, to pass by people in a line-up or interrupt a conversation, etc. and "Sorry" on the telephone when someone isn't home, when you can't hear someone or when you bump someone, etc.

Finally, they told me that Canadians were very respectful of one another's privacy. There are some questions they should never ask a Canadian, the most important of which relates to money. How much money do you make? What did you pay for that? How much do you give to charity? Of course, the government and the bank have a right to know. Questions about one's marital status are also not received well for a variety of reasons. Asking whether someone is single, divorced or widowed can be uncomfortable or even painful for many. Questions about age, weight, height, pregnancy, etc. are also unacceptable, unless you are visiting your doctor. They need to know that considering the feelings of others is what good manners is all about. This invariably brings up the question of religion and if it is acceptable to ask someone about their religion. I like to use this question to talk about Canada as a country that practises freedom of religion and that we are comfortable with other religions. If someone presses you beyond your comfort level, this can be another great lesson on how to express feelings tactfully using language pillows and keeping the relationship friendly.

In summary, people from other cultures see us as friendly, gentle, polite and respectful of privacy. For each of these qualities, there are great lessons to be taught which are useful in helping newcomers integrate into Canadian society.

Did you know ...

... one-fifth of Canadians are immigrants and more than 7.6 million Canadians identify as a visible minority?

See new census data at <http://nationalpost.com/news/canada/newsalert-ranks-of-indigenous-peoples-booming-in-canada-census-shows>

(cont'd from p 3) reminders can be thoughts to counter negative thinking. For example, instead of saying to yourself "I'm never going to make progress", remind yourself how you are being understood by English speakers when you practise the language in the community.

5. **Give yourself time.** Some say that to form a habit, you need to repeat a certain behaviour for 21 days, or 28, or 31. Whatever the number, remember that forming a habit takes time and it is not always straightforward. It may be two steps forward and one step back. Learning a language also takes time. Remind yourself that it is a process and every effort counts. You may make progress or you may reach a plateau but success will come over time if you don't give up.

Would you like to try these suggestions? What appeals to you most? Share it with your classmates.