

THE ESL LINK

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Melting of heart in an ice storm

—Roslyn Farmer

We hold all the ESL classes in the church that many of the teachers attend. The church provides the needed amenities – but it also provides a place that the students have come to feel at home in. During that memorable spring ice storm, a couple of our church pastors decided they would risk the drive and open the church that Sunday just in case someone happened to arrive. Someone from one of our ESL classes did arrive, with her family. She felt safe and comfortable telling the pastor that she'd come to ask, "Could you tell me more about your Jesus?" She came to faith that day.



God Makes Our Summer Beautiful

Timo Posti

What does the word "summer" mean to you? Do you think of flowers, birthday parties, backyard barbecues, a trip to the beach or ice cream? Maybe summer is a long vacation from work or an opportunity to relax on the weekend at your cottage. Summers in Canada are more often than not absolutely beautiful (at least they are so to me).

Summer can be uncomfortable at times also. Sure, there are humid days and sudden thunderstorms. My summers are usually busy—I won't have a long vacation this year since I work in a popular language school in North York. Our enrolment will actually double in July, as high school students will participate in our summer program. Yet, there is a beauty in summer that attracts me, including these features: the warm sun, happy family times and fresh watermelon slices.

Ontario will receive thousands of guests this summer. We have an opportunity to be gracious to many of them. We can lend a helping hand, such

as giving directions to lost strangers. Let us not miss this opportunity to befriend a lonely traveler who has come to enjoy our beautiful summer weather. Perhaps ESL programs continue in some churches throughout the summer. If yours does, press in and perhaps talk about activities in town, or bring students to outings.

Psalm 19:4-6 tells us: "...the sun, which is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices like a strong man to run its race. Its rising is from one end of heaven, and its circuit to the other end; and there is nothing hidden from its heat." (NKJV)

That is exactly how I feel about summer sunshine: it is strong and overpowering.

Canadians like to talk about good weather (have you noticed?). However, I need to mention the most beautiful part of summer, which is actually the best part of any season: through our Lord Jesus Christ, we can worship our Creator and enjoy fellowship with him. In Christ, we experience true beauty (*cont'd p2*)

Using Newspaper Articles with Advanced and Intermediate Students in Conversational ESL Classes

Roslyn Farmer



At Bayview Glen ESL, we've been offering an intermediate and advanced ESL conversation class based on newspaper articles. This is our fourth year and counting, and the study is still going well.

The class is about one hour long and follows the regular 10 am to 12 noon ESL classes. We currently have about 30 students, divided into two groups, each led by a teacher.

We try to pick newspaper articles that are current, would interest our students, and would evoke discussion. We pick a variety of topics.

One format that works well is using three small articles to give three perspectives on the same topic. Examples of some of the topics that have worked well this way are the Toronto housing issue, Canadian family-run businesses, the June provincial election, raising backyard chickens, and co-working spaces.

We also do a variety of longer articles, from everyday aspects of Canadian life (e.g. producing maple syrup) to an in-depth coverage of world events (e.g. the tensions between Russia and the Balkans). We use Google images to add interest, further explanation, and for aesthetics. They also serve as tools to activate the students' thinking.

Each article is paraphrased to simplify the sentences, remove some of the difficult words, and reduce its length – while leaving in useful idioms, colloquialisms, and needed terminology.

When we first started using newspaper articles, we added a vocabulary section and discussion questions to the article. Now we have dropped both of those additions: the leaders ask their own questions, and the vocabulary is taught in situ. This works well.

We open each lesson with an ice-breaker question. For example, when we did the articles on Toronto housing issues, we asked what it was like for them to find housing in Toronto. They enjoyed telling their own stories, listening to each other, and finding out how their teachers found their homes.

When we start up the group in September, the teacher needs to do more intensive leading as the students are not yet comfortable with each other or with their teachers. But as time goes by the comfort level grows, and the

students will initiate the discussion themselves.

I believe that this conversation class meets the needs of our students on several levels:

- The article is the glue that draws the students together into discussion and the building of friendships. Acts 2:42-47 says that fellowship was one of the characteristics of the early church that resulted in "the Lord [adding] to their number daily those who were being saved." Similarly, the more the building of friendship happens within the group, the more 'outsiders' will be attracted to join us.
- Newspaper articles give the students a way to learn vocabulary and grammar in an authentic context.
- The articles help them understand Canadian culture – things that the average Canadian thinks about, worries about, and hopes for – and Canadian perspectives on world events. This sharing of perspectives across cultures makes us realize that we are more alike than different.
- The vocabulary about current events gives them useful "small talk" with which to interact with their Canadian neighbours and colleagues.

Would you like to try using newspaper articles in your class?

Answer: James, while John had had "had", had had "had had"; "had had" had had a better effect on the teacher.

Context: It refers to two students, James and John, required by an English test to describe a man who had suffered from a cold in the past. John writes "The man had a cold," which the teacher marks incorrect, while James writes the correct "The man had had a cold." Since James' answer was right, it had had a better effect on the teacher.

(Source: Wikipedia)

Do you often get asked the question: How can I improve my English? Do your students want study tips about what they can do on their own after class? Here is an article with some good suggestions - [The Most Effective English Study Techniques](#)