



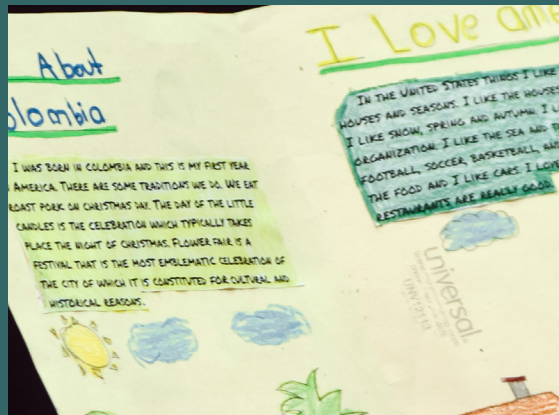
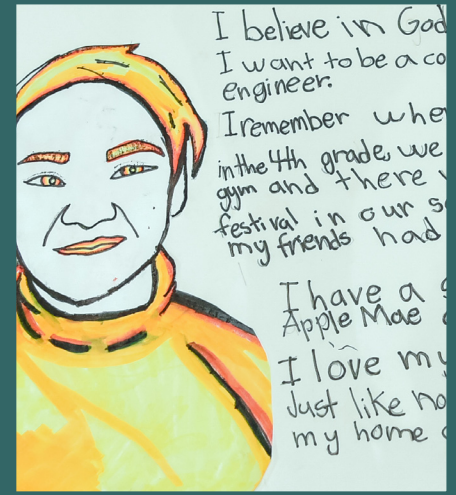
THE RI-TELLER

The Newsletter for Rhode Island Teachers of
English Language Learners & ELL Professionals

www.ritell.org

Issue 14: Fall 2017

Who We Are



Selections from Rhode Island's first Gallery Walk for English Learners, sponsored by RITELL and the RI English Learners Advisory Council, on May 23 at Providence College. Rhode Island English learners, ranging in age from 5 to 63 years old, contributed 168 identity texts for an ESL showcase that included drawings, collages, poems, readings, live dance and mixed-media works. For a closer look, check out our coverage, starting on page 12

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DR. MANEKA DEANNA BROOKS, keynote speaker at the Spring 2017 RITELL Conference at Rhode Island College, is an Assistant Professor of Reading Education at Texas State University. She became engaged in this

work as a result of her experiences as a high school teacher in California. Inspired by the stories of her former students, she pursued a Ph.D. in Educational Linguistics at Stanford University with a focus on the language and literacy development of young people who remain classified as English learners for all or most of their educational trajectory. Currently, Dr. Brooks is an assistant professor of reading education at Texas State University where she works with in-service and pre-service teachers on topics related to equity, bilingualism, racial/ethnic diversity, and literacy education. Her research has been published in *Research in the Teaching of English*, *Language and Education*, *Linguistics and Education*, *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, the *Handbook of Bilingual and Multilingual Education*, and other venues. In Rhode Island, she gave the keynote address at the RITELL Conference in April, titled "Pushing Past Myths: The Educational Experiences of 'Long-Term English Learners,'" and she also presented a breakout session, "Tools for Success: Rethinking English Literary Instruction."



ELIZABETH HARTUNG-COLE (MA TESOL from UCLA) specializes in training teachers and administrators in effective, research-based instruction for secondary long-term English language

learners (LTELLs). Her positions have included: serving as English language development curriculum leader for a large urban school district, creating language arts course outlines amplified for LTELLs and approved by the University of California system, presenting at professional conferences, teaching LTELLs in a credit-retrieval program, participating on school accreditation committees, and teaching English internationally. She presented the breakout session, "Strategies Empowering Long-Term English Learners to Access Academic Text" during the Spring RITELL Conference on April 1 at Rhode Island College.

MITCHELL SANDERS is a talented student of photography who specializes in portraiture and astrophotography. At 19, Mitchell has an unusual amount of experience in the field and has worked with well known artist mentors for years. Currently based in Southern Rhode Island, he attends Salve Regina University in Newport and is continuing his freelance photography business and artistic endeavours. He is the Staff Photographer for RITELL and their events.

LAURA VAWTER is an ESL instructor at International House, Worcester Polytechnic University in Massachusetts. She has a master's degree in TESL.

EDITORS



DOUG NORRIS is the vice-president of the RITELL Coordinating Council and a lead teacher with the R.I. Family Literacy Initiative. He also serves on the Library Board of Rhode Island. He holds a master's degree in TESL from

Rhode Island College and a bachelor's degree in Communications/Journalism from Long Island University. In previous lives, he was the arts editor of Independent Newspapers of Southern Rhode Island, the Rhode Island editor of Art New England, and the news director at Plymouth State University in New Hampshire. In his spare time, he is a vagabond traveler, freelance writer, occasional poet and amateur photographer.



ANKE STEINWEH is a member of the RITELL Coordinating Council and teacher at North Providence High School. She also serves on the ELL Advisory Council of Rhode Island. She holds a master's degree in

Elementary Education from the University of Rhode Island and is a K-12 ESL Specialist. She received her undergraduate degree in English and Psychology from Rhode Island College where she was also an editor of Rhode Island College's literary magazine many moons ago. Hailing originally from Germany, she lives with her husband, three children, two cats and five chickens in the south of our beautiful state.



LAURA FARIA-TANCINCO is a member of the RITELL Coordinating Council and has taught Adult Ed ESL in universities around the state. She has been in the ESL field for 10+ years. She began her ESL

journey in 2006, after a degree and professional attempt in Graphic Design left her wanting more. She moved to Quito, Ecuador where she lived and worked for 2.5 years before backpacking around South America. Upon her return, she began adjuncting at colleges and universities around RI. She completed her M. Ed in TESL from RIC in 2015 and is currently the Coordinator of the ESL Intensive Program and Project ExCEL at RIC. She always says, the best people in the world arrive in her classroom. She enjoys all the challenges & rewards that come with the profession.

NEWS & NOTES

NOTABLE

The Seal of Biliteracy

The Seal of Biliteracy is recognition from an educational agency - alone for now, or in conjunction with a state - that acknowledges a student's successful attainment of a high-level proficiency in two or more languages by the time of graduation from high school.

In Rhode Island, recognition of the Seal of Biliteracy became official on June 17, 2016, making this the 23rd state in the nation to offer such acknowledgment. Districts around Rhode Island are now offering the Seal of Biliteracy on a local level to students who have shown proficiency in reading, writing, speaking and listening in English, as well as one or more additional languages. The class of 2021 is the first cohort eligible for a statewide recognition in Rhode Island.

The Seal of Biliteracy allows all students to showcase their language proficiencies, but is of special interest to EL students as it recognizes and celebrates the enormous challenges that they have to overcome in order to maintain mastery in their first language, while achieving the required level of language proficiency in all domains for academic purposes in English.

Given the increased demand for knowing multiple languages in the workforce, students with the Seal of Biliteracy will be better positioned to qualify for college admission and specialized jobs, and better prepared for success in future endeavors.

For more information about The Seal of Biliteracy, visit www.ritell.org

ATTENTION

RITELLer: Looking for Contributors

If you'd like to write for RI-TELLER, let us know. RI-TELLER is always looking for new material and contributions that our readers, the RITELL membership, may find thought-provoking, engaging or useful.

Contributions could include:

- Scholarly articles on trends, issues, best practices and current research in the ESL field;
- Columns on teaching and learning tools that have worked in your classroom;
- Articles on lesson ideas that have proven popular with students or have helped to build a sense of community in the classroom;
- Profiles on students or educators who have contributed something unique, visionary or enduring to the ESL community;
- We also welcome book reviews, lists of resources, notices of relevant meetings and any other news of interest to ESL educators in RI.
- If you have a teaching resource or link you find useful with your ESL or bilingual students, share the title or URL with everyone through RI-TELLER!

For more information, contact Doug Norris at dougnorris1489@gmail.com

CONTACTS

RITELL 2017-2018 Coordinating Council

The governing structure of RITELL is a coordinating council of volunteers from around the state who share the job of organizing regular mini conferences, maintaining contact information for all participants and maintaining a website to inform members of upcoming events, opportunities and resources. We're pleased to meet you!



- President** Flavia Molea Baker
- Vice President** Doug Norris
- Recording Secretary & Website** Sarah Northup
- Membership Secretary** Holly Bubier
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STAY CONNECTED

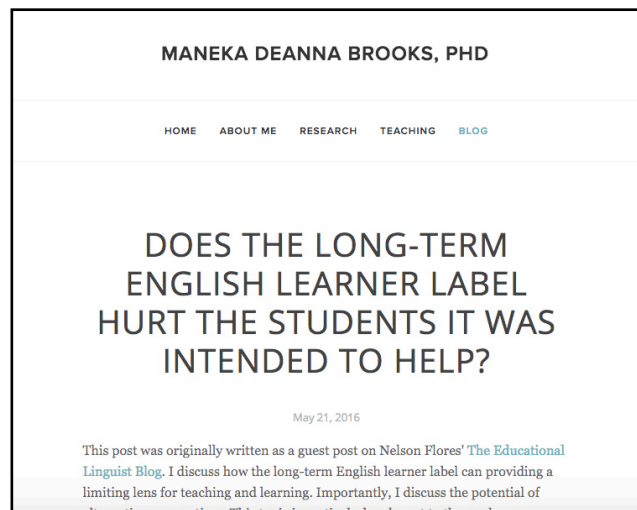
Don't forget to visit www.RITELL.org for teacher resources, conference information and much much more!



Does the Long-Term English Learner Label Hurt the Students it was Intended to Help?

Dr. Maneka Deanna Brooks

This perspective from Dr. Maneka Deanna Brooks is receiving a third life in the RI-TELLER. It began as a guest post on Nelson Flores' The Educational Linguist blog on May 16, 2016. Five days later, Dr. Brooks then reposted it on the blog page of her website. In it, she discusses the importance of providing alternatives to the label of long-term English learner, particularly for educators of adolescent bilinguals, a topic she also explored in her Spring RITELL Conference keynote address at Rhode Island College.



Dr. Brooks' Blog: <http://brooksphd.com/blog/>

There has been an explosion of academic and popular articles lamenting the crisis of long-term English learners (LTELs) in U.S. schools. Although these students have spent many years in the U.S. school system (usually six or more), they remain classified as "learning English." These publications frequently caution educators not to be seduced by LTELs abilities to use English (and other languages) in multifaceted situations. LTELs are frequently described as lacking proficiency in any language. For instance, a recent publication from the *National Education Association* describes their language as "imprecise and inadequate for deeper expression and communication." Every time I read these types of description, I cringe. These characterizations are in stark contrast to the capabilities of the adolescents with whom I have worked.

I draw on the words of 16-year-old Eliza (a pseudonym) to illustrate what a student who is considered an LTEL can do in English. The following quotation was taken from a conversation in which Eliza was discussing her new 20-year-old stepmother:

In working with students like Eliza, I have witnessed how the LTEL lens can be harmful when used to guide teaching and learning.

"At least I am smart about my education and me being independent when I grow up. Not just getting somebody you really like and wanting to get with them. Yeah so, I was like...oh yeah I think of her life. I wonder if she would go—like would have gone to college and not just get married right away. It's like a fairytale in a way. 'Cause she got married when she was eighteen. I think it's a fairytale because I know some girls out there that would be like, 'I wish that somebody could come and get me and take me to another place.'"

In this excerpt, Eliza engages in multiple sophisticated linguistic moves that are celebrated by the Common Core and other educational standards. For example, she does not solely critique her stepmother's decisions. She uses a simile to convey her stepmother's viewpoint. Moreover, Eliza explains how this simile is relevant to this specific context. Eliza's language is precise and communicates a deep understanding of multiple perspectives and life trajectories.

How can someone with the ability to use English in this manner remain classified as an EL for 11 years? In order to fully understand Eliza's extended classification as an EL, it is important to recognize that the criteria used to determine students' English proficiency varies according to their language background. For students who come from households where English is the only language spoken, their home language environment is sufficient to be considered proficient in English. Their academic performance

does not play a role in making this determination. On the other hand, Eliza's EL classification meant that she had to demonstrate her English proficiency through specific levels of performance on multiple measures. Depending on the district, these measures can include assessments of oral English, written English, English language arts, and math. In addition, classroom grades and teacher approval are often included. These criteria expand beyond the knowledge of English to include various measures of academic achievement and compliance with school policies.

The multiple criteria that Eliza needed to meet to be considered proficient in English must be taken into account when understanding her trajectory as a high school student. It cannot be assumed that the primary reason that she remains classified as an EL is because of her English proficiency. This interpretation reflects a very narrow understanding of the various measures that are used to determine English proficiency. For instance, the fact that a student does not perform at a certain level on standardized assessment of English language arts (ELA) does not mean that s/he has yet to acquire English. The existence of monolingual English-speakers with "low" scores on ELA assessments illustrates that there is not one test score that is synonymous with English proficiency. Moreover, there is an extensive research literature that highlights multiple factors that can impact how an individual performs on an assessment. These factors include, but are not limited to, differences in background knowledge, test anxiety, and biases within the test itself. Unfortunately, these considerations are frequently pushed to the periphery when discussing so-called LTELs.

In working with students like Eliza, I have witnessed how the LTEL lens can be harmful when used to guide teaching and learning. The normative LTELs lens obscures what this population of adolescent bilinguals is able to do with literacy, their experiences with literacy, and the nature of their literacy difficulties. For instance, I found that the everyday academic reading experiences of five students who were identified as LTELs were very different from the kinds of reading practices

The predominant framing of the LTEL marginalizes many young people's sophisticated use of English and erases other relevant aspects of their identities and experiences.



A first step forward in this journey is for administrators, educators, and researchers to recognize and incorporate the linguistic expertise (in English and other languages) that so-called LTELs bring into the classroom.

that were used as evidence of English proficiency on assessments. Reading in the classroom primarily centered on oral reading in groups; however, the tests gave priority to silent and individual comprehension. Rather than not "knowing" English, my research highlighted that these students were inexperienced with the tested reading practices. In other publications, I have demonstrated how the prevalent descriptions of LTELs dismiss the way in which students in this demographic are engaging in successful academic literacy practices within the classroom and other spaces.

The predominant framing of the LTEL marginalizes many young people's sophisticated use of English and erases other relevant aspects of their identities and experiences. I argue that a more productive instructional orientation would center on creating academic environments in which this population can experience on-going success. This orientation entails moving away from seeing, representing, and teaching students who are labeled as LTELs as individuals who have "broken" or "incomplete" linguistic abilities. A first step toward in this journey is for administrators, educators, and researchers to recognize and incorporate the linguistic expertise (in English and other languages) that so-called LTELs bring into the classroom. On a more holistic level, this instructional orientation requires designing learning experiences that are situated in a multi-dimensional understanding of the academic, social, and linguistic abilities and experiences of these young people. These students deserve an educational experience that provides this kind of respect and academic enrichment.

5 Questions with... Dr. Maneka Deanna Brooks

HOW did you get interested in working with emergent bilingual students?

I have always been interested in issues that related to bilingualism, culture, schooling, and equity. For example, I worked at an immigrant rights community center and tutored at housing projects. Initially, I didn't have plans to become a teacher in the United States. After I received my bachelor's degree in psychology with a minor in Spanish, I had arranged to teach English in Costa Rica. However, those plans changed on the day of my graduation. One of my Psychology professors, Dr. Ronald Barrett, introduced me to Dr. Magaly Lavandenz who was the Director of Bilingual/Bicultural Education. Dr. Lavandenz encouraged me to work with young people in Los Angeles (where I am from) and to pursue a teaching credential and a Master's degree in Bilingual Education. I thought that her suggestion was a wonderful idea. So, I changed my plans. I ended up applying for graduate school that summer.

HOW do you situate yourself in the work that you do?

The work in which I engage is fundamentally about equity for students of color in the United States. Everything that I do from my research to my teaching is about creating change. My focus on language and literacy is a pathway through which I seek to enact change and to push for equity. In this sense, it is more than work that I do. It is who I am.



Dr. Brooks at RITELL's Spring 2017 Conference

HOW can teachers learn about their students, especially if they are from a different background as their students?

Rather than talking about ways that teachers learn from interacting with their students, I am going to talk about ways that teachers can learn on their own. I am not suggesting that these strategies be used in place of interacting and engaging with students. The suggestions that I am providing go hand-in-hand with learning from students directly. It is important for educators to approach students with some understanding of the experiences they may have had or that they may have as a result of their different social identities (e.g., racial background, gender identity, cultural identity, language background, immigration status). Having knowledge about how students' identities and the intersections of these identities may impact their experiences of the world and schooling is fundamental. It facilitates talking with young people and learning about their lives. However, this process of learning can also be risky because of the danger of using superficial resources that promote a

stereotypical way of thinking.

There are two important ways that an educator could learn about students independently. The first way is to have an in-depth understanding of topics like language, culture, gender, and race and how they impact students' experiences. These types of understandings can help educators know how and when to use specific concepts to understand students' life experiences. For example, a student's racial background can provide an educator with insight as to how he

may encounter. However, it would not be a useful way to try to predict his culture or preferred interaction style in the classroom.

Another way to prepare independently to better understand students' backgrounds is through high-quality literature. Through reading (or listening to an audiobook) it is possible to explore how all of these concepts (e.g., language background, sexual orientation, etc.) impact the way in which people experience the world. Notably, it is a very low-stakes way to get insight into the experiences of people with whom we do not share particular identities. Even if we do share some of the same identities with our students, it is a way of learning about an experience that may be different or similar to our own. Specifically, it is important to read literature written by people about either their own experiences or characters with whom they share specific identities. In this way, we are not reading an "outsiders" description about how they perceive someone else's life. This type of reading is not about finding out the definitive experience about being from a certain

place or having a specific cultural identity. It is not about "matching ethnicities" between books and students. It is about reading to understand how the intersections of multiple identities can shape someone's experience of the world. These books help to set and/or refine the groundwork to understanding our students' experiences.

A few books that I have read somewhat recently that have done an excellent job of illustrating these intersecting themes include:

- Esmeralda Santiago's autobiographical trilogy that begins with the book: *When I Was Puerto Rican*/*Cuando Era Puertorriqueña*. All three books are available in both English and Spanish. These books touch on themes about language, immigration, culture, and identity. The introduction to the Spanish version of the first book has one of the most beautifully written discussions of writing, identity, and bilingualism.
- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* is both a wonderful story and a thoughtful and thought-provoking representation of what it means for a Black person who is not from the United States to be confronted with the racial realities of this country. It also touches on important themes of culture, immigration, and identity.

WHAT are the benefits and/or challenges of the label "Long term English Learner"?

Recently, I used an excerpt from legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw's TedTalk in one of my courses. Among many wonderful contributions in this talk, she highlights the importance of how we frame particular issues. Framing shapes how we understand what is happening.



As a result, it impacts whose voices are heard and how their experiences are represented in attempting to solve a "problem." One of the many challenges with the LTEL label has to do with framing. The framing puts a focus on these young people's perceived "lack" of English proficiency. As a result, the majority of the resulting conversations

about these students are around their English proficiency. My research, the research of others, and my teaching experiences have led me to believe that for many young people to whom this label is applied their continued classification as English learners is not about their English proficiency. Unfortunately, the LTEL label being applied to them reinforces this narrative that the "problem" is English proficiency and there is a tendency to overlook other possible explanations.

LABELS aside, what can we do as educators to provide the best education possible for all emergent bilingual students?

One important factor in educating emergent bilingual students is remembering that it is not only about language. By making this point, I am not minimizing the significance of language or the necessity of language instruction. I am saying that providing the best education means learning about who our students are and how they experience the world. As a result, this requires learning about some uncomfortable topics (e.g., religious intolerance, racism, etc.) that we might not have envisioned as being directly related to being a language teacher. We cannot avoid these topics because language teaching is inextricably linked up with the rest of our world because both language and education do not exist in a vacuum.

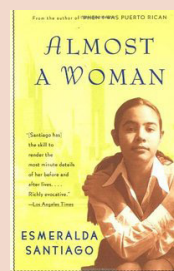
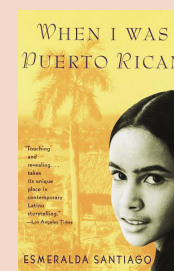
RESOURCES

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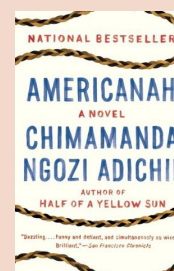
Esmeralda Santiago Trilogy

- *When I Was Puerto Rican*
- *Almost A Woman*
- *The Turkish Lover*



Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

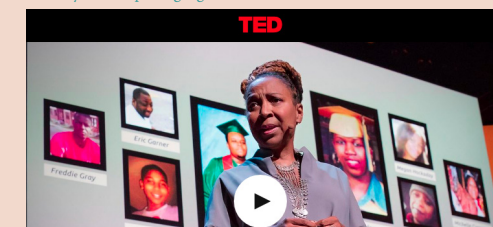
- *Americanah*



Kimberlé Crenshaw's TedTalk

- *The Urgency of Intersectionality*

https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle_crenshaw_the_urgency_of_intersectionality/transcript?language=en



Complex Sentences: Independent Access for Your ELLs

Elizabeth Hartung-Cole

The Situation

Imagine you are pressed for time and looking for a place to park. Will you stop and decipher this confluence of information (See Photo) or ignore it and drive on in search of a simple “Visitor Parking” sign?

This visual represents the way compound and/or complex sentences appear to many English language learners (ELLs) and leads to the same “shut down” reaction most of us had. Many adolescent ELLs will accept this experience as one more example of their lack of ability with academic English. The following dialogue provides a window into the mind of a long-term ELL (LTELL) upon reading a passage containing compound and complex sentences:

Researcher: Tell me what went through your mind when you began to read this paragraph.

LTELL: I got most of the words but together it didn’t mean nothing. You know, it was just like a really long sentence with a bunch of commas and I didn’t think it would get any better so I skipped the rest and went to the next paragraph.

Researcher: How was that going to help?

LTELL: I don’t know, I guess I thought it might clear up what was going on in this paragraph.

Progress reports stated this student was “in danger of failing the class” and “unmotivated.”

Current Strategies

In many language development materials, students learn about various sentence structures by labeling sample sentences as simple, compound, or complex. In another exercise, students practice combining simple sentences. Many students, especially those liter-

ate in their first language or those in well-articulated English language development programs, benefit from these tasks. Unfortunately, these practices do not always transfer to improved academic literacy skills, especially for the growing number of adolescent LTELLs who have become “failure-accepting” (Zakrzewski, 2013).

Sentence Dissecting Strategy

Accessing Complex Sentences 2 *TESOL Connections*: November 2015

Audience: The following strategy gives secondary ELLs the confidence to “read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently” (National Governors Association & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, p. 10); such texts are composed largely of sentences with multiple clauses. This technique can benefit ELLs who are progressing but specifically targets LTELLs mired at the intermediate stage of academic English language development.

Materials: Chart paper, markers (including red), multiple copies of a complex sentence containing key information on the topic being studied.

Strategy Implementation

Note: implement only after the teacher has demonstrated the procedure and students have had time for ample guided practice.

1. Divide students into groups spread apart from each other.
2. Give each group a piece of chart paper and markers (except red).
3. Give each group a copy in large print of the same syntactically complex sentence which contains key information on the topic being studied.
4. Specify the amount of time for groups to “dissect” the sentence.



Street signs (Rand, 2014)

This means they write down as many simple sentences as possible based solely on the information in the given sentence. Each student in the group must rotate writing and initializing their own sentences, while the others are responsible for checking for valid responses (no fragments, correct spelling and grammar, and only information from the text).

5. At the end of the allotted time, groups post their charts of the dissected sentence around the room.

6. Each group is given a red marker, visits one of the other group’s charts, and circles any sentence they think is invalid. The entire class then discusses why the circled sentence is or is not a valid sentence.

7. The group with the most valid dissected sentences wins.

At this point, recognize how many times the students have said, read, paraphrased and written the content of this complex academic text!

Extension Activity

After the students have become proficient with dissecting sentences, try this extension activity:

1. Follow Steps 1 through 4 from above, except be sure to create an even number of groups. Half of the groups receive one syntactically complex sentence (sentence A) and the other half receive a different syntactically complex sentence (sentence B), both containing key information on the topic being studied.
2. At the end of the allotted time, the groups that have dissected sentence A meet briefly with a group that has dissected sentence B to exchange their charts of simple sentences without showing the original syntactically complex sentence.
3. The groups separate again and use the other group’s dissected sentences to re-create the original syntactically complex sentence on chart paper.
4. Each group who has reconstructed sentence A presents their product to

the class. Then their responses are compared to the original sentence. There may be multiple ways to reconstruct the sentence, and this can promote class discussion. All grammatically accurate variations that include all the original information are acceptable. Finally, the process is repeated with groups who reconstructed sentence B.

Benefits

- Targets close reading of key information.
- Can be used across content areas.
- Promotes student talk using academic vocabulary and structures.
- Improves student confidence in their independent ability to unpack and understand sentences with multiple clauses.
- Is especially effective in promoting the academic progress of LTELLs.

Student Sample of Sentence Dissecting

Sentence to Dissect: In an event leading to the outbreak of World War I, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, nephew of Emperor Franz Josef and heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, was assassinated with his wife by a Serbian nationalist in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia, in 1914.

One Group’s Valid Responses

1. Archduke Franz Ferdinand was the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary.
2. Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated.
3. Archduke Franz Ferdinand’s wife was assassinated.
4. They were killed by a Serbian nationalist.
5. They were killed in Sarajevo.
6. Sarajevo is the capital of Bosnia.
7. They were killed in 1914.
8. This assassination led to the outbreak of World War I.
9. Archduke Ferdinand’s first name was Franz.
10. Emperor Josef’s first name was Franz.
11. Austria-Hungary had a throne.
12. Franz Ferdinand was an archduke.
13. Franz Josef was an emperor.
14. Emperor Franz Josef was Arch-

duke Franz Ferdinand’s uncle.

Summary of Results

I implemented this sentence dissecting strategy with a sample of 267 high school LTELLs over a 4-month period. The quantitative data showed significant improvement in comprehending a nonfiction academic passage with sentences containing multiple clauses. It also confirmed that “by taking the time to zoom in on an essential passage of a larger work, students gain insight into the entire text” (Fisher & Frey, 2015, p. 35).

Yet the most powerful results were the students’ written responses to a prompt asking them to describe if and how dissecting sentences helped them with their English. The most poignant statements were the following: Student A: Yeah, you do better if you actually read it. Student B: I don’t give up so much when I see a long sentence. I know how to tear it apart to make some kind of sense.

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Inside Look: Comments & Interactions during a RITELL Conference Panel Discussion

One of the breakout sessions during the RITELL Spring Conference focused on “Strategies and Reflections for the Long Term Adult Language Learner.” The wide-ranging discussion, moderated by Laura Faria-Tancinco, included thoughts, observations and comments from four panelists and a roomful of educators in attendance. What follows is a representative sampling of comments, culled from a recording of the session.



Panelists: Dr. Margaret M. Harrington, Dr. Emily Spitzman, Patricia Bellart and Janet Isserlis

Meet the Panelists

JANET ISSERLIS has worked with adult immigrant and refugee learners since 1980. At present, she teaches basic level ESOL at the Providence Housing Authority, and writing (as an adjunct) at Johnson and Wales University. Isserlis is a co-author of “Making Connections: A Literacy and EAL Curriculum from a Feminist Perspective,” and has written a number of articles about language/literacy learning, assessment and practitioner research.

DR. MARGARET H. HARRINGTON has been a bilingual/ESL teacher for over 35 years. Until her recent retirement, she was an elementary bilingual teacher in Providence, RI. She is currently an adjunct professor at Bristol Community College in New Bedford, MA teaching Advanced ESL courses. She is also an adjunct professor for several colleges and universities in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, as well as a facilitator for the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Second Education (DESE) Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) courses for teachers and administrators.

DR. EMILY SPITZMAN, an Assistant Professor in the TESOL Program at Bridgewater State University, teaches Sheltered English Instruction and TESOL Research courses. Previously, she taught English to international students, adult immigrants and refugees. Her research has focused on intercultural communication, discourse analysis, and power dynamics in interactions.

PATRICIA BELLART has worked for RIRAL since 1987. RIRAL, founded in 1979, is a private non-profit organization that specializes in adult education services in cities around RI. Pat started as a teacher and administrator before becoming the Executive Director in 2002. Pat also serves on the board of the New England Literacy Resource Center, and is a member the RI Department of Education Advisory, and the RI Workforce Alliance.

Discussion Highlights

“One of the first things I thought of with the adult English Language Learners is their strong desire to learn... Working with adults, you just know that they’re there because they really want to be there. They’ve got so many other things to do in their lives, but they just know that learning English is important to them.” – Dr. Margaret (“Peggy”) M. Harrington



“In my experience, thinking back to some of the people who were still with us after 10 or 15 years, it’s not that they’ve actually been with us for 10-15 years. It’s that they’ve started, they’ve stopped, they’ve started, they’ve stopped. And I think that’s kind of common with our group.” – Pat Bellart

On the concern about heavily accented English...



“Is there a way to fix it? I would say two things, because yes, of course we can work on the accent, but we also have to work on the listeners and the people who are listening. These people need to realize that this is the wave of the future. We are not a monolingual society. We are a multilingual society. So the listener – I would say the fix involves them. It’s not just [about] you, the speaker.” – Dr. Emily Spitzman

“My husband will say, ‘Oh, I’m sorry you don’t understand my accent. I’m having a hard time understanding yours, too.’” – Megan Abreu, member of RITELL Coordinating Council

“Have any of you ever read ‘East of Eden’? One of the main characters is Chinese, born in the San Francisco; he is the “housekeeper on the ranch”. He wears a pigtail, dresses Chinese style, and speaks pidgin English throughout most of the book. However, one day the housekeeper was accompanying a guest of the ranch and was engaging in a conversation and speaking fluent English. The guest said, ‘I never realized that you spoke English the way you do.’ And the housekeeper responded, ‘When people look at me, they don’t expect me to speak English correctly. So I’m basically giving them what they expect’. And from my experience of living in Mexico for five years, it was common for people not to understand me when I spoke Spanish because I looked different. They didn’t expect me speak the language and consequently didn’t hear or understand what I said.” -- Pat Bellart *Editor’s Note: This quote was modified from the original in an email after the conference.*

On possible strategies for long-term adult English language learners...

“One of my classes is a beginning ESL class and everybody is bilingual, English-Spanish. One of the students started a WhatsApp list. It’s taught me a lot about people’s ability to use literacy in Spanish. Another strategy I try to use is asking people: ‘Where do you speak English? Where have you spoken English? Where do you need to? Where is it easy? Where is it difficult? Where is it scary? Where do you want it to be easier? How can we help you do that?’ It’s important to try and think about authentic teaching moments, always.” – Janet Isserlis

“I think technology helps a lot...In terms of my in-and-out folks, if we can try to keep them engaged when they’re out, if we can keep a connection with them when they’re away from us, and somehow keep them engaged in some kind of activity, sometimes having technology helps with that...If we can really target the students in terms of what they want to learn, what knowledge they want to gain, and connect that to technology, then if they do leave us

for a period of time, they can continue to use that technology. And, if possible, if we can connect one of our staff members to that person, so they’re not just out there by themselves, but they have somebody to communicate with even when they’ve left us...that’s the only way it’s going to work.” – Emily Spitzman



“Sometimes it’s easier to say if you think of it in your first language. Sometimes I’m trying to teach them past perfect or something, and I say, ‘Think about it in your first language,’ and all of a sudden the bell comes on. Not recognizing the foundation in another language is, to me, like tying one hand behind your body and saying, ‘OK, now play basketball.’ If you’ve got this resource of your first language, whether it’s relatable or not, there’s still that foundation, and you have the ability to tell them, ‘Yes, think about your first language, and use that to help you.’” – Peggy Harrington

“Showing the learner how the teacher learns. I’ve found that to be really effective in my classroom. Even my students just seeing the process. To show them that it can be frustrating for me.” – Moderator Laura Faria-Tancinco
 “There are two things that I always try to do when I first meet a group of students and one is to try to help people understand that it’s an additive process. You’re not giving up who you are. You’re adding to who you are. I also try to encourage people to believe that you can turn it on or turn it off, but you are in control of how you want to present yourself to the world.” – Barbara Gourlay, Senior Lecturer, English for International Teaching Assistants, (ITA) Program Coordinator, Brown University’s Center for Language Studies



“ESOL adults (as we know) vary wildly – some with prior experience with and success in formal education; others with little of that. The tensions in any external funded programs have to do with externally-imposed assessment that generally does not measure what counts for daily life (in and out of school/BICS/CALPS), but

measures what can be easily counted. I thought about the Cambodian women in my refugee ESL classes and how their being in class was a huge part of their finding at least a semblance of community and learning (lowered affective filter) without the “countable” finding of a job, of passing a test. In the 80s, self-sufficiency was a big deal and we kept arguing that a widow who was looking after her grandchildren enabled that family to stay off of cash assistance, and so was part of the employment cohort in a way (or maybe I’m rewriting history); at any rate, [I’ve been] thinking about those classes and about my current classes where students have been in the country for many years but haven’t been able to attend or stay in programs because of family, work, life.” – Janet Isserlis *in a follow-up email, reflecting on the panel discussion*

Stories of Community and Culture Energize First Gallery Walk

Doug Norris

THEY came from South County and Woonsocket, from cities and villages and towns throughout the Ocean State. They came from Haiti and China and countries around the world. They wrote and drew and danced and read and photographed stories about their lives and loves, beliefs and memories. They shared both their common and unique experiences of living and studying in Rhode Island as English language learners.

The first Gallery Walk of English Learners, sponsored by RITELL and the RI English Learners Advisory Council, showcased 168 identity texts from Rhode Island ELL/ESL students, ranging in age from 5 to 63 years old. A ceremony inviting the public to celebrate this diversity of voices attracted 95 attendees at Providence College's '64 Hall Slavin Center on Tuesday, May 23.

The event was conceived as a follow-up to the RITELL Fall 2016 Conference in which Keynote Speaker Paula Markus, ESL/ELD Program Coordinator with the Toronto District School Board, presented a breakout session on how schools and communities could use identity texts to uplift and inspire English language learners. Identity texts are student-produced artifacts – using written, spoken, visual, musical, performance or any artistic combination of elements – that reflect a student's identity in a positive light.

"We weren't sure what to plan for or how many we would be expecting, but we're thrilled with the turnout, and we're just honored to be able to share so many beautiful pieces," said Cathy Fox, one of the event's organizers. "Since I had them on my dining room table, I had the opportunity read all of them. I was just so touched by the richness of their different cultures, and also their struggles. Their feelings

of gratitude for the opportunity to pursue their dreams in peace comes through so strongly. I was struck by the courage it took for them to do some of the things they've done in order to get here. It's just very moving to me."

Fox, a retired Central Falls Schools educator, is a member of the RI EL Advisory Council, an instructor at Providence College and also serves as the Johnson Public Schools ELL Coordinator. Buses of students came from Johnson High School and also from Cranston East High School for the ceremony, which included live traditional Latin dance performances, an "Author's Corner," where writers sat on a large rocking chair and read their works to a gathered audience, as well as a science fair-style exhibition of writings, drawings and mixed-media works that illustrated themes of

biculturalism, identity and community. Titles such as "In Between Two Places" and "Who We Are" set the tone for the exhibition, which served as a platform for a larger dialogue to embrace and include the approximately 3,800 immigrant English learners in Rhode Island schools and educational programs, a group that makes up 32 percent of all of the state's English learners.

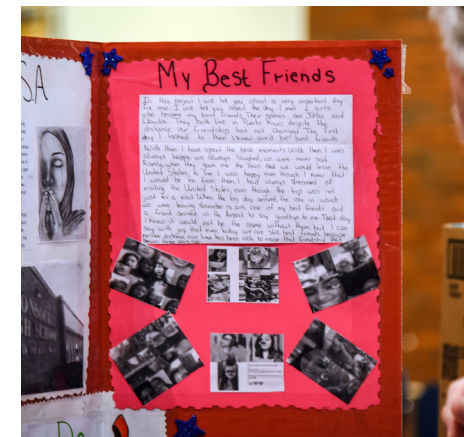
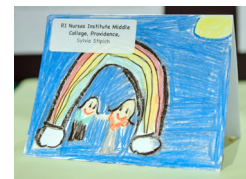
"It totally exceeded my expectations, and it did because so many dedicated teachers stepped forward," Fox said. "I think it was a good start for the first time. We tried something at a very busy time of the year, so the fact that people were able to show this kind of commitment, well, we were very happy with that. There was a small group who put this event together. Flavia Molea Baker (president of RITELL), Julie Motta (chair of EL Advisory Board), Laurie Grupp (EL Advisory



Board & PC) and Rich Kucal helped enormously with the organization and logistics. We were also very grateful to Providence College for hosting the event and providing refreshments, and Sonia Villegas-Gonzalez (Pawtucket) for providing entertainment."

At the Gallery Walk, some students read poems, some shared stories, some danced, many just mingled among the tables, content to let their work speak for them, while curious about what other students from different communities and countries had to say. Fox talked to students who said that just the fact that their voices were being heard made the event worth all of the work they put into it, and served as a welcome counter to the national rhetoric on immigration issues.

"People need to hear these stories," Fox said. "I feel if many of the people who are skeptical towards immigrants came to an event like this, they might change their views. These are the same stories they might have once heard from their ancestors. And... after all... we are a country who has always embraced our diversity."



Haiti Earth Pain

By Jamesy

Haiti, land of pain –
In this country, there is suffering.
Despite all, people have hope.
We only hear cries of pain:
"Enough," "Enough," "Enough"
We see only crying children.
Haiti believes in us,
Believes his sons to save him.
We want to see it standing.
The annihilated families,
The country destroyed
By his own son,
Hearts buried,

All of them cling to life,
They still hope.
We must show solidarity,
Just fraternity,
Help them rebuild everything,
Not to see them die.
Make them avoid the worst
To be able to see
their smiles again.
We are injured, torn
And we need to help them.
Haiti, land of pain.
All come together to save
this corner of the earth.

Where I Am From

By Raaja

I am from a small village in a big country.
I am from *Umm-Alrabaien*,
"Mother of Two Springs,"
A beautiful place.

I am from a big family, the pampered child.

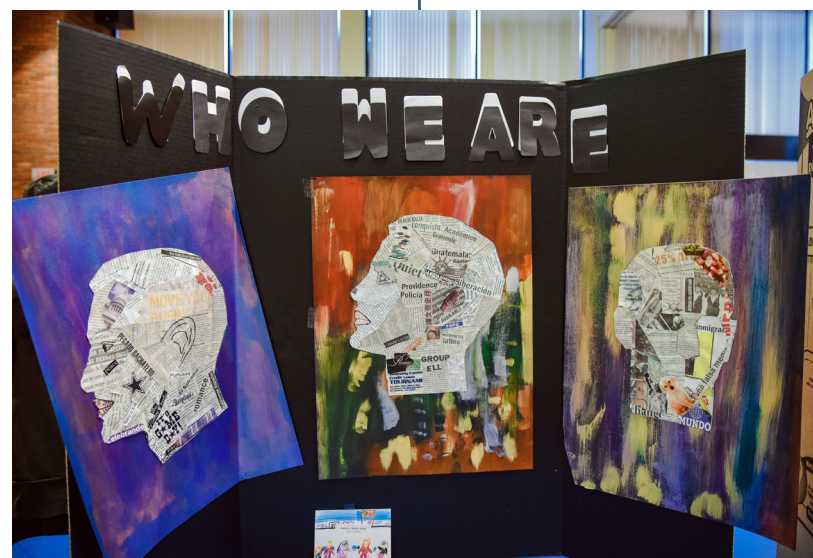
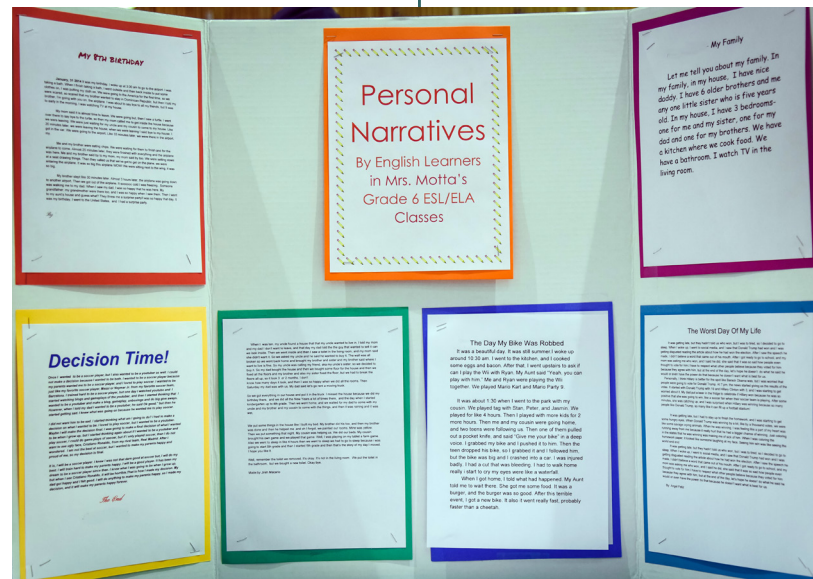
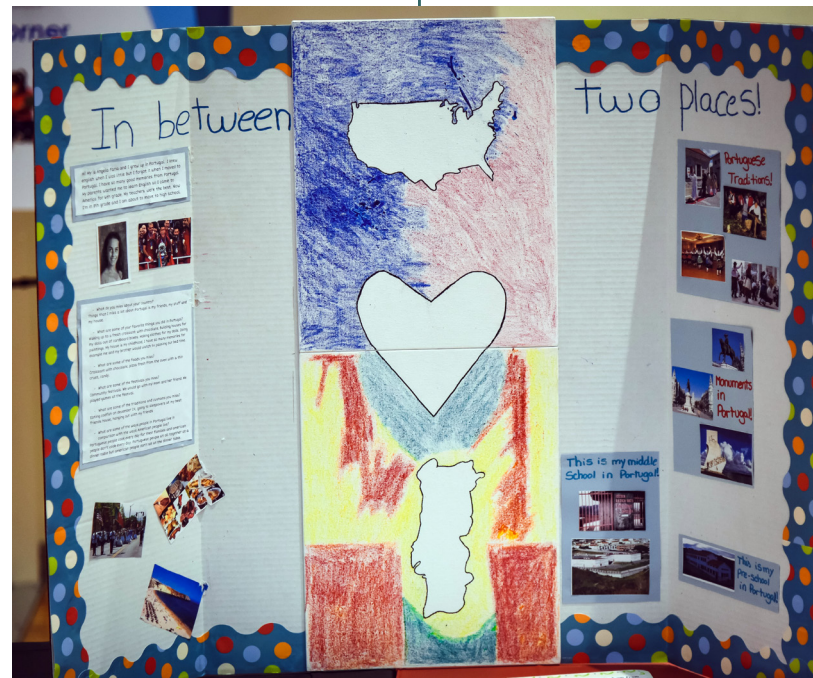
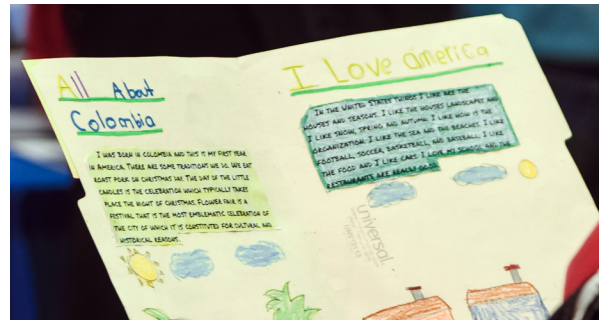
I am from Baba, who always brought chocolate to me.
I am from Mama, a great mother, and I really miss her.
I am from my childhood friend Najlaa.
We spent more than 15 years together.

I am from my husband, who is my husband, and who
Loves me and worries about me.

I am from "Hope," the meaning of my name.
I am from "Teen," a big tree in my family's garden.
I am from a different world than I am going to.

I am Raaja.
I am who I am.
A mother for three lovely kids.
A wife for a wonderful man.
I am from love, peace, hope, faith.
I am who I am.

Gallery Walk coverage continues on next page.



Where I Am From
By Carmen

I am from fruits from trees,
Climbing for almonds and figs.
I am from fresh tomatoes,
Feeling the juices like water for *desierto*.

I am from *sal*, sand and sun,
Relaxing and melting with the sound of waves.

I am from *Carmelitas* cakes
Looking at me with their sugar gazes.
I am from my rag doll Andrea,
With her freckled face and red braids.

I am from a pioneer adventure family
That came from other islands, sailing.
Paul Malia was his name,
Who imprinted in us character and dreams.

I am from Flora.
She was my friend, my aurora.
She was my grandma, and I miss her *ahora*.
I am from "deja de ponerte pantalones y ponte faldas."

I am Carmen.
I am *Andalusian*.
I am from *duende* and light land
That has been muse for poetries and painters.

I am Carmen.

Where I Am From
By Marysabel

I am from my pink baby blanket,
From an album on the living room table
With photos of my siblings,
Jaime, Guillermo, Nohora, Juan Carlos and Richard,
Whose memories are restored in my mind,
From the pear tree my family shares with our neighbors,
From my *tia's* antique key
And my stuffed bear Leona.

I am from mami, who comes from Chiquinquirá, Colombia, and
Loves to sing.
From my papa, who comes from Bogota and
Reads Oscar Wilde.
I am from my *abuela*, who lives in Anapoima, and
Who I miss.

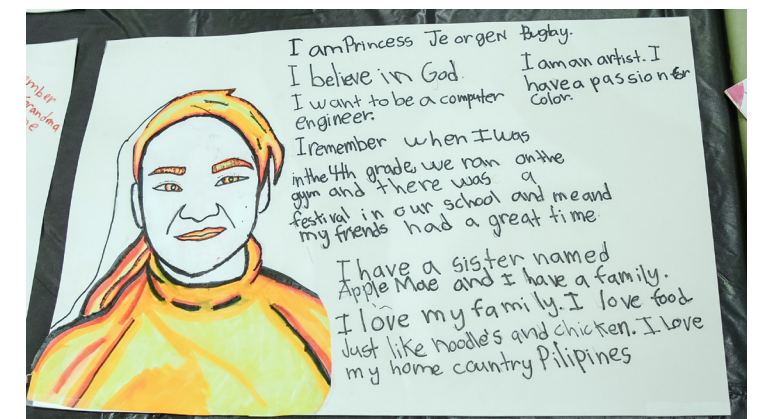
I am from my *abuelo*, who made sculpture, and
My *tia* Conchita who lives in Montreal, and
My friends who speak Esperanto in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

I am from "If you want to go outside, clean up your room"
And "Treat others the way you want to be treated."
I am from *envueltos de mazorca*,
Chorizos, empanadas y arepas
Pastels de yuca filled with rice, meat and peas.

I am from January 20th, the Carnaval Corralejas,
Which makes me very delighted.
I am from my sister's fun *quinceanera*,
From wearing my fancy clothes and dancing slow.

I am from *El Dia de los Muertos*,
When we celebrated my grandpa's life.

I am Marysabel.
I like to help people.
I am a peacemaker.
I am from many places.
I am Marysabel.



Using DuoLingo to Expand Learners' Vocabulary and Listening Outside of the Classroom

Laura Vawter

ONE of the bigger struggles with ELLs is to get them to use their English outside of the classroom. It's one thing to assign homework and require them to complete it for a grade, but it's another thing to ask them to independently practice their English with native speakers and each other. Here, it is often intrinsic, or sometimes extrinsic, motivation that drives learners to use the target language outside the parameters of a classroom. Even if learners are extrinsically motivated by things like work, peers, (or maybe a love interest) to learn and use English, getting them to speak with native speakers outside of class can be difficult. When speaking with a native speaker, learners are often intimidated, in part because they are concerned with the clarity of their speech. It is this concern with being misunderstood because of their accent or pronunciation that often discourages my learners from speaking with native speakers. In addition, this concern also motivates my students to frequently check their pronunciation with online apps and translators like Google Translate. What can sometimes result from this use of online apps and translators is an over-dependence on them. I have had some learners who, if they don't know a word or how to pronounce it, go straight to Google Translate before asking their classmates or the instructor.

Some argue that giving learners access to a translator is the same as giving them access to a dictionary, but a part of my inner teacher disagrees. Requiring learners to ask each other and the instructor FIRST encourages a communicative atmosphere and builds a sense of community in the classroom. Learners can see that their peers and instructor want and can support them



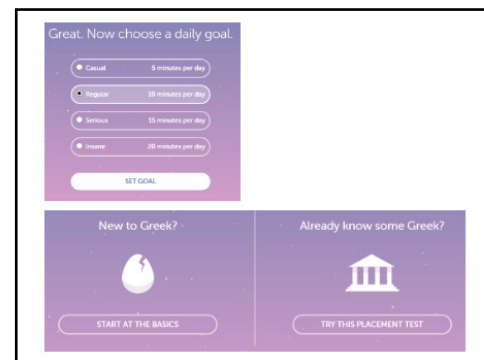
in their language learning and that "errors" are an important and natural part of the language acquisition process. But what if a learner exhausts, or makes an effort to exhaust, all resources in the classroom and still does not know what word to use or how to pronounce it? What if getting and looking up a word in a physical dictionary isn't possible or takes too long for the language activity they are doing? What if their peers AND the instructor have no idea what they are trying to say? What then? This, and in many other cases, is where the value of a translator comes in.

Now the question remains, is a balance possible? How can we give learners access to the pronunciation benefits of translator without discouraging a communicative atmosphere? One way is by using DuoLingo. DuoLingo combines the competitive environment and social connection of programs like Kahoot! and Socrative while also providing a way for learners to build their vocabulary and confidence in their pronunciation. DuoLingo is also a strong language learning tool that can assist instructors in multi-level classrooms by helping support lower level learners while also challenging higher-level learners. In this article, I will walk through

the benefits of DuoLingo for ELLs and give you some suggestions about how to use it in the classroom.

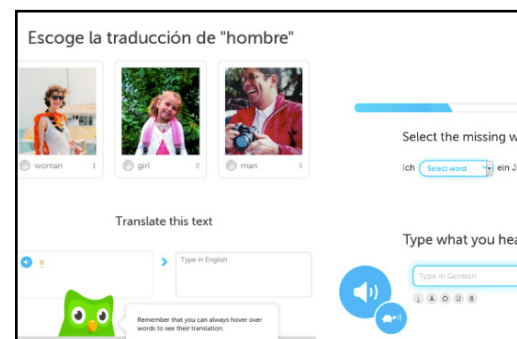
The first benefit of DuoLingo is that it is learner-centered. Learners get to choose the pace at which they want to learn, as well as the level in which they want to start. By setting a daily goal, learners are challenged to use the language everyday outside of the classroom whether they are learning at a casual

or "insane" pace. In multi-level classrooms, DuoLingo provides a way for lower level learners, who may be struggling to keep up, to slow-down and learn at their own level. Since learners can, at any time, "test out" of a level or lesson, it helps high-level learners, who may be "tapping out," to work ahead and feel challenged. What I LOVE about this tool is that it is excellent for real beginners AND fake beginners. With DuoLingo, beginner learners have the option of starting from scratch with the alphabet or with basic phrases. Additionally, since all learners must test into their level, DuoLingo provides instructors with a better picture of learner needs in the often overwhelming multi-level classroom setting.



Another benefit of DuoLingo is that it caters to all types of learners. Each lesson incorporates fill-in-the blank,

multiple-choice and short answer exercises and uses photos, short listening passages, and sentences for learners to translate, repeat and complete. Additionally learners are listening, speaking, reading and writing words in both the L1 and L2, allowing for greater cementation of the target language. This not only helps learners with varying learning styles, it helps cement the vocabulary in the learner's mind.



Furthermore, many of my learners come from L1s whose pronunciation and spelling go hand in hand, which is not often the case in English. Hence, many of my learners struggle with pronouncing and spelling English words correctly. By hearing, seeing and being required to spell and say the words in their L1 and L2, learners have a better grasp on what is normally a confusing aspect of the English language.



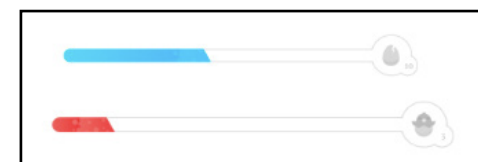
DuoLingo additionally provides lots of support for learners. Each unit has grammar explanations in Learner's L1s. Likewise, If learners are unfamiliar with a word during the lesson that they are asked to translate, they can scroll over the word to see a variety of translations, as well as hear the pronunciation. Learners can also hear a pronunciation or listening excerpt as many times as they want and have the option of slowing it down. Also, if learners feel they need to contest an answer or want more information about it, they can go to discussion boards to ask any additional questions they have. This instantaneous correc-

tion of learner's production and the supports for listening provide a personalized language learning pace.

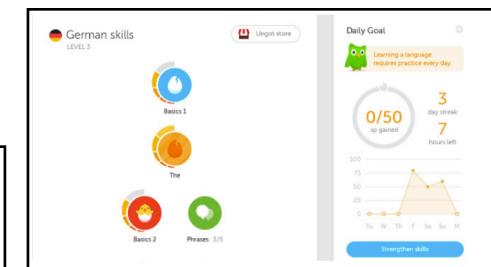


Another great benefit of DuoLingo is that learners have the option of re-doing any lesson at any time. Likewise, each time the learner logs onto DuoLingo, they are given the option of "strengthening" or reviewing past units. This helps learners retain what they have already learned as well as build upon their knowledge. If learners want additional challenges they can also use the "jewels" they get by completing each level and add timers to their lessons or do extra lessons like "flirting" or "idioms" in the target language.

The challenging and beneficial part of DuoLingo is that if learners get an answer wrong, the program remembers. It makes both the learner's progression bar go back and requires the learner to answer additional questions using the target word or phrase that they answered incorrectly. When it comes to capitalization, the app is not too strict, but still teaches the rules. Similarly, learners aren't corrected for spelling and capitalization in the lower levels, but as they progress they begin to be penalized in these areas.



The app additionally tracks your daily progress and allows learners to connect with other learners who are using the program. Learners can see how many lessons other learners have done and what level they are in, which often fosters a competitive atmosphere.



Some weaknesses or potential "trouble areas" of DuoLingo have to do with the progression bar. Since learners cannot progress to a new lesson or level until they get a majority of it correct, some learners may get frustrated if they are repeatedly getting answers wrong and can't finish lessons quickly. In this case, it's great to remind learners that they can exit out of a lesson at any time and take a break. If you are having DuoLingo time in class, it's also a great reminder for learners to write down their usernames and passwords. The website forces the browser to remember and open the last account used. So, make sure learners are logging into and off of their own accounts so they don't mess with other learners' progress. There are countless times I have had learners lose their password or not remember their username and then have to start over from scratch.

Now that I've given you a run-down of the app, the question remains: what are its implications for the classroom? The obvious answer is to assign it as homework as a means of extra support for your learners. You could also give learners extra credit to complete a certain amount of levels or lessons per week. Additionally, having DuoLingo time in classrooms can give both lower- and high-level learners a chance to learn at their own pace and for you to give extra assistance to lower-level learners. If there is no time in your class time to have "DuoLingo time, you can also put a chart on the wall where the learner's write weekly updates of how many exercises they have done or what level they are. This can help foster a class-wide spirit of competition and provide another "tangible way" learners can see their progression.

How to Fix a Toxic Chicken (and Other Stories from Conversation Class)

Doug Norris

THE talk around a table at Central Library in Cranston had already taken several twists and turns, when Mourad suddenly detoured his audience to the Moroccan countryside of his homeland, where he had spent leisurely days as a child scampering around his grandmother's farm.

"She was poor and had no formal education," he said. "I didn't think she could teach me anything." Mourad fixed his eyes on a distant part of the room and smiled. "That was before I saw the drunken chicken."

On an otherwise uneventful morning, Mourad was playing near his grandmother, when both of them noticed a chicken staggering from the barn, stumbling out of the darkness and zigzagging in the sunshine.

"The chicken fell over, then got up, then fell over again," he said. "My grandmother knew instantly what had happened. She kept a box of poison pellets in the barn to keep the mosquitos away. The chicken ate them. My grandmother jumped up, found a razor blade, a nail and some string. She grabbed the chicken, cut the stomach open with the razor, pulled out all of the pellets and stitched the stomach with the nail and string. It took her about a minute. That chicken lived for years."

Mourad shook his head after telling the story. As a young boy, he had been horrified by the blood and brutality of that moment, but once the shock wore off, he realized that his grandmother had taught him something, a lesson he would never forget.

"She had wisdom and a knowledge from growing up on a farm that I would never have," Mourad said.

"She didn't waste anything. But what that moment taught me most of all was that I might learn something from anyone at any time."

All cultures have something in common even if it seems that they don't.

It was just one brief anecdote on a cold, spring afternoon in Rhode Island, but for those us meeting as part of the R.I. Family Literacy Initiative Conversation Class, such informal talk among strangers struggling to learn a new language and culture turned into an authentic exchange of experiences and emotions, as the tale triggered similar memories and thoughts about lessons learned in odd places.

Alfonso, from the Dominican Republic, talked about attending a funeral with his best friend, a Ghanaian, and learning that the tradition in Ghana is to wear red.

"I was surprised," he said. "That would be an insult in my country. I learned something that day, not to judge people by my own traditions."

Aruna, from India, said that she avidly watches Bollywood movies, and only began feeling at home in the U.S. when someone loaned her a DVD of "Grease."

"All cultures have something in common," she said, "even if it seems that they don't."

The class itself, in succeeding weeks, produced moments of learning and universal experience. Sang-bo (Brian), from South Korea, told us how every car in his country is equipped with cameras that record any collisions, so people post their insurance information visibly on the dashboard on cards that have now become elaborate and personal decorations.

Ratanak, from Cambodia, shared his experience of being struck while riding a motorized scooter and going into a coma, and losing memories from his life that he is still trying to recover.

Nada spoke of being a refugee from Syria, her appreciation for how she has been welcomed in Rhode Island and her fervent desire to return to her homeland one day.

Interspersed between these conversations were discussions on how to serve on a jury, where to find cheap flights to international destinations, what to do for free in Providence, how to look for jobs using the Internet, which Rhode Island factories have the best reputations as workplaces, how to give a toast at a wedding, whether Columbus Day should be celebrated as a holiday, where to play Ping-Pong in Cranston, and researching the cheapest bus fares to New York City.

A conversation is a vagabond traveler. It can go anywhere, depending on what the students want or need. And at the end of each class, students (and the teacher) will inevitably retain something worth keeping, a souvenir of the wandering tongue: A gift of culture. A friendship. A new place to park in Boston. Or perhaps just the lasting memory of a toxic chicken and the grandmother who kept it clucking.

Original post can be found at <https://rhodeislandvoices.wordpress.com/2017/03/09/how-to-fix-a-toxic-chicken/>