



President's Letter

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

It seems like just yesterday that we closed out the 2016—2017 academic year and now we are already into the 2017—2018 year. I hope you had a restful summer and had some memorable quality time with your families. On behalf of the entire Executive Board, I would like to wish you a year filled with wonderful teaching and learning opportunities.

This is also the time of year when the planning for the annual conference kicks into high gear. The conference entitled, *Empathy in Action: Social Pedagogy and Public Advocacy for English Language Learners* will take place on November 3–4, 2017 at the Hilton Long Island/Huntington. The VP for Annual Conferences, Dr. Ching Ching Lin, and her team have been working hard since December 2016 to plan this big event. I'd like to highlight a couple of items that are in the works: a) an impressive list of plenary speakers which will include MaryEllen Elia, New York State Commissioner of Education; Angelica Infante—Green, Deputy Commissioner; Lissette Colon Collins, Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages; Ester de Jong, International TESOL President; Osman Canales, founder of the Long Island Immigrant Student Advocates; Tamara Alsace, NYSABE Immediate Past President and Shondel Nero, Associate Professor at New York University Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development b) a fantastic series of concurrent presentations by educators across New York State, c) extraordinary student awards, d) inspiring educators awards and e) a heartwarming memorial for Leonard Fox, NYS TESOL Past President. Please visit the NYS TESOL conference web site <http://ac17.nystesol.org> for details.

One of the most significant events that takes place at the conference is the educators awards. This is an opportunity for us to acknowledge our colleagues who have dedicated their lives to educating culturally and linguistically diverse students. I would like to encourage you to nominate a deserving educator for one of the awards. Please visit <http://www.nystesol.org/awards.html> for details.

Last but not least, I would like to congratulate the Board members who will be completing their terms in November: Ms. Sarah Elia, Ms. Ashley Fifer, Dr. Carrie McDermott, and Dr. Ching Ching Lin. On behalf of everyone in NYS TESOL, I thank them for their ardent dedication to



this organization and for contributing their knowledge and skills to the team.

With the completion of these terms, NYS TESOL is accepting nominations for three positions on the Executive Board. The positions are President—elect, Vice President for Finance, Vice President for Membership, and Vice President—elect for Annual Conference. Please visit <http://www.nystesol.org/elections.html>, for details and to nominate yourself or someone you know who is interested in being on the Board. We need you and would love to have you join the team.

Have a super fantastic school year and I look forward to seeing you at the conference in November!

Sincerely,

Anne Henry

2016-17 President, NYS TESOL

Instructional Specialist, Buffalo Public Schools



Are We Asking the Right Questions? Building Confidence in Adult ELLs through Deeper Reflections

By Amy Joy Lashmet

What did you like about your partner’s work? How could they improve for next time? Regarding peer feedback and self-reflections, these are the two most common questions that I have encountered in my years of teaching ESL, observing other instructors, and reflecting on my own work while I was in graduate school. While these questions are important and hone in on the idea of producing a balanced critique and developing a “game plan” for next time, I have noticed with my own students that these simply do not generate the type of response that would indeed cause them to pause and reflect.

But first, let’s back up and think about why we implement reflections and peer feedback in the first place. Self reflection, or more pedantically, meta-cognition, raises individuals’ awareness about themselves and how they learn, think, and operate. Thus, meta-cognition can give insight into one’s progress as a learner and also aid in changing a learner’s approach toward a particular subject, thus leading to improvement. However, one benefit that I have seen time and time again as a result of self-reflection is simply *confidence*; however, the more I see students progress, the more inclined I am to believe that improvement and confidence are intertwined and that focusing on bolstering confidence can lead to even more improvement in English language usage. After all, we know that the affective filter is oftentimes up, and hopefully by building students’ confidence, we as instructors can bring it down.

This being said, the more I implement self-reflections in my classes, the more I recognize its role in building confidence. Originally, I incorporated self-reflection in my courses because it had been considered a “best practice,” and it constantly appeared in all my graduate school coursework; but now I realize the power in developing students’ metacognition as a means of building confidence by helping students “become more aware of their own strengths and of their abilities to help themselves” (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014).

Therefore, my mission as an ESL instructor has become two-fold: intentionally incorporate tasks that focus on building confidence as well as improving English abilities. Some simple ways to accomplish this of course include guided self-reflection and peer feedback. However, instead of offering those two redundant “what did you like” “what can you improve” questions, I have



found several more thought provoking questions that might make self-reflections a little more interesting, a little more powerful, and result in a little more confidence.

In terms of guided self-reflection, Edutopia (2011) offers many great suggestions such as: *What was especially satisfying to you about either the process or the finished product?* And *What's one goal you would like to set for yourself for next time?* As one can see, these types of questions promote a sense of satisfaction and encourage goal setting which helps students stay focused on achieving a goal and the confidence that will come along with achieving it. Admittedly, these questions maintain a similar significance as the “What did you like” questions, but are more purposeful in that they are pointed and inspire a learner to expand on their feelings of accomplishment.

In addition to self-reflection, it is also possible to build confidence in peer feedback by using guiding questions that encourage students to compare their work and applaud one another for their successes. For example, in a study by Tan and Tan (2010), students were asked to compare their work with a partner’s by answering the following: *After listening to my friend’s recordings, my greatest takeaway is... Our performances were different in that... Compared to my partner, my content...* These questions combine self reflection with peer feedback and provide the opportunity for partners to compliment one another, which in turn will hopefully make peer feedback more comfortable and also empower students as they are now considered an expert who is recognized for their work.

Finally, author and educator, Peter Pappas (2010) has developed a list of engaging questions for reflection that mirror Bloom’s Taxonomy, incorporating questions that range from the basic level of remembering to the advanced level of creation. Some examples include: *How am I progressing as a learner? Where could I use this (content, process, project) in my life? Did I do an effective job of communicating my learning to others?* Again, we see more thoughtful inquiries about progress and application for the future which gives students a deeper understanding of the task, their skills, and how this will apply to their life. From my own teaching experiences, these types of connections have increased students’ confidence not only in the classroom, but also out in the real world, which is ultimately the purpose of ESL courses.

Overall, I think it is time that we are a little more reflective about our own reflection questions and how and why we ask them in the first place. Not only can metacognition improve students’ English abilities, but if approached intentionally, it has the potential to build students’ confidence, which is equally important and essential for success. Now, I ask you, in what ways are you satisfied with your implementation of self-reflection? And what are your goals for the future?



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Rethinking the Norm for Adult English Language Learners on the Autism Spectrum

By David A. Housel

The Bell Curve, mean, and standard deviation come to mind when we think of the norm, but rarely do we grapple with the principles of eugenics that underlie these statistics (Davis, 2013) or how the “norm” is defined and measured and by whom. As teachers of English to speakers of other languages (ESOL), we must first question whether diagnostic measurements are linguistically appropriate and culturally or racially biased (Estrem and Zhang, 2010) and what “deviations” from the “norm” actually mean. Typically, we gear curricula, textbooks, and pedagogy towards the average, but Rose (2016) argued that when we design for the average, we serve nobody. The best and brightest suffer because talent transforms into a liability and weaknesses camouflage strengths. As ESOL instructors of adults, how do we address our students’ “jagged learning profiles” (Rose, 2016), acknowledge their complex life circumstances, and assess their strengths, weaknesses, and capabilities? Often, limited English-language proficiency obstructs the expression of special gifts and talents, and the challenges inherent in acquiring a second language can conflate with undiagnosed learning dis/abilities. We grapple with whether a psycho-educational evaluation is warranted and if this evaluation can be done in the students’ native language without being cost-prohibitive (Reynolds, Johnson, & Salzman, 2012). The manifestations of trauma and other mental health issues exist but might be more difficult to interpret. Students who resist communicating with others or who are socially awkward are more obvious, but, without confirmation, how can we address the needs of adult, immigrant ESOL students who might identify as autistic?

Once considered rare, approximately 1 in 88 children are diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). With earlier detection and intervention, children with ASD are functioning at higher levels and are making their way to post-secondary and adult education settings (Yager, 2016). Paradoxically, little remains understood about the impact of ASD in adulthood (Volkmar, Reichow, & McPartland, 2014) or how dis/abilities are addressed and special education services are provided in other countries. Services to support individuals with ASD through adulthood are frequently unavailable or inadequate (Howlin et al., 2015) and likely non-existent for adult



English-language learners. As ESOL professionals, what can we do?

For example, what academic supports can we provide when a student withdraws and refuses to participate? Yager (2016) suggested that, when possible, these students should be placed in

smaller classrooms with instructors who are willing and able to provide more individualized attention. If smaller classes are not available, all instructors should face students when presenting information or giving instructions. Multimedia presentations also helped students focus and understand content. Think-pair-share protocols allowed students to mull over an issue on their own, discuss with a partner, and then share with the entire class. Any other group or pair work should have a similar problem-solving focus with well-delineated goals and clearly defined roles for each member. When possible, online, hybrid, and flipped classes are effective instructional alternatives. Testing should occur privately in a quiet setting with minimal distractions.

Enhancing social interactions and providing structured communicative activities are goals for English-language learners (ELLs) in general and ELLs with ASD specifically. What kind of social activities and field trips work best? Small, informal gatherings and other events that target hobbies, customs and traditions, or educational/vocational goals and interests focus on ideas or things instead of people, which creates less anxiety for adults with ASD. Video, card, and board games also provide a catalyst for interaction and logical, strategic thinking. People with ASD tend to experience sensory sensitivity. A noisy disco party with strobe lighting and dancing would be extremely unappealing and likely panic-inducing for adults on the spectrum as would a loud concert, protest rally, street festival, or parade (Yager, 2016).

Social anxiety, major depression, other mood disorders, and psychological distress are prevalent among adults with ASD. These mental health concerns—especially social anxiety—can intensify the manifestations of ASD. Though more men are diagnosed with ASD than women (5:1), women are more likely to exhibit social anxiety and other mood disorders (Lever & Geurts, 2016; Maddox & White, 2015). Many immigrant and refugee students have endured trauma and could be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Being sensitive to changes in mood and other manifestations of psychological distress is critical in helping students perform optimally in our classrooms. These moments also provide an entrée to encourage them to seek professional help and support.

Though not trained as mental health or special education experts, we still have an obligation to view our students holistically and to adjust our educational strategies and approaches to foster learning opportunities for *everyone*. Similarly, we need to be mindful of the heterogeneity found in any category, especially the wide range of functional capabilities and experiences of adult,



immigrant ESOL students and those on the Autism spectrum. We need to replace a deficit model with a strength-based approach that builds upon what adults can do—versus what they cannot do—to help them overcome obstacles and challenges. What are their unique needs and how can we facilitate their growth both as students and as unique human beings? Being aware of

outside agencies and professionals who can address their psychosocial concerns and provide access to needed resources and support is crucial. When we remind ourselves that our students are more than so many grammatical or syntactic errors, measurable outcomes, or educational gains, we humanize them. We also reclaim the essence of who we are as professional educators.

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Dealing with Diversity in a Traditionally Homogenous EFL Classroom

By Adam V. Agostinelli

Diversity in the classroom is a relatively new concept in South Korea, where more children of immigrants are being matriculated into the public education system. When I arrived on the peninsula as a middle school EFL teacher, I expected and prepared for my role as a “cultural ambassador” of the US for the students. However, whenever one of my classes would contain a non-Korean student I found that a variety of unforeseen issues relating to intercultural awareness would arise due to the presence of two “foreigners” (the student and myself) in our two different positions within the classroom. These issues greatly influenced class through non-inclusive course content and discrimination of the foreign students by their classmates. I tried my best to neutralize these recurring situations; however, it was not until I sought help from other faculty members that I realized the significance of my position in this situation. It turned out that these students were experiencing discrimination in all of their classes and were the first non-Korean students that many of the faculty members had encountered. Growing up in an atmosphere where diversity was generally embraced, it took me, the next four years, to put the reasons behind these occurrences into perspective, and from there, to realize the importance of my own personal identity as a foreign teacher in this context. Ultimately, this all culminated in being able to incorporate more substantial inter-culturally sensitive practices into my pedagogy years later in a different school where a similar classroom dynamic was present.

After two years of that first job and the next two teaching ESL and pursuing an MA in applied linguistics in NYC, I returned to Korea to work as an EFL lecturer at a college. Here I was presented with an uncannily similar situation to the one I experienced four years prior; two of my classes each contained one non-Korean student, and their presence, once again, greatly affected the classroom atmosphere and curriculum. However, the difference this time was that I was aware and interested in exploring this dynamic of the EFL context.

As expected, much of the research on multiculturalism in the ESL classroom was based in the western world (i.e. Jenks, Lee, & Kanpol, 2001) and research in Korean EFL classrooms made



no mention of this classroom dynamic. This seemed a shame because the effects on classroom practices are easily noticeable due to the homogeneity of the class. So, after some research, I choose to view the situation from a second language identity-focused poststructuralist standpoint to explore how this dynamic was impacting language learning and classroom-based positioning (Peirce, 1995).

Much of the course curriculum in these conversation classes was geared specifically towards Korean learners and it soon became apparent that the international students often seemed marginalized and unable to participate regardless of their language ability or motivation. While they spoke Korean and attended the same classes, they did not grow up in Korea and did not share the same experiences as their cohort. In a more diverse class, this would be celebrated as a valuable learning experience; however, because of the skewed demographics, many of these instances seemed more isolating for the international students, who would often uncharacteristically not participate during these conversations.

Dealing with diversity and individual empowerment in this situation:

One of the most interesting occurrences I noticed with each of these EFL students was the sense of solidarity I felt with them. In each case, even though we were from different countries, we shared a specific identity marker in the classroom, that of a “foreigner.” However, the most notable instance of student empowerment was when I revealed to the two children and their classes that my grandfather was from their country. The impact that this had in the classroom was palpable in terms of their participation and how they were treated during class. Furthermore, with the college students, we were able to establish a sense of solidarity based on both our migrant and linguistic identities as non-native Korean language speakers. Various conversations about these shared identities seemed to strengthen the teacher-student relationship and were possible contributing factors to these students’ heightened engagement during class time (Block, 2009).

Additionally, by using Varghese, Morga, Johnston, & Johnson’s (2005) theoretical framework concerning the importance of teacher identity in the classroom, I have been more cognizant of how my own identity impacts the classroom, and in turn, when it is appropriate to use my identity and position to guide the class discussion. By constantly being aware of my identity and position in relation to my students, I have facilitated more effective critical thinking on issues regarding multiculturalism through structured discourse in the classroom. This practice provides an authentic scenario where Korean students are forced to think critically because of the presence of their foreign classmate and the position of authority of their foreign teacher. These interactions potentially empower the international student by providing a controlled platform to discuss multiculturalism and participate more comfortably in general because, unlike in their other classes, the person in position of power is also a “foreigner”.



Considering the rarity of this classroom dynamic, it can be easy to overlook the diversity-related issues international students in this situation face. However, by recognizing and developing solidarity as “foreigners” and being introspective and thorough about expressing identity and applying social position, the EFL teacher can play an important role in the empowerment of these individuals.

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Teaching Social Justice

By Rebekah Johnson

A current buzzword in education is “social justice” – but what is it? And how can we teach it? My colleagues and I have come up with a working definition of the term and activities for approaching the pressing cultural issues of our time. Our work stems from our belief that creating social justice curricula can provide students with the social and political understanding to successfully compete within social and cultural networks that are often set up to exclude them.

Lisa Delpit’s seminal (1988) piece argues that educators must develop their students’ awareness of the workings of the status-quo power structure that favors white, male, hetero middle and upper income groups in order for minority and lower income students to become upwardly mobile. More recent scholarship on developing socially just curricula (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009; Dover, 2013, inter alia), highlights the diversity of views on what social justice is, and challenges educators to develop curricula which include activities that promote social justice relevant to their local context.

We can meet this challenge by exploring classroom practices which promote a critical awareness of social justice issues such as housing insecurity, non-traditional family configurations, racial profiling, gender, Islamaphobia, immigration, environmental issues, and an understanding of diverse racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Students can also be engaged through discussions of recent national movements to which they can relate such as #BlackLivesMatter, the rise of the “alt right,” student-led opposition to tuition hikes, and discussions of the problem of student loan debt. This relevance can motivate students to research these issues for class activities and projects. In addition, providing a space in which to discuss these issues allows students to look at different sides of the issues, articulate their own opinions, and explore these sensitive topics in a safe space.

Thought-provoking topics are used in many courses at my institution. In ESL composition courses, I have focused on readings about particular issues, including housing insecurity and



homelessness, healthcare, and non-traditional family configurations. Students then write essays where they compose their own stances on these issues while referencing these readings. I have also had students attend lectures on CUNY history, particularly focusing on student protests over tuition hikes or I have given lectures on student debt and financial literacy as other sources for writing. In developing their own stance on these and other topics, they evaluate their sources to determine what “real news” is as opposed to “fake news” to help them build the critical thinking

skills needed to navigate the vast amount of information on these issues and others relevant to them as students and adults.

In a Liberal Arts majors seminar, we approach many current issues through the course theme of language and identity, including race, gender, and actively constructing one’s own identity through language. In our unit on Race and Identity, we discuss #BlackLivesMatter through news coverage, Rachel Dolezal through commentary articles, and read Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015). In our Gender unit, we read Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s (2015) definition of feminism, discussed transgender law debates and transgender portrayals in the media, listen to video lectures by Judith Butler, and watch TED Talks on intersectionality. Students bring their own perspectives into the class and explore areas of interest for final research projects.

Colleagues teaching courses for education majors promote social justice education as the core theme in the program and approach literacy as a social movement (Sheppard, 2011). In one language and literacy course for secondary education, curriculum is based on Hackman’s (2005) Five Essential Components: 1) Content knowledge: Media literacy; 2) Critical thinking and the analysis of oppression: How does media continue to promote inequalities?; 3) Action and social change: “*education as a practice of freedom*”; 4) Personal reflection; 5) Awareness of group dynamics. One activity from a unit on Media Literacy looks at Internet memes and explores how inequalities are expressed and oppression is maintained through popular memes (Carey, 2013).

In another literacy course for childhood education, students work on developing nuanced views of those around them and challenging their perspectives of “other.” They explore these ideas by reading Delpit’s *Other People’s Children* (1995), and watching Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s talks on “The Danger of a Single Story” (ted.com) and “Nobody is Ever Just a Refugee” (youtube.com), and then draw connections to their own experiences or those of students they have observed in the classroom.

By raising awareness about civic issues, including financial literacy and capitalistic exploitation, teachers can broaden their students’ perspectives on issues of inequality that they and their peers face, or in the case of novice teachers that their future students would face. As community college faculty, we strive to (a) engage students with current events and movements, (b) help



students think deeply and challenge their own assumptions, (c) take on new perspectives and appreciate others' perspectives, and (d) develop their own critical analysis of events, opinions, and stances. Not only does social justice curricula address these goals, it can also transform students into global citizens and become active participants in society. Encouraging students to share their own experiences shows them that they are not alone and peers are experiencing similar things.

In the end, you must create a working definition of social justice that is relevant for your teaching context. You could start with one teaching unit on a social justice theme and build from there. Empower your students with the ability to critically analyze information, to understand diverse perspectives, and to articulate their own experiences!

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Taking Cues from Our ELLs

By Joy Scantlebury

English Language Learners (ELLs) come to our schools equipped with a gold mine of information. English as a New Language (ENL) teachers, tirelessly endeavor to tap into ELLs' prior knowledge structures, or schemata, in order to create meaningful, learning experiences (Anderson, Reynolds, Schallert, & Goetz, 1977, cited in Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). Carrell (1987) came to this conclusion upon discovering that students' comprehension improved when they read texts that reflected their own cultures. Her students identified with the information and were able to connect it to their existing content schemata. The following two experiences from my classroom demonstrate how this "text to self" cultural connection (Keene & Zimmerman, 1997) bolstered students' understanding of new information, while enhancing their motivation and self-esteem.

I recently worked with a small group of Ecuadorian and Colombian middle school students who were at the entering and emerging levels of English. In science class, they were learning about the planets and phases of the moon. One student wondered what it would be like to visit another planet. Another student mentioned that she was interested in space travel. I asked them if they knew the names of any astronauts. They did not. This was my cue to delve into this topic more deeply with them, so I introduced them to *A Dream Comes True*, the story of Franklin Chang-Diaz, a NASA astronaut from Costa Rica, a figure with whom they could connect on a personal and cultural level.

After reading the story, my students asked each other questions from the story. As I circulated around the room, I was impressed by the accuracy of their answers. It was evident that they really retained information from the story. In our post-reading discussion, my students marveled at the fact that Chang-Diaz came to the United States at 15 years old, without knowing any English, and only 50 dollars in his pocket. They soon discovered what they all had in common: They were Latinos who knew no English when they came to the U.S. The students were also



impressed with how Chang-Diaz earned a Bachelor of Science in mechanical engineering and a Doctorate in applied plasma physics. He became a U.S. citizen, trained at NASA, and as an astronaut, travelled to space on seven missions!

Before learning about Chang-Diaz, my students did not even know that a Latino astronaut existed! They were so inspired by this new information that I suggested that they do more research. They discovered two more astronauts, Jose Hernandez, a former migrant worker from

Mexico, and Ellen Ochoa, the first Latina in space. My students were surprised to learn that Hernandez had been rejected 11 times before being selected to train with NASA in 2004. My students discovered an awe-inspiring image of Ochoa. As a classically trained flutist, she was playing in space! Because they discovered that Chang-Diaz, Hernandez and Ochoa all experienced career setbacks and discrimination, my students realized that achieving success is a process, which requires hard work and perseverance. They understood that attending school and applying themselves were steps toward achieving their academic goals.

Another experience in which one of my students was able to make a “text to self” (Keene & Zimmerman, 1997) cultural connection occurred when I discovered that my third grade ELL had low self-esteem. It was not only evident in her demeanor, but in her self-deprecating remarks. Because the third grade was beginning a unit on China, her native country, I decided to address this issue within that cultural context. Knowing that she enjoyed folktales, I decided to search for one from China, which might address the theme of inferiority.

I discovered *The Emperor and the Kite* by Jane Yolen. The main character, Princess Djeow Seow was so small that her powerful brothers, sisters, and even her father, the emperor, ignored her. As a result, she felt insignificant, and only found comfort in making kites. At the end, it was Princess Djeow Seow, the unlikely heroine, who used her hidden talents of creativity, ingenuity, and quick thinking. After reading this folktale, my student and I played a board game, which I created. In order to move around the board, players needed to answer questions from the story. At times, my student needed to refer to the folktale when she was unsure about an answer. Overall, I was pleased with how engaged she was while answering the questions accurately. When asked, “How do you think the emperor felt when Djeow Seow rescued him?” she replied, “He felt proud”. She then recounted an experience in which her grandmother was proud of her for taking care of her younger brother. I was impressed by how she made a personal connection to the story. Gradually, her self-esteem improved and her comments about herself became more positive.

Utilizing texts from ELLs’ cultures allows students to make meaningful connections while comprehending with greater ease. This is one way in which ENL teachers can empower their



students. Tapping into ELLs' cultural connections is essential for creating a positive, learning environment in which they can flourish.

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Finding Teaching Opportunities Using Realistic Situations to Teach Math Skills with Adult ELLs

By Naseem Kapdi

Baking and cooking lend themselves to providing rich opportunities to enhance learning. It allows me to dig deep and think creatively and outside the box when planning my English as a second language (ESL) lessons. As the program instructor at a not-for-profit bakery that teaches women how to make bread and find jobs in the culinary industry, my instruction is guided by and must adapt to this environment while keeping in mind the specific needs of students also known as baker-trainees. Therefore, I strive for incorporating hands-on learning as much as possible, which allows for students to actively participate in and improve both their English and bread production skills.

Math, the teacher, and the language learner

Math causes anxiety in many students, myself included, irrespective of whether they are a native speaker or not. Anxiety increases stress and the affective filter. If it is high, language acquisition becomes much more difficult (Robertson, 2011; Vasquez, , 2017). Keeping in mind my own math phobias and that of my students as well as the fact that they come from varying educational and language backgrounds and levels, I face many challenges in how I can present the content across all spectrums and address these fears. By designing lessons that do so, both my affective filter as the teacher and those of my students are lowered so that I can teach the content and they can absorb it. I find that by finding creative ways to teach the content and decreasing the affective filter, the baker-trainees respond positively and, believe it or not, take risks which promote learning (Du, 2009). All of this increases confidence within them, in and out of the classroom, and I can see their math and language growth, both informally, through observations, and formally, through tests and other assessments.



As part of my work, I create the curriculum and lessons that are taught to the baker-trainees. Last year, I had to flesh out a math curriculum for the program. Though, it was mostly basic math with some bakery-specific math thrown in, I was a little panicked about teaching something I had feared for so long (Robertson, 2010 for math strategies). I decided to embrace it and treated math as a language. By viewing it in this way, I could overcome the first hurdle: creating lesson plans by breaking down the vocabulary and concepts into smaller chunks to build on. This, along with a dash of patience, spoonfuls of visuals (anchor charts, etc.), and hands-on activities allowed me to embrace math with a small hug and present it in a way my

students could begin to understand.

Rulers, Tea, and Downton Abbey

Born from this, was a lesson plan which incorporated my love of tea and *Downton Abbey*, a British period show centered on a wealthy family and their staff. During this time, formalities were maintained to the highest degree through strict rules and traditions especially for the upper class, where formality was a sign of social status. For example, when setting the table, a butler's stick was used to ensure the proper placement of plates and other utensils as well as the space between each item. The stick was a measurement tool about twenty-four (24) inches long.

I translated the idea of a butler's stick to help my students use a ruler correctly. In addition, I was able to include elements of grammar, via prepositions of place, as well as listening skills and following directions. Basically, students were each given items that they would place in a particular place (using direction vocabulary with prepositions of place) and a specific distance (from other objects or the table as reference) using a ruler. The use of realia, the tea set, further enhanced the lesson by providing a low-stress environment to reduce students' frustrations with math (Berwald, 1987).



I built up to this activity with each previous lesson. Setting the table for tea was a culmination of everything they learned thus far presented in a fun, non-threatening way. As a treat, I made scones for them to have the full experience of attending an afternoon tea. To close out the activity, we discussed what we did and related it to other math lessons. Light bulbs of comprehension dawned on baker-trainees as they were able to make connections to other lessons

and feel empowered that they were able to tackle math and come out on top.

Embracing math with a small hug

My goal was to make learning math as fun as possible and I think I accomplished that. Though I have a new appreciation of it, I still have plenty of math-phobia to work through. However, by exploring topics outside the box of traditional math instruction, I was able to lower the affective filter for my students and myself. Empowered with a new understanding of math, they were able to increase their knowledge and apply it to their work in production; while I was able to learn something more about math that I struggled with understanding before.

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