



M A R Y L A N D TESOL NEWS

MARYLAND TEACHERS OF ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

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Misconceptions of Common Core

By Miles Hoenig, Advocacy IS Chair, and Tanya Camp, Advocacy IS Chair-Elect

One would be hard pressed to see real benefits derived from Race to the Top (RttT). What started out as an incentive to financially-depressed states to accept a curriculum in order to be partially bailed out turned into a monolithic federal program that affected nearly every aspect of public education, except perhaps the actual role of teaching. The Common Core, the basis of RttT, magnanimously rewarded the testing industry, whether it is Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) or WiDA.

With the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), we need understand how the Common Core was initiated and its consequences over the last 7 years.

First, there are many misconceptions regarding The

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Long-Term English Learners: Left Behind, But Not Forgotten

By Tara Theroux, M. Ed., Chair, Elementary Education Interest Section



Many articles and professional development courses for teachers are focused on helping newcomer English Learners (ELs). Indeed, classroom teachers with newcomers are often at a loss for how to help these students. However, there is a group of ELs that deserve far more of our attention: Long-term ELs (LTELs).

LTELs can be defined as students who have attended U.S. schools for seven years or more (Kleyn & Menkin, 2009). While LTELs are a diverse group, they tend to have common characteristics such as developed habits of passivity, invisibility and non-engagement in school (Olson, 2014). In my teaching experience as an ESOL middle school teacher, I have

also seen that they often have behavioral issues in school. I attribute their behavior issues to the fact that they have struggled for years and have essentially given up hope of academic success. This of course affects their self-esteem.

Often, LTELs are bilingual and have American accents, but they struggle with academic vocabulary and language. They often read and write significantly below grade level, and thus perform poorly across the content areas (Kleyn & Menkin, 2009). LTELs are typically found in grades 6-12 and can be categorized generally into two main groups: Transnational students moving back and forth from the U.S. to their country of origin and thus have fractured schooling experiences in both English and their native language; and Transient students moving between different school systems and receive inconsistent English support services (ESOL classes, little ESOL language support within the mainstream class setting, bilingual education, etc). The result of frequent moves and inconsistent educational programming is substantial educational gaps.

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A Message from Your MDTESOL Newsletter Editors

by Chester Gates and Billie Muñoz, Editors

Happy New Year! January is a time for hunkering down. While the thermometer in Maryland goes erratically from the low teens to almost seventy, elementary, middle and high school ESOL teachers are settling into a routine of our national exam known as WIDA. Routine? Well, this year for the first time most students are taking the test online. Just as many teachers are decidedly pro or against nationalized testing, the increase in technology can be a divisive issue. One plus is that there will be no more laborious signing in and out of test materials under an already overburdened supervisor's eye since there are no more test books to store except for the primary grades. One worry is the lack of keyboarding skills leading to a lot of hunting and pecking on the part of the students. It means, for certain parts of the test, teachers will be out of the grading process as results are tabulated in a central location by unseen readers and listeners. All this

innovation is coming at a time of unprecedented growth of the percentage of EL's in this country. At the local level, in Baltimore County, the Superintendent has stated publicly that EL learners are among the top three priorities for the 2016-17 school year. On the national stage, as we write these words, we learned that a Syrian refugee will be among those listening to the State of the Union this evening. Refugees have been a hot debate topic among the candidates for the 2016 Presidential Election. While the tone has not always been civil, we ESOL teachers stand ready to work with the next wave no matter the country of origin. Some things don't change.

2015



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A Message from Your MDTESOL President

by Yeji Yoon



Welcome to the Maryland TESOL Newsletter!

I'd like to continue sharing some exciting news and updates that Maryland TESOL has to offer its membership.

MDTESOL Awards

MDTESOL has two awards that are open all year long.

The [Ann Beusch Distinguished Service Award](#) honors individuals who work outside of ESL and international student services who have made sustained, exemplary contributions to the field and/or its students.

The [Lifetime Achievement Award](#) was established to honor the accomplishments of professionals in the ESL/ESOL field who throughout their years of service have exemplified dedication to ESL/ESOL students at any educational level and/or in teacher training.

So if you know someone, please nominate and have their work be highlighted!

MDTESOL Professional Development Grant

The purpose of the [MDTESOL Professional Development Grant](#) is to enhance members' involvement and presence in the field of ESOL. The goal of this grant is to fund projects and initiatives which serve to cross-cut a variety of agents and our communities. The grant winners will be announced at the Annual Spring Dinner & Meeting (Date TBD). The deadline for grant applications is **April 1, 2016**.

TESOL 2016 Scholarship

Maryland TESOL is offering scholarships to assist in the professional development of TESOL members by facilitating attendance at the 2016 TESOL International Convention. For more information, please click [HERE](#).

MDTESOL Graduate Student Interest Section Spring Event

The Graduate Student IS is holding its 9th Annual Graduate Student Mini-Conference **Saturday, February 27, 2016** from 9:30 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. at the English Language Institute, UMBC. To attend, please RSVP through [HERE](#).

MDTESOL Annual Fall Conference

Our annual fall conferences will now be held on the second Saturday of November every year. That being said, please mark your calendar for our 36th Annual Fall Conference which will be held **Saturday, November 12, 2016**. (Location TBD)

Now, on to the 2016 TESOL International Convention!

In the spirit of celebrating the 2016 TESOL International Convention taking place in Baltimore, we have asked one of our dedicated and talented past board member, Adreon Hubbard to create a music video. If you haven't checked it out already, please go to our [website](#) or [Facebook](#) or [Twitter!](#)

As a reminder, this year, in particular, we are looking for ways to get our membership involved with volunteering at the TESOL International Convention. To learn about the difference volunteer roles, please click [HERE](#). To sign up as a volunteer, please click [HERE](#).

Will these updates and exciting news ever stop?! Well, "fortunately", they'll keep coming. So stay tuned! If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, please do not hesitate to reach out. We are here to serve you!

Best,
Yeji Yoon
President, Maryland TESOL
president@mdtesol.org

Are You Receiving emails from MD TESOL?



Have you been receiving emails from MDTESOL? If not, you may need to add website@mdtesol.org to your list of "safe senders" in your email account. That way you can stay informed about all the exciting Interest Section events, advocacy issues, and conferences that MDTESOL offers throughout the year.

TESOL 2016 International Convention & English Language Expo

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TESOL 2016 International Convention
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MDTESOL GRADUATE STUDENT INTEREST SECTION SPRING '16 CONFERENCE

For the 9th straight year, TESOL graduate students from universities across the region will gather to learn from one another. To register, please complete this [registration form](#) by February 25. You may also register on-site. There is a \$5 registration fee, payable on-site by cash or check. Past presentation topics include bilingual education, world Englishes, teacher candidate training, ESOL for migrant solidarity, and others. Please join us and spread the word!

WHERE?

University of Maryland Baltimore County's English Language Institute
University Center, 1000 Hilltop Circle, Catonsville, MD 21250

WHEN?

Saturday February 27, 2016 9:30am-1:00 pm
Doors open 9am for breakfast and registration.

HOW DO I GET THERE?

[MARC commuter rail](#) (BWI or Halethorpe Station, connect to free UMBC Shuttle)

Exit 47B off I-95 ([free parking](#), ride share with other Conference attendees)

[UMBC Shuttle from Downtown Baltimore](#) (connections to [Lexington Market Light Rail](#), [Camden MARC](#), and [Grayhound Bus Terminal](#))

Amtrak ([BWI](#) or Baltimore Penn Station)

CAN I PARTICIPATE IF I'M NOT A CURRENT TESOL GRADUATE STUDENT?

Yes, while preference for workshop slots are given to current grad students, everyone is encouraged to attend and submit presentation applications.

For more info, please contact Tabitha Kidwell and Owen Silverman Andrews at mdtesolgradconference@gmail.com.



Developing Implicit Grammatical Knowledge Through *Dictado*

By Ángel A. Toledo-López, Ph.D., J.D., M.Ed.

Communication is the means through which we express our thoughts and feelings. Being unable to do so effectively can be frustrating. Language learning can be a complex and difficult process for children and adults alike.

This process requires effort from the learner's part as well as the proper strategies and techniques to promote language learning. Research that studies the process of language acquisition has concluded that it takes an individual about 2-3 years to learn common language for daily communication, and about 5-7 years to develop in depth knowledge of the academic and professional usage of language (Cummins, 2008). During this process, individuals are likely to undergo a silent period in which they choose not to communicate in the second language out of fear and anxiety produced by their perceived inability to effectively use language conventions in the L2 (Krashen, 1984).

Other bodies of scholarly literature have focused on teaching strategies and methodologies that lower students' affective filter and facilitate the process of language learning. Part of this discussion has focused on the necessity (or lack thereof) of teaching grammar to L2 learners or even native speakers (Weaver, McNally, Moerman, 2001). Some argue that teaching grammar and the mechanics of the language, especially if this focuses on identifying parts of speech and their usage, makes language acquisition more complex, frustrating, and demanding (Krashen, 1982). This type of grammar teaching does not help students learn the language inasmuch as they do not transfer this knowledge into their work (Weaver, McNally, Moerman, 2001). On the other hand, grammar teaching "goes a long way when it comes to helping students edit for the use of standard conventions in their writing, and the concepts can be taught as we discuss literature

and the students' own writing (Weaver, McNally, Moerman, 2001, p. 17). In other words, grammar teaching, when it is planned and meaningful, must be highlighted and attended to if we want students to properly use the language in all of its dimensions.



Some grammatical notions are acquired naturally and intuitively. They occur implicitly as children listen and imitate the sounds and structures that are being spoken to them. This, however, is not enough to develop the necessary skills to understand and produce language at a higher level of cognition.

Explicit knowledge of the sort that occurs as students explore, create, and produce in meaningful activities is also necessary (Ellis, 1995). Explicit knowledge, according to Ellis (1995) is observed in activities that are guided and monitored. As a result, it can be analyzed and reported for evaluation. Explicit knowledge helps students in two ways: it allows them to process, evaluate, and understand the input that they are listening, and it lets them compare what they have heard and processed with what they have produced in the form of writing (Ellis, 1995). Thus, intake, production, and interpretation are key components of the process of learning the mechanics of the language in meaningful ways.

Students are unlikely to use grammatical conventions that they have not converted into implicit knowledge. Drilling them about grammatical rules and notions is said not to work because students are not incorporating these rules into their belief systems and cannot put them into practice in meaningful and relevant activities in the long run. One way in which L2 learners and native speakers can practice and learn grammatical structures is through *dictado* (dictation). Dictado is an explicit and interactive strategy that helps L2 learners understand how their native tongue and the target

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language compare (Genesee & Riches, 2006). It also helps second language learners and native speakers become conscious of linguistic forms and structures, incorporate these structures into their implicit knowledge, and use them effectively as they produce written and spoken language.

Kathy Escamilla (2009) originally developed the *dictado* technique to help speakers of Spanish acquire in-depth and explicit knowledge of the grammatical structures in English. It has since been adapted to assist emerging learners of different languages develop knowledge of the mechanics (spelling, punctuation, agreement, capitalization, sentence structure, and fluency) of the L2. This technique is easily implemented in any classroom setting by following some simple steps. First, we must identify the students' grade level to determine how long the *dictado* can be. We will use shorter sentence structures or just words with students in kindergarten or first grade, and multiple sentences that may be compound or complex with students in second and third grade. Second, we must choose relatable and meaningful words or sentences to dictate. Dictating about topics that students cannot relate to might become confusing and make it difficult for students to establish the required linguistic connections. Moreover, sentences must be carefully chosen to focus on specific grammatical elements.

Dictado sessions take between 15-20 minutes. The same sentences will be used throughout the week. In the first day, the teacher will read the sentences or words out loud while the students write. The teacher will then produce the correct form of the *dictado* for students to correct their own work. The teacher, together with the students, will talk through the *dictado* in an interactive and explicit manner. In this discussion, the teacher will focus on a single grammatical element. Other grammatical elements are discussed throughout the week when *dictado* is repeated. During the week, students can take turns dictating to each other so that they can practice reading, writing, listening, and pronunciation. I go a bit further and ask my students to draw and color images that represent what the *dictado* is about. This is not only fun, but it also allows me to check for interpretation and understanding of the *dictado*. On

the last day of the week, the teacher reads the *dictado* one more time for evaluation and grading. This interactive process will help students develop implicit knowledge of grammatical structures and will help them incorporate these structures into their language systems for long term use.

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Why is this group so important? The 4.7 million ELs enrolled in U.S. schools comprise 10% of the school-age population. This is an increase of over 60% over the last decade (Olson, 2014). This is the fastest growing group in our nation's schools, and this trend will continue. Nonetheless, historically they have been disproportionately under-achieving and have been underserved (Olson, 2014). No Child Left Behind was created to ensure accountability for all learners, but despite best efforts, ELs are indeed being left behind. ELs continue to have disproportionately high dropout rates, low graduation rates, and low college completion rates (Olson, 2014).

Data show that LTELs is a growing population among ELs. In New York City, approximately one-third of all ELs are LTELs (New York City Department of Education, 2008, cited in Kleyn & Menkin, 2009). The state of California has identified nearly 350,000 students from grades 6-12 who have attended California schools for seven years or more and are still not fluent in English (Watanabe, 2014). They make up three-fourths of all secondary students still learning English. Among these students, nearly 90,000 are classified as LTELs because they have failed to make progress on the state's English proficiency exams for two consecutive years and score below grade level in English standardized tests. In LA Unified School District, a third of the 600,000 students are learning English and more than 35,000 of them are still not at grade level English after five years (Watanabe, 2014). This issue is so important that in 2013 the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) sued the state for allegedly failing to provide legally required services for students learning English (Watanabe, 2014). Consequently, California recently created a law that requires the state to "define and identify a long-term English Learner". This law is the first of its kind in the nation (Watanabe, 2014).

As ESOL teachers, it is our imperative to help these often overlooked ELs. While there are strategies for working with this specific population, it is best to prevent students from becoming LTELs in the first place. As the initial environment for formal education, elementary schools could help slow the current trend. Although the research on the topic is nascent, there are several recommendations for preventing ELs from becoming LTELs, which we could implement at the elementary level. Some of them include focusing on data-driven approaches, taking their English language proficiency standardized testing as seriously as other state tests; focusing on learning strategies, study skills and metacognition; and informing and involving parents as learning partners in their children's progress with academic English (Olson, 2014).

However, we will get the most bang for our buck with the following three broad approaches: promoting literacy in the native language, creating specialized ESOL classes designed for LTELs that have a focus on academic English; and content-area classes that simultaneously teach content, language and literacy.

Literacy in the L1 (first language)

One characteristic of ELs is that they are often illiterate in their L1. In *The Language Rich Classroom*, authors Persida and William Himmele included a home language writing sample to administer to students. I would administer this at the beginning of the school year to all my ELs. In this way, a teacher can discover the extent of literacy in the native language. This is important because the extent of literacy in a first language is a predictor for academic performance in English (Ford, 2005; Thomas and Collier, 1997; from Kleyn & Menkin, 2009).

This is not to say that the solution is clearly bilingual education. Bilingual education is only one possible solution, and the quality of the program matters. Some programs are concurrent translation, and this tool proves ineffective, as students simply wait for the translation in their dominant language and disregard the other language (Crawford, 2004 from Kleyn & Menkin, 2009). Also, bilingual education is not always possible in our monolingual culture. In California, Proposition 227 forbids bilingual education (Watanabe, 2014). Foreign language classes could be a solution to build students' language skills (Kleyn & Menkin, 2009), particularly in academic language and across the language domains of reading and writing, since most ELs are only bilingual with oral conversational language (BICS, or Basic Interpersonal Communication) in their L1. Language classes should be designed for these students in mind, such as a native Spanish speaker class, so that students are challenged with a focus on academic language and literacy. They should be encouraged to take native language classes until the Advanced Placement level when they are in high school (Olson, 2014). Additional programs outside bilingual education that can build native language literacy include using bilingual para-professionals or local volunteers; implementing after-school enrichment programs, and providing texts in the students' native languages (Kleyn & Menkin, 2009). These programs particularly benefit ELs for whom Spanish is not their native language, since they cannot qualify for the most common type of bilingual or dual-language programs, those in English/Spanish.

Specialized ESOL class/approach for LTELs

Several articles mention that LTELs have either one of two experiences: being placed in low-level ESOL classes that were appropriate for newcomers (a student referred to them as ‘baby’ classes), or in challenging mainstream classes that demand high levels of literacy and provide no English language development support (Watanabe, 2014), which not surprisingly, result in low academic success. Additionally, they can also be placed in intervention classes (such as reading) that were created for native English speakers and do not address their needs as English Learners (Olson, 2014). LTELs need classes specifically for them (with no newcomer ELs added) that focus on oral academic English language development, literacy and writing skills (Kleyn & Menkin, 2009).

In secondary schools, this would take the form of a separate class in addition to being placed into a mainstream grade level English language arts class. However, in an elementary school setting, a separate class may not be feasible in the schedule. Nonetheless, using pull out, a teacher could follow a set curriculum. The ESOL teacher would have to have the students for enough time to implement the program for it to be effective. In a situation where at least a third of the class was comprised of LTELs, the ESOL teacher could co-teach with the mainstream teacher and implement the curriculum.

Content area classes such as math, science and social studies, that focus simultaneously on literacy and language learning

In the same way, LTELs need literacy taught across the content areas to address their shortcomings in reading and writing in academic content. Classes should be designed with a specific focus on language and vocabulary development, and a study of advanced grammatical structures needed to comprehend and produce academic language (Olson, 2014). Dr. Olson also advocates for the use of carefully structured language objectives that allows for continuous practice of the language.

The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) is a program that fuses language into content and uses language objectives. It is validated research and has been found successful with ELs and non-ELs alike for its focus on academic language. It is not a curriculum; it is an approach. There are eight components and thirty features. SIOP has been implemented for about fifteen years. For more information, visit here [CAL SIOP](#) or here [Pearson SIOP](#). I

have successfully implemented SIOP in my co-taught ESOL science classes in which about half of the ELs comprised of LTELs. In a co-teaching environment, if the ESOL teacher is trained in SIOP, the ESOL teacher can support the mainstream content teacher to incorporate this approach into the classroom.

If we create specialized ESOL classes focusing on academic language, focus on literacy and academic language in the content classes, and develop and maintain native language literacy, we will be helping a generation of English Learners step ahead with their best foot forward. And as ESOL teachers’, that’s our job: to advance the academic success of all ELs, not just those who recently arrived in the United States. After all, if we don’t advocate for those at risk-students early in their education, who will?

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<http://www.latimes.com/local/education/la-me-english-learners-20141218-story.html>

Common Core State Standards (CCSS):

1. Regarding college readiness, the CCSS have never been subjected to any research studies linking them to readiness of any kind.
2. The authors of the Common Core had no research background in being able to determine college and workplace expectations.
3. The CCSS were not benchmarked against other nations' standards, and were created in a top-down approach with no regard to primary grades. Most countries do not have standards for the lower grades, yet an argument made for these standards is that we are falling behind the rest of the world in our educational performance.
4. Very few teachers, other than those board members associated with publishing companies, had any input in the creation of the standards.
5. Although federal law prohibits the federal government from creating a national curriculum, the mandated tests which accompany the CCSS became the de facto curriculum.
6. With transiency high in many states, a standardized curriculum has had an adverse effect on many of our students.
7. There were no modifications or adjustments for our ELL population.
8. Due to the enormity of the costs entailed, we've seen the evisceration of programs related to the arts and hands-on science.
9. Students have to focus more on test strategies than on critical thinking strategies.
10. Emphasis on reading is on informational text, rather than classical literature. The joy of reading has been diminished and critical thinking regarding the author's intention is missing.

(from BATS Refute Common Core Rhetoric)

Much has been written regarding the curriculum, testing, etc. regarding achieving success for our students. What has long been omitted has been any real consideration for the main cause of poor performing schools and students: poverty (Krashen).

The main evidence for the claim that our schools have failed is the fact that American students have not done especially well on international tests of math and science. Studies show, however, that American students from well-funded schools who come from high-income families

outscore nearly all other countries on these kinds of tests (Payne and Biddle, 1999; Bracey, 2009; Martin, 2009). The mediocre overall scores are because the US has a very high percentage of children in poverty, over 20%, compared to Denmark's 3% (http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/eco_chi_pov-economy-child-poverty). (1) Our educational system has been successful; the problem is poverty.

http://www.sdkrashen.com/content/articles/protecting_students.pdf

What is not addressed on ESSA is the root cause of poor performance.

In an upcoming article, soon to be published, written by S. Krashen, M. McDermott and P. Robertson, an argument will be made that the new ESSA will concentrate heavily on testing.

One aspect of ESSA that we can see is the repudiation of President Obama's policy on teacher evaluations based on student test scores. All of us in Maryland have written, and will soon be validating, our SLOs (Student Learning Objective). This Act will perhaps give the states the power to evaluate teachers based on legitimate metrics, unlike with the present SLOs. <http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2014/05/13/report-finds-weak-link-between-value-added-measures-and-teacher-instruction>

Of course it is way too early to evaluate the Every Student Succeeds Act. Will our ELLs be better served? Will curriculum be driven by student needs or testers' bottom line? Will poverty be considered by the new Congress this January when considering student achievement? How will foreign and domestic policies, and electoral politics, play into this? What can we, as Maryland educators, do to advance the needs of our students?

One thing that will be happening will occur at the TESOL Convention in Baltimore this April. MD TESOL will have an advocacy table. If there are any pieces of legislation pertinent to our population making its final passage through the Maryland General Assembly, Advocacy will have information available for participants to add their input. We will not promote any particular legislation but will provide the information for participants to the convention to form their own opinions and write letters to targeted representatives.

Beyond Borders...Connecting Diverse Perspectives

TESOL 2016 International Convention & English Language Expo
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