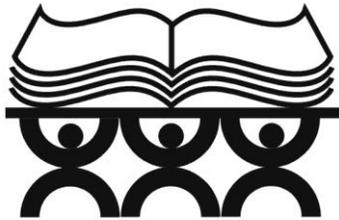


TUTORING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL) LEARNERS

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➤ Introduction to working with ESL Learners

Frontier College's experience in tutoring students with ESL

Frontier College has been involved with newcomers to Canada since 1899. Many of those workers were new immigrants to Canada. In 1919, Alfred Fitzpatrick, the founder of Frontier College, wrote *The Handbook for New Canadians*. ~ This book was written for and issued to Labourer-Teachers. It was very much a book of its time. Fitzpatrick emphasized rigorous drills to increase vocabulary and to build listening and speaking skills. The book contains a picture dictionary and detailed information about Canadian geography, wildlife, government, history, and citizenship.

Our ESL work continues today with migrant farm labourers who come to Canada for seasonal employment. As well, we train volunteer tutors across the country to work with ESL students. We have joined with other agencies, churches, and community groups to help them develop one-to-one ESL tutoring programs of their own.

More recently, Frontier College has developed innovative ESL program models such as Families Learning Together that offer one to one tutoring for adults as well as a learning program for their children all at one location. We also offer ESL tutoring to specific groups such as foreign Live-in Caregivers or “nannies” who cannot easily access government sponsored ESL classes.

Newcomers and Culture Shock

If you've lived in another country or even travelled for extended periods of time away from home, you have likely experienced some degree of culture shock. It may have been as mild as a little homesickness or perhaps a longer period when you intensely disliked where you were and the people who lived there. Now multiply that many times over and this approximates the experience that most immigrants have sometime after moving to a new country. As a traveler or even an overseas worker, you always know inside that one day you will return home to what is familiar and comfortable. However, most immigrants are making probably the most life-changing decision of their lives to pull up their roots and transport themselves, their families and a few possessions, permanently to a totally new and unfamiliar country. Add a completely different language to the mix and you can start to imagine the fear, combined with excitement, that newcomers to Canada experience.

Newcomers can experience severe culture shock which can last a long time and resurface periodically long after their physical arrival. Canada's culture is individualistic and self-centred and many newcomers are isolated and may feel intensely lonely and frustrated. If they do not have a strong support system through family and friends, they will have few resources to help them understand and adjust to their new home. Contact with Canadians may be very limited and frequently confusing or even unpleasant experiences. You may become one of the few Canadian citizens your student gets to know well.

Culture shock can have a significant impact on a newcomer's capacity to learn the language, depending on what phase or stage they are experiencing. What you may initially regard as disinterest or inattentiveness on the part of the learner may in fact be a manifestation of culture shock. It will require patience, empathy and strong listening skills on your part in order to establish a constructive working relationship with your learner.

Understanding Canadian Culture

“Culture” is more than high art or fashion. It consists of habits, behaviours, ideas, beliefs, rituals, technology, and physical artifacts. In short, culture is both the place in which we live and that which we observe. Just as the student may bring many life experiences to the tutor-student relationship, you will bring your own cultural behaviours and ways of thinking.

What seems perfectly natural to you may not be to your student, and vice versa. This can easily lead to misunderstanding. When you find something your student does hard to understand or strange, try not to interpret its meaning and pass judgment. Rather, take the time to discuss it with your student and explain that you do not understand it.

You may be your student’s window into Canadian culture but this does not mean that you should try to change her mannerisms, habits, or ways of thinking. Of course, certain behaviours are unacceptable in Canada and you can alert your student to these. Always use your judgment when discussing cultural topics with your student.

ESL students and the SCIL method

For many ESL students who have studied English in crowded, multi-level classes, one-to-one tutoring is a new (and welcome) approach to language learning. Your student may still be enrolled in full or part-time ESL courses at a community college or adult learning centre. Or, you may be the only “teacher” the student sees every week. In either case, you will be an important part of your student’s life. You may be one of the first English-speaking friends your student will get to know.

The SCIL method allows your student to learn beyond the classroom curriculum. Together you map out a learning plan. As with any other student, build on strengths and what she already knows. Find out where and how she uses English in her daily life. ESL students have a wide range of experiences and goals. Your student might need to learn words and phrases to communicate with her doctor, neighbours, union steward, or children’s teacher. Her longer term goals might be finding a better job, attending university, or “perfecting” her English. Many ESL students involved in one-to-one tutoring are especially interested in improving their pronunciation, speaking skills, and written and oral grammar.

[You may be one of the first English speaking people your student gets to know.]

Keep in mind that your student may be unfamiliar with the principles of student-centred learning. In some cultures, the teacher is the expert. Your student may be used to learning by rote and not telling the teacher what she would like to learn. Right from the start, set a friendly and informal tone to your tutoring sessions (this does not mean unplanned!) Tell your student about yourself. Show her that you are a learning partner rather than a “teacher.” Do not be surprised if she seems uncomfortable telling you what she wants to learn. As your relationship develops, the initial student-teacher feel to your meetings will diminish. Just take the time to get to know each other.

Never assume that ESL students have not learned to read and write. Many can read and write in several languages. This section is written for ESL students who already have some experience reading and writing in the Roman alphabet. See the section called *Recommended Reading* for information about working with an ESL literacy student. ESL literacy students include those who speak a language for which there is no written form, those who are not familiar with the Roman alphabet, and those who have not learned to read and write in their first language.

[Many ESL students can read and write in several languages.]

Your Role as an ESL Tutor

Your role as a tutor for an adult ESL learner is very similar to and follows essentially the same principles as working with an adult literacy learner who speaks English as their first language. However, there are some additional factors to keep in mind when working with a newcomer student.

Be sure to:

- Assist learners in meeting their own **personal goals**, i.e. employment, improving their pronunciation, etc.
- Help the learner to **gain more control over their lives** by helping them develop the skills required to meet their everyday needs *
- Help build their **self-confidence** in using the language in different real-life situations
- Help them become familiar with Canadian culture by acting as a **guide and facilitator**
- Be open to **learning yourself** about their cultural norms and beliefs

Be careful not to:

- Impose your own beliefs or cultural values on the learner
- Impose your own learning style or conceptions of learning and education

* One of the most important things you can do as an ESL tutor is to help your learner do something for themselves using English that they were unable to do before. The sense of having control over one's own life and not having to depend on others for help, is something every adult needs in order to feel self-reliant. Helping your learner achieve this, even if it's something as mundane as ordering a coffee or using the public transit, will help build their confidence and sense of independence.

➤ ESL Language Teaching Approach

Our approach to language learning is communicative. Students need to know English to communicate in their day-to-day lives. Modern ESL teaching follows what is known as the Communicative Approach, which can be defined as follows:

The Communicative Approach stresses and promotes the use of real-life language by the learner in real situations and contexts, rather than emphasizing grammar rules and structure. The teacher should be encouraging the learner to use the language creatively and meaningfully in order to accomplish their goals.

Many of us who went through the English school system in Canada many years ago will recall without much fondness how we were taught French. It was made up of a lot of verb conjugations and repetition of largely useless sentences unrelated to real life. We do not wish to teach newcomers English using the same method. The Communicative Method is intended to build learners' skills to use the language to actually communicate for a real purpose. It does not ignore grammar and syntax but rather incorporates it into themes and contexts that learners will actually use.

The Language Skill Areas

There are four primary language skill areas that one must work on and develop to become fluent communicators in any language. These are:

1. **speaking (including pronunciation)**
2. **listening**
3. **reading**
4. **writing**

Woven within these, one will also learn grammar, proper sentence structure (syntax), and new vocabulary.

Canadian Language Benchmarks

The *Canadian Language Benchmarks* is used across Canada in ESL classes to assess learner levels and progress. Here is an example from the CLB of the four language skills of a Level 1 (Beginner) learner:

Speaking 1

I can greet people:

Hello!
How are you?
I'm fine, thank you.

I can ask some questions:

What time is it?
Pardon me?

I can give some information:

M-A-R-I-A.
555-6729.
I'm from India.

Reading 1

I can read the alphabet.

I can read some words that I see often.

I am learning the sounds of letters.

I can read a short sentence with the help of a picture.

I can read:

Name
Phone Number
Address

Listening 1

I can understand greetings:

Hello! How are you?
Please come in!

I can understand questions:

What is your name?
How do you spell it?
What is your telephone number?

I can understand information:

I am from Colombia.
It's ten o'clock.

Writing 1

I can write the alphabet.

I can write numbers.

I can write my name and address.

I can write my telephone number.

I can fill out a simple form.

I can write a short list.

Tutors can make use of the CLB to get an idea of what skills their learner has and what they need to learn. However, it is important to note that *language learners are seldom at the same level in all four skill areas*. In actual fact, most learners are stronger in some areas and weaker in others. For example, many

newcomers in Canada have actually studied English in their home countries before emigrating and may have a fairly strong vocabulary and knowledge of grammar. However, they have had very little actual speaking experience in real situations, and so have a very difficult time understanding spoken English (listening) and communicating orally (speaking). Other newcomers who have actually lived in Canada a long time may have picked up a lot of speaking and listening skills but may still have poor reading and writing skills which are of a more mechanical nature.

For more information on the Canadian Language Benchmarks and how to use them, go to www.language.ca

Learner Profile 1

Grace is in her late 40's and has two children, one in high school, the other in university. She's been working in a garment factory for the last 6 years but was an elementary school teacher in her country of origin. Grace would like a better job, maybe even in the educational field again, but feels held back by her poor speaking skills. She's conscious of problems with her pronunciation and she lacks confidence speaking in public.

Grace has studied English in her country of origin and also for several months in a class after coming to Canada. Overall, she's at an Intermediate to Lower Advanced level (CLB 4 – 5) but her reading and writing skills are higher than her speaking skills (level 3).

➤ Assessing Learner's Needs and Abilities

It is vital to get a good idea of what are a learner's language abilities, needs and goals before starting actual tutoring sessions. Assessment can take various forms, from very informal such as simply chatting and taking notes to complex language assessment tests carried out by a trained assessor. At Frontier College programs, we usually do not choose the latter form because our programs are intended to be more informal and non-intimidating for learners. Nevertheless, it is possible to gain a reasonable understanding of your learner's abilities and needs without carrying out a complex assessment.

A language needs assessment:

- Enables you to identify the student's strengths and to build on and further develop them
- Helps you identify themes in the student's immediate circumstances (such as a need for housing) which require specific English skills
- Helps you, in consultation with the student, develop a long term action plan.

Assessing Your Learner's Needs and Goals

This is generally carried out over your first few meetings with the learner. Your first meeting is usually more of a social one where you can talk and start to get to know each other. But take along a pen and some paper to take some notes. If your student is intermediate or advanced, the conversation you have will be fairly straightforward. But listen for your student's strengths and needs. You can ask questions such as:

Where is it you need to use English? Do you need English for shopping, finding work, dealing with government agencies?

Where do you usually speak English now?

What problems do you have with English?

What do you hope to do in the future?

One rule of thumb is not to ask a student any questions you wouldn't like to be asked. Although you are not formally testing your student, you are assessing her language level. Pay attention. If she doesn't understand something you say, rephrase it and slow down. Try to use simpler language and phrases where possible, avoiding a lot of slang, but without using childish language. Is she confident or is she reluctant to speak? Is

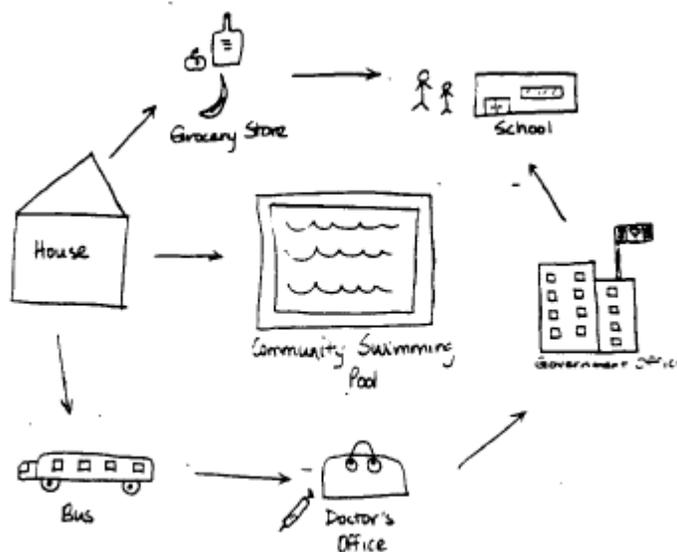
she able to express her opinions and feelings? Do you understand each other?
Most important, relax. If you are at ease, your student will be less nervous as well.

Learner Profile 2

Wei has been living in Canada for almost 10 years and is now well into her 60's. She came here to join her son and his family. Wei now spends much of her time looking after her grandchild while the parents are working. She lives in a community where many people around her speak her first language and she is able to meet her basic needs without using English. She is fully literate in Mandarin. Wei has not taken any formal English classes since coming to Canada but has picked up various words and phrases over the years. However, she is often aware of the limitations of not being able to understand or converse in English, especially with her grandchild who speaks English all the time. Wei doesn't have a specific learning goal in mind but simply wants to be able to understand and communicate at a higher level. Wei is at a Beginner Level (CLB 1-2)

Mapping technique

This is an easy visual method for determining your learner's language needs. The mapping technique usually provides lots of information and some comic relief. It works like this. During your lesson, draw a simple map of the places you visit on a daily or weekly basis. As you draw, explain where you visit, what you do there, and most important, which of the language skill areas (speaking, listening, reading, writing) you use at each stop.



Next, ask your student (or gesture appropriately) to draw her map and explain as you did. This will give you an indication of what your student already knows and what her language needs are.

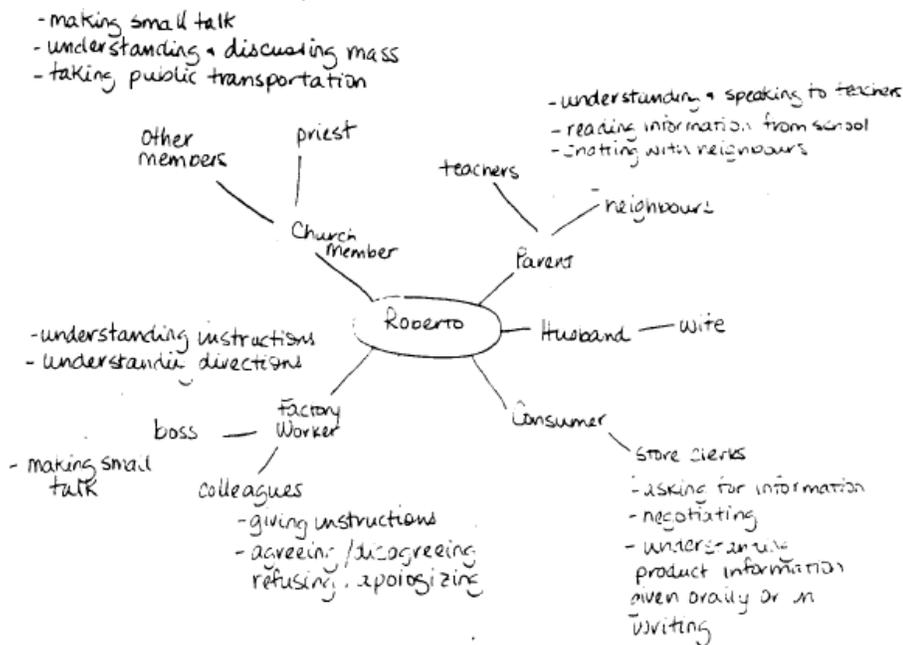
[If you are relaxed your student will be relaxed.]

Learner Profile 3

Mohammed has been living in Canada for about one year and is 28 years old. He has had a few temporary jobs as a labourer but needs to find a regular job to support his wife and young daughter. Mohammed would like to find a job as a computer technician but might accept any job if it is full time and permanent. He didn't finish high school but has taken computer courses in his country of origin. He has not taken any regular ESL classes since arriving in Canada. Mohammed is at an Upper Beginner to Lower Intermediate level (CLB 2 - 3)

Role technique

Another way of discovering general information about your student is to discuss the roles he plays in his daily life. You could start by drawing a role diagram of your own like this:



Here is the procedure for creating a role diagram:

1. Ask your student to draw his own diagram or determine his roles through simple questions about his life.
2. Determine the responsibilities that go along with each role. For example, as a worker, does he need to respond to requests for information and relate to colleagues?
3. Determine with whom he communicates.
4. Determine the situations in which he will have to communicate. For example, in his job, does he communicate at an information desk and on the telephone?
5. Determine the language, factual information, and cultural knowledge he will need in order to communicate effectively.

Based on your discussions about the student's needs and circumstances, talk about goals in general and, if possible, try to define them in more specific terms.

Assessing Your Learner's Language Abilities

Generally when learners want to join a Frontier College tutoring program, they are typically asked to complete an application or information form of some kind. This is useful in a few ways. First of all, it provides us with the essential information about the learner, such as their full name, address, phone number and also other useful facts including their country of origin, first language, how long they've been living in Canada, and so forth. The application form can also include other sections where the learner can check off specific learning goals, such as finding employment and using English at work, going to the doctor, talking with their children's teachers, etc. Lastly, it can include a section where the learner does some writing, answering the question, "What Did You Do Yesterday?"

You can gain a wealth of information and insight into a learner's language skills by seeing how they

completed the form. Did they understand the questions? How complete was the information they provided? Did they print or use cursive writing? How well were they able to form the letters? Were they able to write on the lines or in the spaces provided?

The writing sample can obviously give you a good idea of their writing ability. Did they write in complete sentences? Did they write using the past tense since they are writing about what they did yesterday? Did they write in list form or in a narrative form, as in a story? See writing samples below.

Learner Profile 4

Hawa has been living in Canada for over 8 years and came as a Convention Refugee. She attended a LINC class at Level 1 for a few months but stopped when she became pregnant with her 4th child. Her other children are 10, 6 and 3 years old. Hawa had only sporadic education when growing up and reads and writes even in her first language with difficulty. She is able to complete simple forms in English and recognizes a few basic words. She can speak at a higher level than she can read and write. One of Hawa's main concerns is the health of her children. She struggles with speaking with a doctor and understanding medical instructions.

Hawa is at a CLB Level 1 but still has some difficulties with basic literacy skills such as phonemic awareness and penmanship.

What Did You Do Yesterday?

Please write about what you did during the day yesterday. You can write as much or as little as you want – you don't have to fill every line. Please *do not* ask anyone to help you with the writing.

I wake up 7 o'clock
clean my ~~te~~ teeth
pak up my ~~chait~~ children lunch

Learner Profile 5

Jenn has been in Canada for 3 or 4 years and is now enrolled in a social work program at a community college. Although her speaking and listening skills are still not fluent, she is able to cope with most situations as long as people don't speak too fast or use a lot of slang. However, she is struggling with the higher level reading and writing required for her course. Her teachers have criticized her written work and she has misunderstood questions and assignments. She also has difficulty reading English newspapers and items she receives in the mail.

Jenn's reading, writing level is Intermediate (CLB3-4)

What did you do yesterday?

When I got up I ^{got} ready my
children for school. I have two
daughters and they have long
hairs and it makes me a lot of
work in the morning.

When they went to school
I have been cleaning for home
for almost 2 hours. Then

I went ~~to~~ to school and brought
my younger daughter home.

Then I was preparing lunch,
playing with daughter and
listening music. Also I was reading
English. At 10 we, altogether went
to bed.

[Your student probably understands more than she can express.]

Using Picture Dictionaries

Picture dictionaries (i.e. *Word by Word*) specially designed for adult language students, catalogues or shopping flyers, are also handy at a first meeting. Encourage your student to describe what she sees. While the student is speaking, take some notes. What English words does she already know? Does she know how to say, "I don't understand," "What is this?" or "Please say it again." Listen for specific grammar and pronunciation problems. And don't forget to take note of strengths. If a picture dictionary isn't available, shopping flyers from grocery and department stores work well too.

Integrating the Language Skill Areas

As noted above, there are four primary language skill areas that one must work on to become fluent in English (or any language). These are speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is important to note however, that *these are not all distinct skill areas to be learned separately*. They are in fact integrated with one another and reinforce each other. It's easy to see how speaking and listening go together, as do reading and writing. It's difficult, if not impossible, for example, to do speaking without also listening. But even reading will also impact on your speaking skills because you are learning new words, phrases and expressions, observing grammar and sentence structure, some of which you will incorporate when you carry on a conversation. Similarly, as your speaking improves, you will become a more confident reader and writer.

When finding or developing learning activities to do with your learner, you will want to incorporate some of all four skills areas into the activity. That's not to say that all four need to be present in equal measure. An activity might emphasize one particular skill area over another, such as reading a text, but it may then involve answering some written comprehension questions, and a discussion about the text, thus covering all four.

The following sections provide some background on each of the language skill areas, followed by some suggested learning activities that focus primarily on that skill area.

➤ Building Speaking Skills

A critical problem for many learners is their poor or inconsistent ability to communicate orally. Often their understanding of grammar and their reading and writing skills far surpass their speaking skills. Also, they frequently understand much more than they are able to express. Frustrated in their attempts to express their ideas and feelings to others, it is no surprise that many students name conversation skills as their chief area to work on with a tutor. Why? They need a safe place to practice their speaking and to make mistakes.

While an understanding of grammar may provide the basis for communication, being able to express oneself is more than making correct sentences in controlled exercises. The speaking activities you design should draw other skills and knowledge into meaningful communicative activities.

In one-to-one tutoring sessions, speaking just happens. As you and your student get to know each other, there will be lots to talk about. But keep in mind that your student needs to speak to others (who are not nearly as patient as you!) when you are not around.

The ability of your student to speak with confidence:

- helps him be understood by others
- helps him become more credible to others as a result of being understood
- builds his ability to understand and use appropriate language for different social settings
- develops his independence and self-confidence in a variety of circumstances.

When selecting and designing speaking activities you need to bear in mind your student's language level and, just as important, his real and immediate life circumstances. If you get to know your student well at the beginning and you develop a good rapport, themes and topics will present themselves naturally. Remember the obvious survival themes in every newcomer's life.

Newcomers' Key Survival Themes

health	food and clothing
transportation	family
housing	education (self, children)
work	banking
recreation	citizenship/government issues

These themes relate to various situations in which your student will have to speak and be understood. Some of these are:

- meeting people
- getting acquainted
- getting to know neighbours
- getting directions or information
- taking phone messages
- arranging appointments
- dealing with emergencies
- talking on the phone/getting information
- looking for a job
- applying for a job/interviews
- looking after housing needs
- using public transportation
- dealing with merchants

If you work on a theme such as going to the doctor, find out what she already knows. Does she know the English names of body parts and ailments? Encourage her to teach you how to say the words in her language. Does she know how to say “I have a _____ .(headache, fever, etc.)? At this point you are introducing a relevant grammar point (using the verb “to have” in the simple present) in a meaningful context. More about grammar later on.

▪ Activities that Emphasize Speaking

Role play

The idea of a role play is to act out and explore language requirements for particular situations. As a follow-up, give your student tasks that require her to enter into the situations simulated in the role plays.

Follow these steps:

1. Before the session, write out a situation and dialogue for the role play. A job interview is a good example. In the write-up, explain roles and relevant cultural points, and list vocabulary and key phrases.
2. At the session, have the student read the write-up. Discuss vocabulary, cultural points, etc. and ensure that she understands how a role play works. (The concept of roles may itself be foreign)
3. Play the roles, following the dialogue. Switch roles. Discuss ideas for other role plays.

Discussions

Some ideas for discussions:

- describe and interpret pictures and photos
- bring in a short article from a newspaper, read and discuss together
- describe objects (qualities, colours, shapes, uses)
- compare and contrast (objects, pictures, sports, experiences, films, etc.)
- describe and interpret recorded material (radio advertisements, newscasts, TV shows, etc.)
- solve dilemmas and survival problems. e.g. *Suppose you lost your wallet and money in a foreign country. What would you do? What five things would you take to a desert island and why?*
- state and support opinions

- have the student describe things (what makes her happy, what she likes to do, the things she cannot live without. etc.)

ESL Students and the Telephone

For many students, from beginner level to advanced, speaking on the phone is particularly difficult. Why? The student has no visual cues to help her understand the conversation. She cannot look at the shape of the speaker's mouth to help distinguish different sounds. She cannot interpret the speaker's gestures and body language. If possible, arrange to speak over the phone regularly or make pretend calls at your tutoring session by facing away from one another while speaking. Practicing with you will give her confidence. At your session, simulate a phone conversation. Put your chairs back to back.

Activities for More Advanced Students

It is important that you help your more advanced student understand and function using different communication patterns that fit the social context. Fluent speakers tailor their language to particular social settings, their motives for communicating, and the expectations of others. Our communication functions change as we change social contexts. For instance, we can ask for a cup of coffee in several ways:

- Gimme a coffee.
- Give me a coffee, please.
- Can I have a coffee, please?
- I'll have a coffee, please.
- Do you mind if I have a coffee?
- Would it be possible for me to have a cup of coffee, please?

Common Communication Functions

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requesting • Agreeing and disagreeing • Interrupting • Offering and declining offers • Giving advice • Persuading • Stating opinions and arguing • Apologizing • Expressing likes and dislikes |
|--|

The ability to understand or not understand language functions often indicates a student's level of English fluency. When teaching language functions, you need to explain not only the different ways to express feelings and ideas but also how they relate to various situations or contexts. This can be tricky (it's often something you know intuitively) but also a lot of fun. Two books in the resource list are excellent guides for teaching functions. They are *Functions of American English: Communication Activities for the Classroom* and *Take Part: Speaking Canadian English*.

Pronunciation

Improving pronunciation ranks high on many E.S.L. students' wish lists with good reason. Your student wants to be understood when she speaks. She also wants to be seen as credible when talking to a co-worker, employer, or bank teller. So, pay attention to her pronunciation. Pronunciation primarily has to do with the saying of individual sounds and sound combinations. There are many more sounds in English than there are letters of the alphabet. More critically for the learner, the English language has many sounds and sound

combinations that may not exist in their first language. Thus, the muscles in your student's mouth are not used to producing some English sounds. If you doubt this, try to say words in a language such as Cantonese or Mandarin to a native speaker and watch them double over in laughter as you mangle it completely. There are very subtle tonal sounds in Chinese that most English speakers cannot easily distinguish or reproduce.

Be aware that changing pronunciation takes time. And also keep in mind, improving pronunciation does not mean eradicating a "foreign accent." A student's accent is part of her identity. Instead, focus on errors that make your student hard to understand and cause problems with communication. You do not need a degree in phonetics or linguistics to help your student with pronunciation. Here are some ways to get started.

- Use a tape recorder. It is particularly useful for students to hear both their voice and yours to be able to correct themselves. As well, you can borrow the tape from the student to prepare for next week's meeting. Listening to it at home will help you get a handle on her pronunciation strengths and needs.
- Take a small mirror to your sessions. A student who has trouble making either of the "th" sounds (as in *that* and *think*) looks in the mirror to check that her tongue is between her teeth. Let's say your student says *tin* instead of *thin*. First, check that she can hear and identify the "th" sound. Write *tin* and *thin* on a paper. Then you say *thin*. Ask her to circle the word she hears. If she doesn't hear "th," show her how you make the sound. Exaggerate the sound, and explain the tongue is positioned between the upper and lower teeth. Now show her that when you make the "t" sound, the tongue touches the roof of the mouth. Now it's her turn to try to make the "th" sound.
- Use a cut-away diagram of the human mouth, with the lips, teeth, tongue and palate illustrated (see diagram below) to illustrate the positioning of these to produce specific sounds.
- Use minimal pairs like *thin/tin* and *thanks/tanks* to isolate the "t" and "th" sounds. Use everyday words your student already knows or uses to distinguish between sounds. Minimal pairs exercises of all types can easily be found on the internet, including those with online exercises using sound.
- Generate and practice sentences that have the problem sounds such as "My tall, thin brother took the train to Thunder Bay."
- Find meaningful contexts in which the sound occurs naturally and make up some conversation topics for. For example, write and act out a role play about a visit to the dentist. Insert "th" sounds wherever possible. (*'Doctor, I have three sore teeth and a sore throat...'*)
- Do not expect instant results. Do not interrupt to correct her every time she mispronounces the sound. Encourage her to listen to herself and self-correct whenever possible.

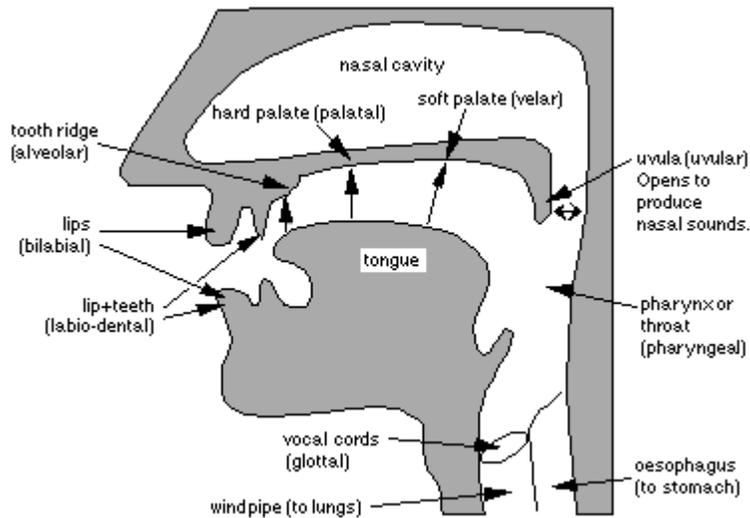
Other key aspects of pronunciation include:

Intonation: The pattern of rise and fall of the pitch of a sentence. For example, in English our pitch rises at the end of a question to indicate that the sentence is a question or drops when stating a fact.

Stress: Emphasis on a particular *syllable* or word: *refuse; refuse; Where are you going? Where are you going?*

Rhythm: The sense of flow in speech, marked by the stress and timing of syllables in words and sentences.

Linking: The blending together of words within the same phrase or sentence, so that there is a seamless transition from one word to the next, i.e. "*Howareyadoin'?*"



[There are many more sounds in English than there are letters of the alphabet.]

➤ Building Listening Skills

Just as many students need to learn to pronounce new sounds to make themselves understood, they also need to make sense of the jumble of verbal noises they hear every day. This involves distinguishing different sounds from one another and comprehending the meaning of what is spoken. There are many occasions in which English is spoken very clearly and even slowly. But there are even more which can be extraordinarily difficult and frustrating for a student.

[English is not always spoken clearly and slowly. Your student will have to learn to understand it in a variety of situations.]

Think of your own speaking habits. When you are angry or in a rush, do you speak slowly and enunciate every syllable clearly? You likely use contractions such as *don't*, *I'm*, and even *gonna* and *wanna*. Where and why does your student need to understand spoken English? Make a list together. It might look like this:

- at work (listening for instructions, talking with co-workers)
- on the bus, train, or subway (listening for directions and public announcements)
- at the immigration office or community agency (listening in an interview)
- getting advice or instructions from a health professional
- on the phone (dealing with emergencies and using voice mail)
- at home (watching television and listening to the radio).

Use these, and other situations suggested by your student, to form the basis for your listening activities. Then follow up the listening activity by writing something about the topic or by reading a related story.

There are two main types of listening activities:

1. Activities for perception (learning to distinguish individual sounds and words)
2. Activities for comprehension (learning to understand what was spoken and how to respond appropriately)

As with all language areas, build your lessons around your student's concrete needs and strengths. Use

listening activities that encourage your student to respond to what she hears. Use your creativity. The best materials are authentic ones that have a real, communicative purpose. Do not “spring” listening tasks on your student. Explain the purpose of the activity and ensure that she has some prior knowledge of the concepts and vocabulary in the exercise.

▪ **Activities that Emphasize Listening**

- For beginners, try **Total Physical Response** (TPR). This is a technical term for simply giving verbal instructions to your student and seeing if she carries them out correctly. Start off with something straightforward such as, “Please give me the pencil.” (Make sure she already knows what *please*, *give*, and *pencil* mean.) You can design activities of this kind to practice verbs (“Brush your teeth”) or prepositions (“Put the pen on top of the book”). It works best if the activity has a common purpose or theme to the commands.
- For an intermediate or advanced student with an artistic bent, try origami or model building. Read the instructions while she listens, folds, and creates. You watch, help, and pay attention to what she does and doesn’t understand.

Adapt listening activities to suit a beginner or more advanced student.

- Listen to a newscast or weather report and ask your student specific questions like, “Is it going to rain tomorrow?”
- Get your student to phone a museum, movie theatre, or any other place that has voice mail or an answering machine to listen to information about admission cost, hours, and special events.
- Tape a message from your own answering machine. Ask your student to listen to it, then ask her questions about it
- Use a map. Give directions and have your student trace the route with her finger.

Identify the word

Give your student a series of paired words: cheap, cheaper; hard, harder. Then read some sentences containing one word of the pairs (His car is cheaper.). Have the student identify the word she heard. Here you are teaching comparative adjectives but you could also use this technique to teach many other points such as verb tenses, adverbs, and adjectives.

Source: J. House. A Guide for Tutoring Adult E.S.L. Students.

[The best learning resources have a real life purpose.]

Fill in the blanks (cloze exercise)

Prepare a passage to read and a student work sheet that has the same passage but with some of the words missing. Read it once and have the student just listen. Read it a second time and have the student fill in the blanks on the work sheet.

Cloze exercises can also be designed using pre-recorded newscasts, telephone recordings, song lyrics and more. The missing words can all be a certain type, i.e. all adjectives, prepositions, etc., if you want to practice those, or just every 5th or 10th word. This activity also opens up the opportunity for discussions about the meaning of the material.

Circle the answer

Prepare several short passages and a student work sheet with multiple choice statements. Read the passages aloud and ask your student to circle the correct statements.

- A.** *Linda goes to the bank.*
Linda is going to the bank.
Linda's going home.

- B.** *He doesn't like snow.*
He likes snow.
He is going skiing.

What's wrong with this picture?

Describe something in the room and make some obvious mistakes (*The chair is on the desk*). Have the student stop you when you make a mistake or have her note the mistakes on paper and tell you what they are at the end of the description. Follow the same procedure with a picture that has many elements. While you both look at the picture, describe the things you see.

Source: J. House. A Guide for Tutoring Adult E.S.L. Students.

Charts or grids

Give your student a chart or grid to record information on as it is spoken. For example, read several scripts involving people making appointments to see a doctor, dentist, or employment counsellor. Have the student fill in the chart with the caller's name and the time of the appointment under the correct day.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

Source: J. House. A Guide for Tutoring Adult E.S.L. Students.

Here is a sample script for Chart Exercise

A: Good morning, Dr. Stone's office.

B: Good morning. I wonder if I could make an appointment with Dr. Stone, please.

A: Who's calling, please?

B: My name is Mohammed Khan.

A: Are you a patient of the doctor?

B: Yes, I am.

A: Oh, ok. Uh, which day are you available?

B: I only have Friday. I wonder if, ah, anything's available.

A: Yes, we have an opening at 4:00 Friday afternoon, is that ok?

B: Uh, is it possible, uh, to get anything a little bit earlier?

A: I'm sorry, Mr. Khan, that's all we have left on Friday.

B: All right, 4:00 will be fine then.

A: Ok, and is it Mohamed or Mohammed?

B: It's Mohammed with two m's.

A: Ok then, see you Friday.

B: Thank you.

A: You're welcome.

B: Bye-bye.

A: Bye-bye.

Follow up this exercise with role plays that have the student make appointments with various people.

➤ Building Reading Skills

As we know already, reading is a complex process of decoding symbols on paper into meaningful information. Fluent readers read a great amount of material every day, both for work and pleasure. But even the most skilled reader reading his own language sometimes has trouble because of unfamiliar vocabulary, difficult or unfamiliar content, or a complex writing style.

Keep in mind that ESL students who read in several other languages are not new readers. They are not learning to read, rather they are reading to learn. In other words, students who read in Spanish, Farsi, or Vietnamese have important reading skills that are transferrable to English from their first language. You will not need to teach your non-literacy ESL student to look for the main idea in a text, or to skim and scan for information. Your student is reading to learn about a new language and culture.

Reading Strategies

All readers use three primary strategies to decode and make meaning of text:

- **Phonics** – the sound/letter strategy
- **Syntax** – the word order strategy (i.e. subject + verb + object)
- **Semantics** – the meaning and context strategy (using the familiar words in a passage to help make sense of something)

More advanced readers use additional strategies or techniques when reading a text for the first time:

- **Skimming** a passage to get the general idea and then reading it more slowly
- **Scanning** a passage to find a specific piece of information
- **Predicting** what will happen next in the story or text based on information we already know

[Literate ESL students are reading to learn.]

As your student reads, not only is she learning about the text, she is finding out how English works. She is paying attention to new vocabulary, different verb tenses, and word order as well as the ideas in the text.

Remember that unlike a new reader whose first language is English, your student may have difficulty guessing the meaning of an unknown word in a sentence. Why? Second language students have difficulty with English syntax or word order. Your student may not be able to predict if the new word is a verb, noun, adjective, or adverb. A new adult reader who is a fluent English speaker knows inherently that our language works like this:

subject + verb + object
You read the newspaper.

place + time
Igor goes to work every morning.
not
Igor goes every morning to work.

But second language readers cannot always rely on syntax to determine if something they are reading sounds right. They don't know the language well enough. And don't even try to justify English spelling patterns and sound-letter correspondence to a student familiar with more straightforward spelling systems

(used in Spanish, for example). Such students, used to pronouncing every letter in a word, will of course apply this strategy in English. It is common for students to read *know* as *k-now* or *comb* as *com-b* the first time they see the word in print. So be prepared for your student to say something like “English is crazy.” And how can you disagree?

[Your ESL student cannot rely on syntax to determine if what he is reading sounds right.]

▪ **Activities that Emphasize Reading**

Whenever possible, use whatever is in your student’s environment. That means reading everyday things like menus, catalogues, brochures, posters, billboards, medicine labels, and the yellow pages.

Some factors to consider when choosing reading material for your student

- Is it interesting and relevant for the student?
- Is the vocabulary appropriate for the student?
- Are the concepts obscure or commonplace?
- Are the concepts specific to one culture or are they universal? (Are you sure?)
- Is there too much to remember?
- Are the grammatical constructions easy or difficult?

Using the newspaper

- Read the weather map to learn about Canadian geography, locate and read names of provinces and capital cities, and saying numbers or temperatures.
- Decipher abbreviations and scan the classified ads for apartments for rent or items for sale.
- Read headlines or photo captions. Build on what your student already knows about the news item from TV news or a community newspaper in the student’s own language. You do not need to read whole articles.
- For a beginner, use food flyers. Scan the pages for specific items, prices, quantities.

Other materials

- poems
- recipes
- movie reviews
- song lyrics
- instruction manuals
- government publications such as *A Look at Canada*, to help newcomers (as well as people who have lived in Canada for several years) prepare for their Canadian citizenship test.

Pre-reading Activities

1. Discuss the material with your student and encourage him to talk about what he already knows about the subject. You could ask him to write down all he knows about the subject in point form, a mind map, or a simple paragraph.
2. Brainstorm ideas about the content of the text using titles, headings, accompanying photos, etc.

3. Pre-teach some key vocabulary he will need to understand the text.
4. Discuss the strategies he will use in reading the text (skimming, scanning, reading for details).

Post-reading Activities

1. Ask content questions:
 - What happens in the story?
 - What qualifications do you need for this job?
 - What happened before (or after) what you read?Avoid asking, “Do you understand this?” because students, wanting to please their tutors, will often say “yes” whether they understand or not.
2. Ask the student to retell a story from a different point of view or in a different tense.
3. Ask the student to summarize the text orally or in writing (or one after the other).
4. Gather and read other related texts, such as articles offering a different point of view on the same subject.
5. Design follow-up tasks such as drawing a picture of the situation depicted in a text, writing a letter to the editor, or developing counter arguments.

[Ask open ended questions to avoid yes or no answers.]

Reading Aloud

Reading aloud is not the same as reading to one’s self. When reading aloud, a person is not necessarily paying attention to the meaning of the text and is often preoccupied with making it sound right to the listener. If you want your student to comprehend a text, ask him to read silently. If you want to identify pronunciation problems or to have the student practice pronunciation (though this is not natural speech), then you could ask him to read aloud. Always make sure that your student knows and agrees with the reason for reading aloud.

➤ Building Writing Skills

Writing is often neglected in the tutoring process perhaps in part because many learners are less concerned about this language skill or they find it too mechanical and labourious. In one-to-one ESL tutoring, students usually want to concentrate on improving their speaking, listening, and pronunciation. But don’t forget to include writing activities that will reinforce your student’s other language skills in your sessions. Writing requires organization, accuracy, and care in selecting vocabulary and verb tense. So, it makes sense that spending time writing will help students to pay closer attention to their accuracy in other skill areas such as reading, speaking, listening, and pronunciation.

The term “learning to write” can mean learning to:

- Print
- Write in cursive style
- Spell correctly
- Construct complete sentences with correct grammar, punctuation and capitalization

These are the mechanical aspects of writing. But “learning to write” also involves the *creative* aspects of

writing:

- Writing short notes, messages and emails
- Expressing thoughts and ideas such as in a letter to a friend or in a journal
- Developing accurate reports, business correspondence, or essays with clear and logical statements
- Creating a story with vivid characters, settings and action

A Word of Caution

If the focus is only on the mechanical aspects of writing, students may learn those skills well but may still have difficulty in composing clear, natural-sounding sentences and paragraphs. They become so focused on the penmanship and punctuation that they lose the message or point of the piece of writing. This may result in a fear of writing on the part of the student. Make sure you do not over-correct the mechanical aspects while overlooking the thought or message of the piece.

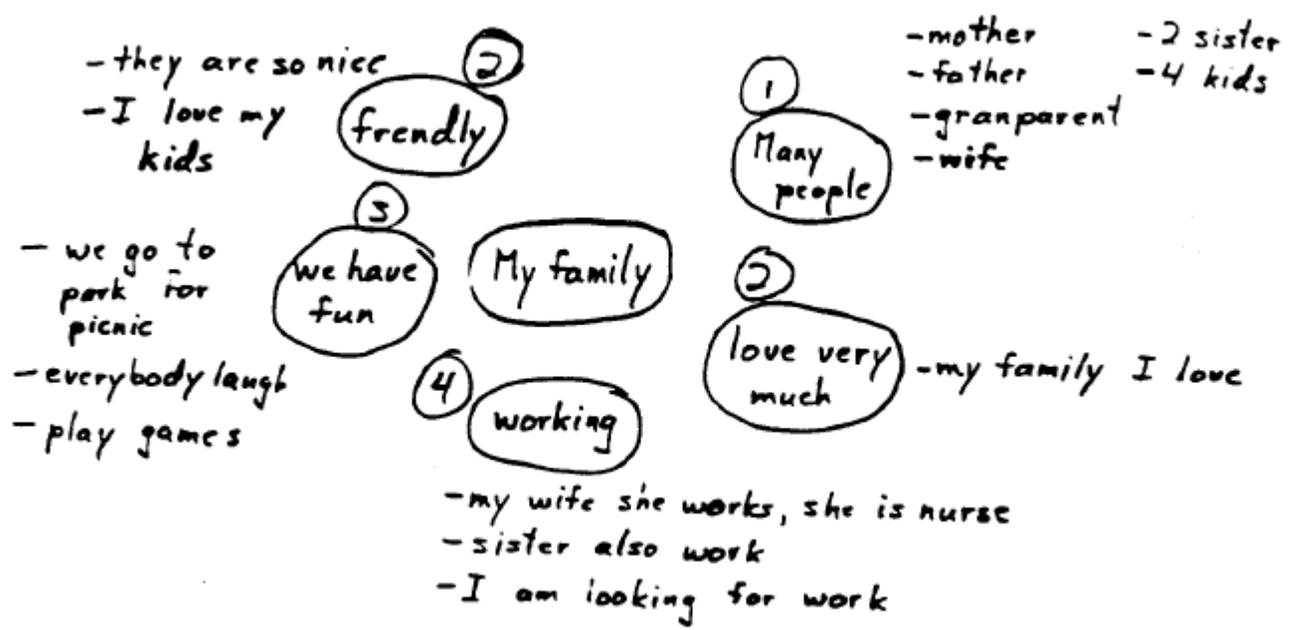
■ Activities that Emphasize Writing

Use writing activities that encourage your student to express ideas, knowledge, and experience. Many writing activities are not “authentic” in so far as they do not enhance the student’s ability to communicate in real-life situations. Authentic writing is distinguished by the way in which sentences are connected logically, sequentially, and by a common theme. For instance, exercises that consist of changing verb tenses in a list of unrelated sentences is hardly authentic. On the other hand, asking a student to write a letter to a newspaper editor draws on considerable communicative ability.

Keep in mind the day-to-day writing needs of your student. She may want your help with job applications, notes to her children’s teachers, letters of complaint to her landlord or bank, and all kinds of forms.

Mind mapping

Mind mapping is sometimes known as brainstorming on paper. It is an excellent way to generate ideas for a writing project. The procedure is as follows. Have your student choose a topic and write the topic in the centre of a sheet of paper. Then have him write down all he knows about the topic or all that he wants to write about the topic. Talking about the topic with the student during the mapping may also be useful. After the map is done, the ideas can be clustered and sequenced. The student can go on to write a more formal outline or the mind map can serve as the outline.



Lists

Lists can be made anytime and about any topic. When starting out, it is a good idea to ask your student to make a few lists that will help you get acquainted with each other. At this stage, lists with headings such as *Things I like to do*, *Important people in my life*, *Important events in my life*, and *Things I love* are useful. To generate ideas and topics for writing together you could make lists of personal possessions, memories, controversial statements, descriptions of another country, etc.

Composing

Discuss the whole process of writing with your student and make sure she understands that the composing stage is the drafting stage — one step rather than the final step. Also talk about the correcting process, what you will correct and why. Make sure that she agrees with the purpose and way of correcting.

Here are some general ideas for writing exercises:

Narrative

- Choose topics from the student's own experience.
- Display a sequence of pictures and have the student write the story
- Display several unrelated pictures and ask the student to draw a topic from the images.
- Use road or country maps and itineraries in point form and ask the student to write a narrative.
- Have the student read a passage and rewrite it in her own words.

Description

- People — family members, friends, colleagues, strangers
- Things — pictures, real objects (before writing, teach or review adjectives of colour, texture, quantity, shape, quality, etc.)
- Places — places you've visited, places you'd like to visit (Use guidebooks for ideas.)
- Processes — getting a library card, learning to drive (this is a good exercise for teaching and practicing the passive voice and the imperative, e.g. First you go to the library..).

Contrast and Compare

- movies, books, countries, experiences, objects, people, etc.

Letter writing

- personal letters or emails exchanged with you or with other students in the tutoring program, or to landlords, family, or friends
- letters of enquiry regarding advertisements, jobs, housing
- business letters at work, to the government, bank, or potential employers

Transcribing

- Tape your student's spoken words. Ask her to listen to herself on tape and transcribe her story line by line. This is especially useful for promoting self-correction.

Writing Time Lines

Have your student chart the important events in her life along a line. Use the simple past tense. First, explain that we add "ed" to regular verbs to make them past tense. Introduce everyday verbs like *walk/walked*, *work/worked*. You might want to introduce common irregular verbs like *go/went*, *take/took* at this point as well. But do not overwhelm your student with an endless verb list. Ask her to write two or three sentences about yesterday. Use the time line to generate other writing ideas or more conversation.

I was born	I started school	I graduated school	I got married	I came to Canada
1961	1968	1980	1985	1987

Written conversations

Written conversations are quite simply conversations on paper. It doesn't matter who begins the written conversation. The sentences are written and read in silence. You can read the sentences aloud, after each is read silently or you can wait until the conversation is over. You read yours and your student reads hers. This will clarify what may not have been understood during the silent reading. This is not a test of the student's writing (or reading) abilities, so if she asks for a word or phrase, give it to her. Allow her to write without constraint. Apart from providing material for other writings, written conversations are enjoyable ways of demonstrating your student's strengths and weaknesses in writing as well as grammar.

What did you do on the weekend?

I go park with my friend. Then we see a movie. Not good.
Why wasn't the movie good?

Too much angry people and fighting.

What kind of movies do you like?

I like romantic movies. I also like to see movies from other countries.

Would you like to go to a movie together?

Yes. Can we go next Tuesday? It is not expensive.

Revising and Correcting

Ask for your student's opinion and thoughts about his first draft and what happened during the writing. Students will frequently have good insights into their own work. On the other hand, your role in building the student's confidence and providing an objective view is critical when your student is unduly harsh about his work.

You need to be selective and strategic on how you correct your learner's work. Most of us will remember the humiliation in school of having your written work come back with all the mistakes marked in red ink. You obviously do not want to discourage your learner by pointing out every mistake, even if they ask you to do so. It's far better to focus on certain mistakes and help your learner understand how to correct them, such as with punctuation, verb tenses or prepositions. Always ask the learner to try to correct any errors for themselves first. You can give little hints, such as, "remember what we said about where to use capital letters?" or "what is the past tense for 'go'?". There is a far better chance that your learner will remember a few corrections that are clearly explained rather than a dozen different things all at once.

Be sure to keep any drafts so they can be reviewed later to illustrate how far the student has progressed. When you review a draft with your student, look for strengths but also look for grammar points that need reinforcement or correction. Also check for opportunities to introduce and explain new vocabulary which should be written in the student's notebook in a section called Word Bank or Personal Pictionary.

➤ Grammar

Adult ESL students often ask for help in improving their spoken and written grammar. They want to be credible speakers and writers. They want to understand the grammar rules of their second language so they can better express themselves. Just imagine yourself in a foreign country struggling with a new language. Wouldn't you want a basic understanding of how the language works?

Chances are, you might be a little (or a lot) apprehensive about helping your student with grammar. Maybe you have never formally studied English grammar yourself. Here's the good news. You do not need to be a grammarian to help your student. There are many effective and even enjoyable ways to teach grammar. You know much more than you think about English grammar because you "live" in the language. There are also many excellent resource books that you can consult. (See the section called *Recommended Reading*.)

When you meet your learner for the first time, listen closely to the way she speaks, take some notes and then make a plan to teach some grammar points over the next several weeks. ESL students often identify English verb tenses as something they want to work on.

[Decide with your student on how much grammar is needed.]

Does "correctness" matter? It depends on your student. For someone who speaks very little English, grammar is less important than just getting the message across. A student who has been studying English for a longer time and needs to communicate clearly at work might be more interested in perfecting their grammar.

Let's look at a typical verb tense error. As your student tells you about her daily routine, she says or writes, "I am get up early." Do you understand this sentence? Of course you do. Remember your student's grammar doesn't need to be perfect for her to be understood. But how do you explain the grammar error to your student? Generally, we use one verb for daily or habitual activities. So, "I am get up" should be, "I get up." Ask your student to write/say what she does every evening or every weekend. Ask her to check that she uses one verb (without *be*) for every action. This is how we use the Simple Present tense.

You could explain when we use *be*. Make a list:

be + name	I am Maria
be + adjective	It is cold
be + nationality	We are Portuguese, etc.

Whenever possible, your student should generate sentences that are meaningful to her. Learning and correctly using a grammar rule takes time. Your sessions should not be two hours of solid grammar. Most students hate tedious drills. Instead, explain a grammar point, give clear examples, and use and practice the structure in your learning activities over the next few weeks.

Most students do not care and do not really need to know what a particular grammatical term is, for

example, “the past continuous tense” or a “conditional clause”. They just need to recognize the form and know where you need to use it for a particular purpose.

For example:

We say, “*I was studying English for a couple of hours last night when you called*” [past continuous] to express what you were doing (*studying English*) when something else occurred (*you called*) in the past (*last night*). We don’t say, “*I study English for a couple hours when you called*” because “*I study English*” is talking about what happens regularly or every day [simple present] but you want to talk about something that happened in the past.

When you want to talk about something you might do if something else happens [conditional clause], you say, “*If I win the lottery, I’ll buy a new house*” or “*If it rains tomorrow, I’ll take the subway to work*”.

You can help your learner to recognize and become familiar with the grammatical patterns, but without necessarily knowing what it is called. Nevertheless, you may find that your learner is already familiar with these terms because they studied English grammar before, perhaps even before coming to Canada. In this case, they may be perfectly comfortable with all the terminology. You will have to determine what is appropriate for your learner.

Integrating Grammar into Learning Activities

Rather than devising or sourcing distinct exercises on various grammar points or working through a grammar textbook, it is generally simpler to build a little grammar into whatever activities you are working on with your learner. That way, you are connecting the grammar to whatever is the context or purpose of the language activity. Your learner is much more likely to understand and remember it, rather than trying to understand grammar in the abstract. It is also generally much easier on you!

Example

Topic: Shopping at the market

Language Function: Asking for prices

Grammar: the question form; count and non-count nouns

- How much are six bananas? [count noun]
- How much is the lettuce? [non-count noun] \$1.00 per head [count]
- Are the eggs \$3.00 for a dozen? [count]
- How many chicken wings in a package? [count]
- Is the orange juice on sale? [non-count] How much per can? [count]

In this lesson, you can cover vocabulary for grocery items while looking at different grammatical forms for asking questions about prices and quantity, as well as the difference between count and non-count nouns. You and the learner can practice the dialogues in a role play, incorporating speaking and listening. She can read grocery flyers and write her own grocery list. It all fits within the same context which will help the learner integrate and remember all the language skills.

➤ ESL Literacy Learners

If your student never learned to read and write fluently in her first language, then the process of learning a second language can be more difficult because they lack the transferable skills that someone has who is literate in their first language. As a tutor you may be teaching English as well as how to read and write at the same time. These are two distinct but, in this case, related skills.

Learners who may be defined as ESL Literacy:

- Have only very basic or no knowledge of reading and writing in their first language
- May have only limited prior education
- Have a first language that is primarily oral with no written script, or has a completely different (i.e. non-Roman) script
- May not be adept with the mechanics of writing and making letters – i.e. properly holding a pencil, writing on the line and proper spacing
- Be unfamiliar with letter/sound correspondence and connecting written words with real life
- Have difficulties with basic numeracy
- Have other issues affecting their learning which may include: learning disabilities, experience of severe trauma, lack of confidence in their ability to learn, uncomfortable with school and working with a teacher

Relatively few learners will fall into the category of having virtually no knowledge or skills in reading, writing and numeracy. Many will have various bits and pieces of knowledge and skill such as being able to write their name and address on a form but not able to decode text.

Literacy level learners will not benefit much from a once weekly tutoring session unless they are also in a regular class appropriate to their level. Tutoring sessions, however, can be used to support their classroom learning as long as you are covering the same or similar material. Ask them to bring what they are working on in class.

Strategies for Working with Literacy Learners

- Focus on survival words – always put them in real-life context and using their own experience
- Employ realia (real objects) where possible and/or pictures, drawings
- Use a lot of gestures and body language to help in explaining words and concepts
- Emphasize oral and listening skills first – connecting the sound of the word with the object
- Speak and enunciate clearly (however, not too artificially slow); use only as many words as necessary, choosing simpler words and shorter sentences.
- Progress to reading and writing so that it reinforces the oral – they become familiar with hearing, saying, writing and reading the word (word recognition)
- Activities can include word matching, object-word matching, recognizing common signs and symbols, word order, recognizing word/sound groups
- May need to help them develop mechanical skills for writing – properly holding and using a pencil
- Practice writing letters of alphabet and simple words, and eventually making simple sentences
- Familiarize them with the alphabet, including the sound of letters and how to print them; move fairly quickly into using the alphabet to form actual words, rather than just memorizing the alphabet
- Numeracy should be incorporated into regular lessons, such as on using money when going shopping so that they can count their money when paying and counting their change
- Reading practice can initially emphasize phonetic decoding before reading for meaning
- Do not use text heavy materials – use materials with very limited text and with larger fonts

- Start to work on reading skills of skimming & scanning; reading various types of materials (forms, labels, instructions, advertising)
- Introduce and focus on only a few limited words and new concepts at a time; make sure the learner fully understands and can use them before moving on
- Review some words and material from previous lessons to ensure they have retained it

Language Experience Approach (LEA)

The language experience story technique is an excellent way of deriving meaningful written material from the student's own experience and using the material to teach reading and writing. As described in more detail in the section on Reading in the Tutor's Handbook, a language experience story is a springboard for dozens of other activities and it works just as well for ESL students. Here's a brief outline of how to do the LEA with your learner:

1. Have the student tell you about an experience they've had, such as what they did last weekend or perhaps what happened when they first arrived in Canada.
2. Write down what the student says word for word, not making any grammatical or vocabulary corrections (but using correct spelling and punctuation).
3. Read it back to them pointing out the words as you go.
4. Ask your student to read it back to you a few times.
5. Ask them if they would make any changes to what is written, i.e. correct any mistakes
6. You may choose to make some corrections for the student if you think it is appropriate but do not correct the entire passage if there are several errors. This would discourage your student.
7. Have your student identify meaningful or difficult words in the story and you write them on index cards or post-it notes.
8. Have the student match the cards to the story.
9. Mix the cards up and ask the student to read them.
10. Write each sentence on a card, mix them up, and give them to the student to put them in the correct order.
11. For further practice you can have the student write the words in a new context by creating new sentences.

Other activities

- teach how to alphabetize (use new words, names, items on a shopping list)
- find specific words and letters in newspaper articles and magazines (scavenger hunt)
- fill in blanks in words (I bought some ___ilk at the store.)
- fill in the missing words in a sentence (When I walked in the door, the _____ was ringing.)
- re-order the letters in scrambled words
- find words with the same beginning or ending letters
- learn abbreviations such as Mr., Ms., etc.

➤ Measuring Learner Progress

Every tutor and learner want to have a sense that there is some progress as a result of the work they are doing together – this is only natural. As a tutor, you want to know that you are on the right track and doing the right thing to help your student. As an ESL learner, you want to have a sense that you are improving and that you are able to communicate better and meet your goals. But how best to do this?

First of all, it is necessary for both tutor and student to be realistic about what progress is reasonable or possible within a once a week meeting format. Obviously, meeting once a week for a couple of hours is not as likely to result in as much progress as attending a class five days a week, five or six hours a day. There are also a whole slew of variables on how quickly a student will progress, including their starting point, their attitude towards the learning process, how much work they're willing to do between meetings, their learning goals, how focused your learning activities are, and so on.

So, one of the first essential steps is establishing some realistic goals together with your student. A learner starting out at a beginner level is not likely to progress to an advanced level in six or eight months of once a week tutoring sessions. But they might progress enough to feel more comfortable getting themselves around the city, answering the phone, writing a list or note, and reading the headlines in the paper. Start with some basic, achievable goals that can be reached within the framework of your sessions together.

Above, we spoke about assessing your learner's goals, needs, as well as language abilities. This may involve the completion of a simple form and a writing sample by the learner. There may have also been a more formal language assessment carried out with the learner to gauge their level and abilities. After a few months, you can refer to these together with your student to see how far they've come.

Other methods of tracking progress include:

- **Portfolios:** simply a folder, envelope or binder where you collect materials that your learner has completed, including writing samples, activity sheets, lists of books and articles read, etc. Be sure to date everything that is put in the portfolio so you can see the changes over time.
- **Meeting Log:** a record of each meeting with your learner, where you make notes of what you worked on, the materials used, and outcomes. You can use a simple form (see below) or make your own log in a notebook. Take a few moments to complete this at the end of each session and review it with your student every 2 – 3 months.

Date of meeting:

Briefly describe today's learning activities:	Outcome of the lesson, i.e. skills developed; needs identified:
Materials used:	Plan, goals for next meeting:

➤ Student and Tutor Case Studies

Meet some Frontier College tutors and their ESL students. Their names have been changed.

George retired from his job, in an electronics company three years ago. Last year, he decided to work as a volunteer ESL tutor with Frontier College. His student, Mohammed, also has a technical background. At their first meeting, Mohammed was very quiet. Mohammed's wife sat in on the session and most of the conversation was between her and George. Although Mohammed understood almost everything George asked, he answered questions with only one or two words.

The next week Mohammed and George met alone. Not wanting to "force" his student to speak about himself George had brought along some of his family photos. What happened? Mohammed started asking George questions. He didn't feel pressured to talk about himself He felt more comfortable listening. As George described his family, Mohammed started to open up and talk about his life before he came to Canada and his own family.

In the meetings that followed, George continued to respect Mohammed's way of learning and avoided asking him too many personal questions. They worked on Mohammed's resume and read through community college catalogues for part-time ESL courses. After several weeks, Mohammed told George about an experience in Iran that changed his life. He was thrown in jail and so severely beaten that he suffered a concussion and subsequent memory loss. He told George that he now wanted to write his autobiography and share his story.

[When George talked about his family, Mohammed felt more comfortable talking about himself.]

George's patience and his decision not to coerce Mohammed into talking about himself went a long way in strengthening their relationship. Even though Mohammed is now enrolled in part-time ESL classes, they continue to meet regularly.

Ana and her tutor, Claire, have been working together for about six months. Ana has a three-year old daughter. Ana's goal is to improve her speaking and pronunciation. Whenever she has to speak English, she gets nervous. She tends to speak very quickly so she is difficult to understand. Ana also wants to help her daughter, Teresa, learn some English before she starts school. How do Ana and Claire spend their lessons?

Besides working on specific pronunciation exercises and role playing, they have been taking Teresa to the public library once a week. Teresa chooses several books to take home (Dr. Seuss is a particular favourite). Ana and Claire read one or two of the books together. Claire helps Ana with her pronunciation and often they tape themselves reading together. Then Ana reads the books to Teresa the rest-of-the week.

Reading aloud to her daughter has given Ana confidence and lots of stress-free . She also has the satisfaction of teaching her child while she is learning herself

[Children's books are not appropriate for adult students unless they want to read to their children.]

A word about using children's books with an adult.

Read them only if your student says she wants to be able to read stories to her children. Adult students will be insulted, and with good reason, if handed a book written for children.

Jung and her tutor, Rita, have been meeting for less than three months. Jung, a recent immigrant, works long hours in a garment factory. She studied English grammar and writing in high school, but is not confident about speaking English. At their first meeting, Jung could not understand most of her tutor's questions such as, "Where do you live?" and, "How did you get to our meeting today?"

Rita had known her student would be a beginner, so she brought a picture dictionary and a department store flyer to the session. Instead of asking more questions that her student didn't understand, Rita and Jung looked at the photographs of clothing. Jung already knew several words such as "dress," "skirt," and "jacket" because of her work. Rita taught her some new words that she could try out at work such as "pocket," "button" and "collar."

Jung practiced saying the new vocabulary she had learned and wrote the words down. By the end of this first meeting both student and tutor felt the session had been productive. Jung had learned something she could use in her daily work and Rita had several ideas for following lessons (such as practicing basic questions and answers, teaching vocabulary for food, taking the bus, etc. and some pronunciation work).

This is a very good example of a tutor building on what her student already knows, and knowing when to move on to an activity that will increase her student's confidence.

Last Word

We will leave the final words to an ESL learner in a Frontier College program:

My name is Jing who arrived in Toronto in September, 2009. I Joined the FLT program in last November. With time flying, I have deep contact with Canadian society and Canadian culture. Followed, I have more challenges and questions. The FLT is the place that helps me a lot. I love this program and I greatly appreciate the efforts the program coordinator and all tutors do.

What we discussed in the class with my tutor and my partner covered lots of fields. We spent some time on pronunciation rules. I remembered clearly and deeply there was no "h" sound in "Markham". That is a typical mistake lots of people make. Now, I am proud to correct others about the "h" pronunciation in some words. Also, I corrected specific wrong pronunciation I made before with my tutor's help. Sometimes, he recorded me with his cell phone so that I can hear the differences between mine and his. Also, we worked on English expression and idioms which Canadian people use a lot. However, that is hard for newcomers to understand but we have to face. Another thing we discussed is how to speak English for English-listening-ears listening, which means how to make ourselves more understandable in words organization and intonation changes. Though we can't perform like a broadcaster, with more practice in intonation variation, we can make ourselves more native way. Besides, I have to mention my "word bank" I got from the program, I wrote down some new words I met in the daily life and it expanded my vocabulary. Some of my friends asked me about it. I can see they are admiring me.

What most attract me from the program are the topics about Canadian culture. There are huge differences between eastern culture and North American culture. Sometimes, when I come into cultural shocks, I can't figure out them by myself. But I can ask the tutors without any shyness or embarrassment and they are patient to answer me. We talked about how to give and receive feedback, how to make efficient communication, especially in workplace. Euphemism is often exploited nowadays, how to react appropriately is a kind of art. We also conversed about

addressing, like how to ask and answer “how are you doing” or “what is up”. They are simple questions we used every day, but we can rephrase in different way, in casual, in formal or in professional. We can’t use “rocks” with our boss and apparently, “super” and “terrific” are kind of outdated. How to build professional relationship in workplace is also our subject. Which way is a professional way in workplace to be friends with your associates or keep a distance. We also talked about leadership. My tutor is experienced in retail area and was a senior manager. He is generous to share his stories and experience with us. That is another treasure we got from the program. I believe all the learners agree with me. All of us get more or less from the tutors’ own experience except language learning.

Through the “Family learning Together” program, I also feel Canadian culture by volunteering atmosphere. All tutors here are volunteers and most of them have a career and a family but they constantly come to the class to help the learners. I was curious why they were acting as volunteers with their limited leisure time. I asked and most of the answers were “I want to do something back to the community”. I am touching and considering what I can do back to the community. Obviously, I am not eligible working as English teaching volunteer, but I think I do have something I can contribute. I need to find it.

What I learned from the program is targeted and beneficial for my whole life. I show my thanks to all the people involved in the program and I will never forget this period.