

**Helpful Resources for Teaching Students of Refugee and Trauma Backgrounds**  
**Handout to Accompany a PowerPoint Presentation: Teaching Refugees**  
**Compiled by Kris Hull, English Language Learners (ELL) Welcome Centre**

**Videos from today**

- Karen refugee camp: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_cd9NvpzuAw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_cd9NvpzuAw)
- Somali refugee camp: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cdmw4trMBL8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cdmw4trMBL8).

**Print resources**

- Basic English Grammar—Betty Schramper Azar
- The More-Than-Just-Surviving Handbook—Barbara Law and Mary Eckes
- Talk Your Head Off (...and write too!)—Branan Rish West
- Zero Prep for Beginners—Laurel Pollard, Natalie Hess, and Jan Herron
- Informational & Reference Items for Secondary ELL Teachers—Carole Davis (available from Surrey School District)
- bilingual dictionaries.

**Websites**

- Teaching Refugees: [www.teachingrefugees.com/](http://www.teachingrefugees.com/)
- Google Translate: [translate.google.ca/?hl=en&tab=wT#](http://translate.google.ca/?hl=en&tab=wT#)
- ELL in Surrey: [secondaryellinsurrey.wordpress.com/](http://secondaryellinsurrey.wordpress.com/)
- Raz Kids Reading: [www.raz-kids.com/](http://www.raz-kids.com/)
- Refugee Children with Low Literacy Skills or Interrupted Education: Identifying Challenges And Strategies: [www.springinstitute.org/Files/refugeechildrenbehavior3.pdf](http://www.springinstitute.org/Files/refugeechildrenbehavior3.pdf)
- Great audio and video content: [www.eslgold.net](http://www.eslgold.net). Click on *Listening* and you will have access to Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab. Also, check out the podcasts: [www.esl-galaxy.com](http://www.esl-galaxy.com)
- See Languages/ESL as well as Flashcards and Theme Units: [www.abcteach.com](http://www.abcteach.com)
- Click on News Snapshot—daily current events activity at a Grade 3–5 reading level, including printable student handouts and a teacher's page. It is American, but you can pick and choose as appropriate: [www.nytimes.com/learning](http://www.nytimes.com/learning)
- Lesson plan archive: [learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/](http://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/)
- Portal linking to websites for learners of English. Click on CG Kids Atlas for the interactive component. It has a daily lesson plan and featured Canadian place: [www.canadiangeographic.ca/atlas/](http://www.canadiangeographic.ca/atlas/)
- Digital archives—see Learn, for teachers. See CBC Learning Online, which includes video and audio resources, as well as the teacher's lounge: [www.cbc.ca](http://www.cbc.ca)
- Includes a media centre, but the site is still under construction: [www.canadahistory.com](http://www.canadahistory.com)
- Tools and resources for students, teachers, learners and academics: [www.usingenglish.com](http://www.usingenglish.com)
- Online placement tests, lessons, and exercises. Students can even find pen pals: [www.tolearnenglish.com](http://www.tolearnenglish.com)
- Includes worksheets, games, and quizzes organized by grade and topic, most of which are completed online. Can also generate worksheets: [www.softschools.com](http://www.softschools.com)
- Extensive teacher resources. See Best of Web for Teachers: [www.marksesl.com](http://www.marksesl.com)
- Lyrics, CDs, and downloads including an ESL area: [www.songsforteaching.com](http://www.songsforteaching.com)
- Lots of online practice for ESL learners. A grammar test that gives a rough estimate of level of English: [www.eclecticenglish.com](http://www.eclecticenglish.com)

- Everything from ESL teaching resources to webpage creation, plus a list of podcast sites designed for ESL listeners. Includes tons of worksheets at ESL-PDF.com: [www.ibritt.com/resources/tr\\_esl.htm](http://www.ibritt.com/resources/tr_esl.htm)
- Audio-visual stories for preschool and elementary levels, and a web-based jukebox of digital books in languages from around the world. Hear the books, read, and see the text on screen in a multitude of languages. Registration is free. The site offers downloads of the stories for a fee, but the online books are free: [www.bookbox.com](http://www.bookbox.com)
- Interactive books, phonics games, and printouts to teach reading to pre-kindergarten to Grade 3. The contents are multicultural, very engaging, and attractive. They also have an educator's area: [www.starfall.com](http://www.starfall.com)
- Free online resource for elementary teachers provided by MOE and TFO. Includes animations, interactive games, and video clips of classroom lessons for teaching, reading, writing, and math: [Eworkshop.on.ca/edu/core.cfm](http://Eworkshop.on.ca/edu/core.cfm)
- Educational video links to over 11,000 videos in 2,000 categories such as history, math, and science; YouTube meets Wikipedia. A good source of easy-to-read articles: [www.watchknow.org](http://www.watchknow.org)
- News for You: [www.news-for-you.com/](http://www.news-for-you.com/)
- Time for Kids: [www.timeforkids.com](http://www.timeforkids.com)

### **Things that have worked well for me**

- personal whiteboards
- newspaper pictures for journals
- picture spelling tests
- Raz Kids reading
- slideshows for Canadian culture
- buddies: high/low
- YouTube spelling/pronunciation videos
- just copying questions when work is too hard
- morning questions
- labels on things around the room
- picture vocabulary sheet to study at home before a unit
- web homework
- 1:1 reading with a higher student
- access settlement and multicultural workers from the Welcome Centre: 604-543-3060
- involving students in the cooking or P.E. program.

\*Many of the above websites and the information below have been taken from a handbook prepared by Carole Davis, Informational & Reference Items for Secondary ELL Teachers. It is available from the Surrey District or online at: [secondaryellinsurrey.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/ell-secondary-information-reference-handbook1.pdf](http://secondaryellinsurrey.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/ell-secondary-information-reference-handbook1.pdf) .

### **25 Ways to work with ELL students in the regular classroom**

1. Establish a language-rich learning environment.
2. Activate and build upon prior knowledge.
3. Repeat key phrases often to ensure student learning.
4. Slow the rate of presentation.

5. Draw connections between course content and real life.
6. Provide hands-on activities.
7. Establish a daily routine.
8. Break information into manageable chunks.
9. Paraphrase information using simplified language, especially after reading.
10. Provide ample wait time for students to formulate a response.
11. Control new vocabulary: it should be simplified, but include key technical terms. New vocabulary should be clearly introduced and reinforced. Providing students with new vocabulary ahead of time will allow them some control over the material.
12. Design lessons that integrate language and content.
13. Provide word lists for quizzes and fill-ins.
14. Use global strategies when introducing a new unit or chapter in a text: show a related film clip and discuss the major topics, tell students what the chapter is about and arouse their interest with personal anecdotes and class sharing, read portions of the chapter aloud while students follow along.
15. Allow use of first language dictionaries.
16. Provide example sheets of correct format and procedures for written work.
17. Use lots of gestures and facial expressions.
18. Provide visual support—models, charts, manipulatives, pictures, diagrams, or actual objects.
19. Write down what you say on the board or overhead.
20. Allow students to work with peers. Be sure students know the difference between co-operative work, where both students are giving input and learning, and the out-and-out copying of another student's work.
21. Always summarize the key points of your lesson.
22. Allow students to work at their own pace.
23. Consider giving separate tests.
24. Be creative in thinking of tasks that demonstrate competence without demanding a lot of language.
25. Make the ELL student a part of the class as much as possible.

### **Things I wish I'd known when I started teaching ELL**

1. Don't mark everything.
2. Don't mark *for* everything.
3. Teach grammar and vocabulary in context.
4. Don't be afraid to call on the quiet ones.
5. Remind students to not nod and smile when they don't understand.
6. **Encourage students to read outside of school!**
7. Use peer editing with comments.
8. Do daily writing activities, such as journals.
9. Writing projects—such as the autobiography—cover sentence patterns and verb tenses.
10. Teach the revising and editing process. It's hard and boring, but has a *big* payoff.
11. Anonymously borrow sentences with ESL type errors from student work, and use them to remediate common errors. "You be the teacher."
12. Do daily public speaking—short to long, informal to more formal.
13. Use word families for vocabulary development.
14. Use the prefix/suffix/root word approach to vocabulary development.
15. Drafts get a check mark.
16. Use role-play, telephone dialogues, and **props!**

17. Find ways to get more mileage out of each lesson.
18. Increase student interactions.
19. Conference with students while others are working quietly.
20. Make the ESL classroom a safe place to take risks.
21. Allow first language use in class for clarification.
22. Read, write, speak, and listen in every class.
23. Focus on one type of error at a time.
24. Use manipulatives to teach prepositions.

**Assumption: It doesn't take long for students to perform well academically in English.**

**Fact:** It can take approximately two years to develop social language, and five to nine years to develop the academic language needed to read textbooks and perform academic work.

**Assumption: All school systems are the same, and all schools use the same teaching techniques.**

**Fact:** Teaching styles and practices vary greatly from country to country. In Canadian schools, play, field trips, co-operative learning groups, and other interactive strategies are considered valuable and important ways to learn.

**Assumption: All students should have homework every day.**

**Fact:** In Canada, giving homework is related to our understandings about the ability of learners to focus. Therefore, young learners typically only receive minimal, if any, homework, while older learners may have up to one hour of homework per day. However, it is important to remember that learning a language—being immersed in it all day—is exhausting. A good way to relax from this is to read or talk in the home language. Reading in the home language supports reading in English. ESL students who are assigned one hour of homework will typically take two to three hours to complete the work in their new language. Reading at home or orally interacting with a parent is considered very effective homework because it develops language and thinking.

**Assumption: Reading is not homework.**

**Fact:** Research has shown that daily reading at home strengthens the vocabulary and the development of reading comprehension. Discussion of the reading with a caregiver makes the reader even stronger.

**Assumption: It is acceptable for tutors to do work for learners.**

**Fact:** Some students are lucky enough to have the help of a tutor. However, students eventually have to be able to cope alone and be accountable for what they can do independently. The best tutors understand this and help the learner toward that independence by working with the learner, but never doing work for the learner.

**Assumption: Older siblings are able to interpret and translate information accurately.**

**Fact:** Translating information from the home language to English and back is not at all easy. It is not just translating words, but also includes an understanding of the school system and how things work. It is also difficult to translate the language of schooling here when your home language does not necessarily have the equivalent constructs.

**Assumption: My child will graduate from school “on time” regardless of age on arrival in Canada.**

**Fact:** Since it takes as long as two to nine years to become fluent in a second language, older students are not always able to graduate by the age of 18 or 19. Much depends on each student's level of English competency at their time of arrival in Canada. Older learners can, however, still complete secondary school and even go on to university at an older age. Starting university in your 20s or 30s is quite normal in Canada.

**Assumption: All students are university bound. In fact, university is the only acceptable option after secondary school.**

**Fact:** Only about 20% of students in British Columbia continue to college or university. Many pursue a wide variety of other options that also lead to a happy and successful life.

### **ELL strategies**

The following strategies are designed to enable ELL learners to develop their English language skills in both social and academic contexts.

#### **Classroom strategies**

- Create an environment where learners feel secure and are prepared to take risks.
- Support and value learners' languages and cultures.
- Build on the knowledge, skills, and understanding that students bring to the learning context.
- Build on the linguistic understandings students have of their own language.
- Encourage the use of the learners' first language if the learner is literate in that language.
- Use themes and topics that are relevant to learners' particular needs.
- Expose learners to cultural information that enables them to understand and participate in Canadian culture and society.
- Focus on purposeful communicative activities that are comprehensible and appropriate to the learner's age and needs.
- Generally teach the macro skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in an integrated way, although at times there may be a need to focus on a particular aspect of one (e.g., pronunciation, listening to specific instructions.)
- Focus on developing learner's oral language skills for oral language development and to support writing.
- Support the learner's language skills development through scaffolding the learners' language.
- Explicitly teach new language (vocabulary, text types, grammar, sound knowledge, pronunciation, intonation) in the context of a theme or topic.
- Use pair and group work and peer/cross-age tutoring to maximize language interaction in a low-stress environment and encourage risk-taking.
- Jointly deconstruct and construct texts to model how texts work to achieve their purposes.
- Use an experiential approach to provide meaningful contexts.
- Use visual cues wherever necessary to clarify and reinforce concepts.
- Use graphic organizers (e.g., diagrams, timelines, concept maps, etc.) to represent and organize ideas and to develop thinking skills.
- Unsure that assessment tasks, activities, and criteria are relevant to the student's stage of English language development.

#### **Teacher talk**

- Keep talk to a minimum.
- Use clear, common, and consistent instructions, and repeat or rephrase if necessary.

- Speak at a normal volume, and slow the pace if necessary.
- Don't use too much jargon.
- Support instructions with visual cues as much as possible.

### **Reading materials**

- Have good visual cues to enable students to access the story easily.
- Reflect the experiences, knowledge, and interests of the learners.
- Use bilingual books, big books, stories with lots of repetition, class-made books based on class experiences, and teaching schemes with thematic interests.
- Involve the ELL in a number of reading experiences every day that focus on language in context.
- Provide exposure to meaningful print in the immediate environment (e.g., signs, charts, labels.)
- Model deconstruction of a range of whole texts to develop understandings of the organization and language features of different genres and the conventions of English.
- Use taped readings, shared book experiences, big books, wordless books, picture sequences, and photographs to build a story.
- Choose pre-reading activities that prepare the reader for the text through activating prior knowledge about the topic, developing a shared overall knowledge of what the text might be about, and teaching strategies for predicting the text content.
- Create reading activities that develop language and reading skills in context.
- Choose post-reading activities that focus on responding to the text in order to gain a greater understanding.
- Help students develop an understanding of the text, extract information for other purposes, critically interpret and analyze the text, and give personal responses to it.

### **Teaching writing**

Teachers can scaffold learner's writing by

- modeling all aspects of the writing process
- teaching the text organization and language features of different genres through a range of different activities
- jointly constructing texts with students
- supporting the development of editing and proof reading skills
- using shared experiences (e.g., field trips) to write class or individual books/texts
- using photos and other visual stimuli (such as sequenced pictures) in the early stages of writing development
- using groups and pairs to develop group texts.

Other writing strategies

- Encourage students not to focus too much on their mistakes.
- Encourage writing for real purposes by publishing in innovative ways (e.g., newsletters on the school's website.)
- Encourage the use of different strategies for accessing vocabulary needed and for recording new vocabulary for use in future writing.
- Teach all aspects of word knowledge and spelling through specific activities, including games, quizzes, etc.

### **Fast facts about English language learners**

- A “silent” period is very common for English language learners. They are absorbing and processing the language and events around them. This silent period may last days, weeks, months, or even longer.
- Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are not all acquired at the same rate. Oral language proficiency can appear fluent long before reading and writing skills are at an age appropriate level.
- Social language (everyday, face-to-face conversation) is learned first, often within two years.
- Students seem to learn language and content quite rapidly, then reach a plateau, where little language acquisition seems to take place. This is a normal cycle of “fits and starts” and is part of normal development.
- Academic language (textbook language) can take between five and ten years to develop to the level where the ELLs are able to achieve on par with their age peers.
- Many parents think social language equals academic language; it does not.
- ELL parents do not view themselves as “partners in education”—this notion takes time for parents to accept and act upon. The onus is on the teachers and schools to initiate and facilitate the process.

### **Four stages of culture shock**

It must be emphasized that every child reacts differently to moving to a new place. New arrivals usually go through four stages of culture shock.

#### **1. Euphoric or Honeymoon Stage**

During this stage, newcomers are excited about their new lives. Everything is wonderful and they are enjoying learning about their environment.

#### **2. Culture Shock Stage**

The differences between the new and the native cultures become more apparent. Students feel overwhelmed at this stage. There is so much they do not understand about their new surroundings. They are frustrated because they cannot communicate and are bombarded with unfamiliar surroundings, unreadable social signals, and an unrelenting barrage of new sounds. Students suffering from culture shock may seem sleepy, irritable, disinterested, or depressed. Some students may become aggressive and act out their frustrations. Newcomers in this stage of culture shock need time and patience from their teachers.

#### **3. Integration Stage**

Newcomers start to deal with the differences between the old culture and new. They learn to integrate their own beliefs with those of the new culture. Some newcomers will start to replace old values with new ones. Others will begin to find ways to exist within both cultures. Many immigrant parents become alarmed at this stage because they do not want their children to lose their language and culture.

#### **4. Acceptance Stage**

Newcomers are now able to enter and prosper in the mainstream culture. They accept both cultures and combine them into their lives. Some students will adopt the mainstream culture at school and follow the values of the home culture outside of school. During this stage, many immigrant parents make it clear to their children that they do not want them to adopt the mainstream culture. This is because many immigrant students forget their native language and reject their culture.

(Based on Law & Eckes, 1990)

## **Resources**

Collier, Virginia. (1995). *Acquiring a Second Language for School*.

Dresser, Norine. (1996). *Multicultural Manners: New Rules of Etiquette for a Changing Society*. NY: John Wiley & Sons

Gibbons, Pauline. (2002). *Scaffolding Language, Scaffolding learning: Teaching Second Language Learners in the Mainstream Classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Haynes, J. (2007). *Getting Started with English Language Learners: How Educators Can Meet the Challenge*. VA: ASCD [www.everthingsl.net](http://www.everthingsl.net)

Helmer, S. & Eddy, C. (2003). *Look at Me When I Talk to You: ESL Learners in Non-ESL Classrooms*. Pippin Press.

Reiss, J. (2005). *Teaching Content to English Language Learners: Strategies for Secondary School Success*. NY: Longman

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