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TESL Canada Connects

*The mind is like a
parachute – it only
works when it's open.*

Frank Zappa



Welcome to the fifth issue of our TESL Canada Connects newsletter featuring news on an innovative ELL program in Manitoba and a summary of a study into Intercultural Communicative Competency by a rising ESL practitioner.

REDI – a proven success linking Syrian refugees to employment!

The Refugee Employment Development Initiative (REDI) was introduced by Manitoba Education and Training in late 2016 with the goal of creating a pathway for refugee newcomers who had basic English language proficiency (Canadian Language Benchmarks 1-4). This pathway would help them prepare for and find meaningful employment in a relatively short amount of time—approximately six months—as well as retain employment. Many Syrian refugees in particular, over 1,000 by the end of 2016, had resettled in Manitoba as a result of Canada's Syrian refugee resettlement initiative. Those who were government-sponsored would transition from federal to provincial income support after their first year in Canada. REDI began with several rounds of preliminary consultations, or "dialogue cafes", with settlement and other stakeholders, including language providers. A call for expressions of interest followed in early 2017. From these consultations emerged an innovative approach to program delivery. This model was based on the notion of a continuum of service for students from outreach and assessment to employment-readiness training to employment, ensuring a student's experience was a cohesive one. Organizations whose spheres of operation would typically not overlap were given an opportunity to collaborate and learn from one another. From a language training perspective, it was exciting to develop curricula for stage one learners that was sector-specific and to provide ongoing language support that followed the client to the employment service provider. REDI has been a proven success in linking this particular client group to the labour market (sectors have included construction, manufacturing and service), evidenced by reductions in levels of income support required. In addition, the program is unique in the province in that it receives financial support both from the province of Manitoba and also Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), exemplifying effective co-planning by government. (In Manitoba, IRCC has been the sole funder of language training for permanent residents

An inspiring book recommended by Stuart Schwartz:

Cy Wakeman's *The Reality-Based Rules of the Workplace: Know What Boosts Your Value, Kills Your Chances, and Will Make You Happier*
2013, by John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

"Although this is not written for ESL professionals in particular, it has inspired me as an employee and has value for ESL students trying to understand what drives employee success and happiness in the North-American workplace."

for several years.) In April 2019, REDI entered its third year. Each year, partner organizations provide feedback on how refinements can be made in the program to produce a better quality of service to students. As a result, each iteration of REDI has built on the learning gained in the previous one.

Stuart Y. Schwartz

Stuart Schwartz is a program manager at Red River College Language Training Centre in Manitoba.

Intercultural Communicative Competence in ESL Classrooms

In light of the CLB 4 language requirement for citizenship application mandated by the federal government and the Canadian Language Benchmark's application of Sociolinguistic Model, we as ESL teachers are tasked with equipping newcomers for employment, eventual citizenship and social integration in general. However, there is an absence of explicit means of imparting this competence. Using Michael Byram's Model for Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), I decided to explore the *Attitudes, Knowledge and Skills* of Intercultural Communicative Competence among English as a Second Language teachers in government funded adult non-credit language programs in Canada. For example, Byram lists the following factors as requirements for the development of Intercultural Communicative Competence in the second/foreign language setting; *Attitudes of openness and curiosity, Knowledge of other cultures, Skills of interpreting and relating, Skills of discovery and interaction and Critical cultural awareness/political education* (Byram, 1997 pp. 36 - 37). 110 ESL teachers from across Canada participated in the study. Findings showed that although teachers possessed attitudes, knowledge and skills of intercultural competence, lack of time, resources and inadequate understanding of Intercultural Communicative Competence prevents them from fully implementing intercultural communicative competence practice into their classrooms. Therefore, seeing that there is a lack of clarity of what intercultural communicative competence really means, it would be good to create a simplified version of ICC in the form of short self-guided courses for busy teachers. ICC teaching materials and resources produced by ATESL and NorQuest Centre for Intercultural Education should be promoted further. In addition, creating Canadian Language Benchmarks and Portfolio Based Language Assessment aligned tasks, activities and assessment tools would encourage teachers to apply it in their classrooms. It is important that the link between the CLBs and PBLA be highlighted so that teachers are able to see that ICC is already imbedded in the CLBs. It is simply a question of to what extent. This will allow ICC to be applied systematically with clear learning objectives and targeted outcomes instead of a by-product of another lesson. Sara Afa is an ESL practitioner completing her Master's from University of London.

Upcoming Conferences:

TESL NB will be holding a Professional Learning Day and AGM on June 22, 2019 at UNB Fredericton.

The 2019 ATESL Conference is October 18-19, 2019 at the Westin Hotel in Calgary. Join us to celebrate 40 years of excellence.

TEAM Manitoba is very pleased to be offering a full-day professional development conference in collaboration with TEAL Manitoba on October 25, 2019.