

# TEAL<sup>MB</sup>

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TEAL Manitoba Journal welcomes submissions from teachers, students, academics, and anyone interested in the field of teaching English as an additional language. There are three regular sections in the journal:

**Features:** These articles can be theoretical or practical. The range of articles in this section includes: classroom-based activities, methods, strategies, workshop presentations, theoretical and/or academic perspectives, and issues in the TEAL/TESL profession. Articles may include example worksheets, and all articles must include a reference list of materials consulted and quoted when writing the article.

**Reviews:** Reviews of teaching materials and resources are written by practicing teachers and instructors. In addition, we publish reviews of fiction and nonfiction books, websites, articles, movies or anything related to EAL, newcomers and international cultures and issues. A bibliographic reference of the resource being reviewed must be included with the review.

**Voice Box:** Lesson plans, exercises, and resources can be submitted. The purpose of this section is to provide teachers with a forum to share resources that have been useful in the classroom.

**TEAL News:** This section includes updates and news from and about the various associations and schools that are related to teaching EAL in Manitoba.

TEAL Manitoba encourages you to make submissions to any of these sections of the journal. Please submit articles or article ideas to the editor as a Microsoft Word e-mail attachment. Please ensure your submissions arrive by the deadlines listed.

The editors make final publication decisions, but they regularly seek advice from the TEAL Manitoba Executive at its monthly meetings. If you wish to collaborate in the editing of your submission, please let the editor know. We appreciate your input and assistance.

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# TEAL MANITOBA JOURNAL

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## PRESIDENT'S VOICE

Sandra Melo

Undoubtedly, these first few months of school have been busy ones for all involved in English as an Additional Language. From getting to know our students to the TEAL Manitoba SAGE Conference at the end of October; a great deal has been happening across the province. In particular, it was fabulous to see so many new faces at the TEAL Manitoba SAGE Conference. This speaks to the need for our ongoing commitment to professional learning, dialogue and networking. I would like to thank all of those who contributed to the success of the conference; the keynote speakers, presenters, publishers, vendors, committee members and students. An excellent day full of learning was had by all.

I am sure that this issue of our journal will offer you many practical ideas and thoughts for discussions throughout your

year working with English language learners. As always, we are constantly looking to our membership for contributions to the journal! It is so important to hear from the field and if you have anything you would like to share, please email me at: [smelo@sjsd.net](mailto:smelo@sjsd.net).

Finally, professional growth and learning in EAL is a very important commitment that TEAL has made. Watch for future sessions that may be offered through our organization or that we may be supporting. Check out our website, [tealmanitoba.ca](http://tealmanitoba.ca) for updates.

Thank you for all that you do for EAL learners and I encourage you to keep the EAL conversation going!



## EDITOR'S VOICE

Yi-fang Chen

After an eventful October, we are all now in the middle of the semester. Looking back we survived the first couple of weeks working with new students and helping them adjust to their new grades and classrooms. Now, looking forward, we need to start thinking about how to assess the effectiveness of our teaching and how to evaluate our students' progress. We all hope that, as educators, we can maximize students' learning in the limited classroom time we have available to us.

This issue of TEAL Manitoba Journal provides you the highlights of the 2013 SAGE Conference held on October 25<sup>th</sup>, at Collège Sturgeon Heights Collegiate Institute. There are also two special features discussing the challenges of English learning in Sudan and China, as well as an activity idea that may be added to your teaching repertory. We hope that this issue of TEAL Manitoba will further provide new ways of looking at international students or students with immigrant backgrounds.

The 2013 SAGE Conference, "E. A. L. Language and Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", again provided in-service teachers, as well as student teachers a great variety of practical teaching ideas, an awareness of multi-cultural classrooms, insight into the needs of literacy learners, discussion of the relationship between language demands and content area lessons, and in-depth analysis of the challenges faced by English learners in a non-English speaking countries. All these topics provoked great discussions and helped teachers gain deeper insight into EAL students' learning needs.

Volunteer experiences are always inspiring for us in many different ways. The opening feature of this issue is Jennifer Nicholson's "A Day in the Life". Jennifer Nicholson was afforded a volunteer opportunity to spend her summer teaching in the Marial Bai Secondary School in South Sudan. Before the trip to Sudan, she collected stories from her EAL students in Winnipeg describing "a typical school day." She hoped to share these stories with students in Sudan and exchange them for similar ones from Sudan. The stories Jennifer Nicholson brought back from Marial Bai Secondary School were powerful and thought provoking. The students in that particular school in South Sudan are very motivated, even though they have to deal with less than ideal conditions in the school environment, school supplies, and teachers, the latter often lacking professional training. In comparison, most of our students here are surrounded by enriched learning environments, modern

facilities, and professionally trained teachers. However, they may not necessarily be highly motivated. Therefore, Jennifer Nicholson encourages EAL teachers here not only to read these stories, but also to share them with their students. The hope is that, if local students learn about the hardships of their peers in other places, it may provide inspiration for them to study harder here.

Since we have so many EAL students from China in recent years, the second feature in this issue engages a situation that many EAL teachers may have encountered in their classrooms. Dan Chen, author of "The Challenges of Learning Oral English in Chinese Higher Education", discusses three possible factors that could hinder Chinese students' facility in spoken English. Based on her own experience with the education system in China, she feels that oral English is never an important element in the curriculum. Instead, reading, writing and listening are the three focuses of the test-oriented educational system in China. Ms. Chen also mentioned cultural factors affecting English language learning in China. Confucianism, generally viewed as the most important normative social ideology in China, is another possible obstacle for Chinese students since it may emphasize a passive, teacher-centric classroom setting. In short, Dan Chen's article encourages us to seek to understand our students' learning background. She also provides us with some possible ways to encourage Chinese students to practice oral English.

The final piece is Yi-fang Chen's activity idea, "Review Squares". By using a dice game, students get the opportunity to review what they have learned from the class, as well as to interact with classmates. This activity is adaptable to any level and age group. Hopefully, this activity can be added to your activity box in the near future.

TEAL Manitoba hopes the rest of the semester will be as fruitful and successful as the first half. We would like to thank all of our contributors and volunteers. We also welcome to any submissions to our journal in the future. We accept feature articles, reviews, and lesson plans. We are sure that many teachers will benefit from your contribution. For more information, and for past issues of the TEAL Manitoba Journal, please visit our website [tealmanitoba.ca](http://tealmanitoba.ca).

# The Challenges of Learning Oral English in Chinese Higher Education

By Dan Chen

## INTRODUCTION

### NARRATIVE BEGINNINGS

I started learning English as a compulsory discipline in primary school when I was ten. Having learned some basic vocabulary and simple sentences, I continued my English study in a key local junior high school. The English teacher in my class, Miss Chen, was an elderly lady with a pair of old glasses. I clearly remember the first day of our English class in junior high school. Armed with an English textbook, Miss Chen came into the classroom with a serious face. After standing up and bowing to the teacher, all 62 students were asked to sit down and stay quiet. Slowly, Miss Chen started her first sentence in Chinese: “Boys and girls, do you know how important English is?” After a few seconds, during which nobody dared to answer her question, she continued: “English is required in every important exam in your future study, such as the High School Entrance Examination, the College Entrance Exam, and even in postgraduate study.” Although I had no understanding of postgraduate study, I knew the importance of the High School Entrance Examination. With sincere words and earnest wishes, Miss Chen repeatedly urged us to study English diligently. I did not expect it, but our first English class became a totally Chinese “moral education” class.

From then on, my purpose for studying English became to get a high mark in every exam. Since Miss Chen mainly focused on grammar instruction and exercises, our English classroom was quiet, except for the sound of Miss Chen’s voice, which lingered on. After class, we were required to finish written exercises. Quizzes, midterm exams and final exams ran through the whole semester. Since the rankings would be announced in parent-teacher meetings

held at the end of the semester, we had to work hard to get a decent score in every written English exam. This situation changed when a new policy was added. An oral English exam would be included as part of the evaluation for admission to high school. In order to enhance our scores in high school exams, our English teachers began to pay more attention to our oral English exercises. It was not until my first class presentation that I started learning oral English. Two weeks before my 3-minute oral presentation, I started to prepare for a perfect performance. I will never forget it as it was the first time I opened my mouth to speak English in front of 62 students and my strict but respected English teacher. It was a morning class right after our morning reading at 8 am. When the bell rang, our English class began as usual. Miss Chen asked me to stand at the podium where she usually stood, and to begin my oral English presentation without a text. After walking down the narrow aisle, I stood in front of my classmates and started reciting my English mini-newscast. Every second felt like a year. Suddenly, I stopped because I had forgotten my next sentence. “Uh...uh...the news said...uh...” I tried to remind myself of the next sentence by repeating the last sentence. Unfortunately, I still could not remember a word. I felt my cheeks blush with shame and embarrassment. “My goodness, how can I continue? They are watching me and my teacher is staring at me! It is an abyss of disgrace! I totally lost face in public!” I do not remember how I finally finished my terrible English presentation, but I do remember the shameful feeling I had when I saw the frustration in Miss Chen’s eyes.

Years later I entered university with a decent written English score in the College Entrance Exams and I majored in English.

I found it was common for students who majored in English to not be able to speak fluent English when they graduated. I was one of them.

When I reflected on my oral English learning experience, which began with an embarrassing presentation in junior high school, I came to realize that there must be some reasons for this common phenomenon. With several research questions in mind, I began my new journey to explore the obstacles, which Chinese university students face in learning oral English.

### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Research studies in EFL teaching and learning show that students who have already gone through more than ten years of formal English instructions are not satisfied with their competency in English communication (Chen & Goh, 2011; Liu, 2009; Jin, 2012). This is because many college students can hardly communicate in English, even though this is understood to be a requirement in the job market (Liang & Chen, 2011). Results from the study of Liu (2006) and Yan and Horwitz (2008) indicated that a large number of college students felt significant levels of anxiety whenever they spoke English in the classroom. Zhang (2011) conducted a study using questionnaires and interviews in five universities across China. Results from individual interviews of 18 students, with varying English proficiency levels, show that 16 of the participants thought that their spoken English was below the average level. Moreover, 13 of them claimed that college English classes do not improve their speaking competence. Six of the 18 participants indicated that college English teaching is far from satisfactory. Based on the data from Test Taker Performance Report (2011) of the International English Language Testing

System (IELTS), Chinese test takers were ranked at the bottom of 40 countries and areas with an average score of 5.3 out of 9 in their oral test performance.

It is not hard to find Chinese students who encounter obstacles that cause unsatisfactory oral performance either inside or outside of the classroom. Teaching spoken English at the university level seems to be much less efficient and effective than it is supposed to be (Huang, 2007). Therefore, it is important to identify and explore students' oral English learning challenges and provide potential solutions for the EFL teachers and policy makers. In the literature review, the author mainly focuses on some of the challenges that college students face while learning to speak English, namely: the English learning environment in the Chinese context, the high-stake testing and its aftermath, the qualifications of EFL teachers in China, as well as Chinese traditional cultural issues. Potential solutions are provided for students who will be learning oral English in the future. Only through a better understanding of the challenges that learners encounter can EFL educators and policy makers provide teaching and learning environments that enhance students' oral English competency.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

#### ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN THE CHINESE SCHOOL SYSTEM

English is the primary foreign language in China and EFL teaching has more than 20 years of history in China's higher education system (Liu, 2009). In the 1980s, English became an essential subject in the national curriculum and a compulsory subject in the national College Entrance Examination (Chen & Goh, 2011). The English learning process contains two stages in China (Wu, 2001). First of all, there is a nine-year compulsory stage which requires students to study English throughout primary school, junior high and senior high years. Secondly, there is the university stage, which requires stu-

dents to study English until the second year of university (Zheng, 2010). This means that students spend at least 13 years studying English in the Chinese school system (Wu, 2001; Jin, 2012). English learners in China "take regular English courses, 4 class hours per week, 18 weeks per term, for 12 terms in high school and 4-8 terms at university" (Wu, 2001, p191)

China, with the largest population in the world, has one of the largest populations of EFL learners (Rao, 1996). Yong & Cambell (1995) pointed out that there are more than 200 million students in China who participate in different EFL programs (as cited in Zheng, 2010). As for students at the university level, over 27 million university level students are learning English and taking English exams (Cheng & Curtis, 2010).

In terms of pedagogy, English is using the traditional Grammar-Translation method in most of the Chinese EFL classrooms (Yu, 2001; Rao, 1996; Rao, 2002; Hu, 2002; Huang, 2007; Song, 2009; Zhang, 2011). According to Rao (1996), EFL classrooms in China tend to use teacher-centered, book-centered methods, which emphasize the teacher's systematic grammar instruction and the students' rote memory and literacy translation (Hu, 2002). Since the Grammar-Translation method is being used by teachers, the learning strategies of Chinese EFL students tends to involve a process of reception, repetition, review, and reproduction (Rao, 2002).

#### THE AWAKENING OF ORAL ENGLISH EDUCATION

"Communicative competence refers to the ability not only to apply the grammatical rules of a language in order to form grammatically correct sentences but also to know when, where and with whom to use these sentences appropriately" (Gao & Zhang, 2010, p.70). Proficiency in English communication, as far as Liu (2009) is concerned, is the basic goal of learning a foreign language. According to Liu (2009), the ability to communicate proficiently in English is not just a curriculum requirement, but a useful skill for job-hunting in a competitive market. Liang and Chen

(2011) investigated the social demand for college English curriculum reform. By using questionnaires and interviewing 20 college graduates, these two authors drew the conclusion that the most important skill, which determines students' success is the ability to communicate in English. That is to say, the current society in China calls for graduates who have high competence in spoken English. Consequently, Zhang (2011) suggested that EFL specialists should not only respond to the problem of students' limited ability to speak English, but they should shift from an emphasis on linguistic competence to an emphasis on communicative competence.

Since the 1980s, some effort has been put into improving teaching techniques for English instructors in China. Some schools and colleges have adopted new teaching methods such as the Communicative Language Teaching Approach (CLT). In 1999, the College English Test-Spoken English Test (CET-SET) was also added as part of evaluation (Zheng & Cheng, 2008; Chen & Goh, 2011).

#### Characteristics of Chinese EFL Learners

Chinese EFL students have their own specific characteristics that are different than those of English students in other places. Several research studies have described Chinese students' nature in the educational context. It is believed that the specific nature of Chinese students is a reflection of their Chinese sociocultural background (Wang, 2001; Hu, 2002; Zheng, 2010). Specifically, by using a quantitative questionnaire to investigate 188 university students, Wang (2001) identified several main characteristics of Chinese university students. Among the characteristics listed, diligence and the ability to review knowledge gained high acceptance and recognition from the participants. In Wang's (2001) quantitative research study, 94.95% of the students believed that diligence was an indispensable component for academic achievement in English study. Diligence is regarded as one of the Chinese traditional virtues, which is deeply embedded in the field of education (Wang, 2001; Zheng, 2010). Having been taught by their parents and teachers, Chinese students are familiar

## FEATURES

with a famous Chinese proverb saying that, “If you work at it hard enough, you can grind an iron rod into a needle” (p.21). Therefore, students try their best to learn English because they believe that they can grasp it through diligent effort (Wang, 2001). Another characteristic of Chinese students that deserves attention is their preference for reviewing and reciting knowledge (Wang, 2001). Based on Wang’s (2001) data results, 98.99% of the participants regarded reviewing and reciting knowledge as their most valued learning strategy. This was also mentioned by Rao (2002). This pattern of learning is firmly embedded in the EFL classroom as the prevalent method among EFL students in the Chinese school system (Wang, 2001; Rao, 2002).

In addition to the characteristics mentioned above, Wang (2001) offered readers a general understanding of students in the Chinese sociocultural context by listing and explaining other prevalent virtues such as modesty, patriotism, erudition, and respect for teachers.

### ENGLISH LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The English learning environment in the Chinese context can be divided into a macro environment and a micro environment. The macro environment refers to the whole sociocultural environment and the micro environment refers specifically to English teaching in the Chinese school system.

In terms of the macro environment, there are different voices from researchers. Gil (2008), a researcher from Australia, argued that students and teachers in China have, in fact, established a richer English language environment than is commonly believed. Instead of blaming the macro environment, Gil (2008) suggested that teachers and learners should make good use of authentic materials such as printed materials, Internet and radio to enhance English learning in a practical way. Holding a different idea, both Wang (2001) and Chen et al. (2005) proposed that since English is not spoken in people’s daily life in China, students’ access to the target language is greatly reduced. Moreover, in view of the fact that mass media provides some access to spoken English, Chen et al.

(2005) claimed that people who study English as a foreign language in the Chinese context are just not motivated to pursue such input.

Teachers, students and the teaching and learning activities join together to form the classroom environment. This is regarded as the micro environment in terms of English learning. According to Zhang (2011), a traditional EFL classroom in China is supposed to be teacher-centered, with teachers lecturing and students taking notes and memorizing knowledge in a crowded classroom. Consequently, teachers in the traditional Chinese EFL classroom find it difficult to manage communicative interaction among students (Huang, 2007).

In addition to the teacher’s classroom management, the physical settings and classroom layout also influence the teaching and learning process. Randolph (2001) described the challenges, which she faced while teaching spoken English in an adult English classroom in Beijing:

However, there were potential problems posted by the layout, with two-student desks being spaced in either five rows of two each or two rows of five. Thus, if I were to hold up an illustrated book at the front of the deep, narrow classroom, I would run the risk of losing the interest of the students seated in the back several rows, and if I tried reading while standing at the center of the long wall at the front of the wide, shallow classroom, I would need to swivel every few seconds to catch the visual attention of the students seated on the periphery. (p.9)

Since English as a foreign language is being taught mainly within the classroom, the teaching environment is linked to students’ communication performance (Liu, 2009). Chen et al. (2005) stressed that high student-teacher ratios commonly exist in Asian schooling. Specifically, Huang (2007) indicated that there are 50 to 70 students in a classroom in most Chinese colleges. Such a huge class size has been criticized by many EFL educators and researchers (Huang, 2007; Chen & Goh, 2011). This arrangement is necessary because, in order to finish the prescribed curriculum, EFL teachers have no choice but to spend most of their time lecturing

rather than encouraging students to have open discussion (Huang, 2007, Chen & Goh, 2011). Consequently, students in a teacher-centered classroom seldom get a chance to have communicative activities such as group discussion and role-plays (Chen & Goh, 2011). Instead, they tend to listen quietly and take notes. Over time, students who have already adapted to the teacher-centered classroom management style become inactive or even reluctant to use oral English. This poses a threat to their oral English proficiency.

### HIGH-STAKE TESTING AND ITS IMPACT ON ORAL ENGLISH LEARNING

In China, education and selection are overlapped and interwoven. Exams are regarded as fair indicators and are used as a measurement standard for the selection of talent in all walks of life (Cheng, 2010). With nearly 2000 years of testing history, a common belief among Chinese is that high scores in tests lead to successful lives (Cheng, 2010). As a result, students tend to master the knowledge measured in the exam and ignore the other important abilities that are untested (Horn, 2010). Such examination-oriented patterns result in “a misalignment between assessment, teaching, and learning, with teaching relegated to testing and grading, and where ‘learning’ equates with getting good grades” (Lee, 2013, p.36). Therefore, it is not difficult to understand that students in China take countless exams “at the school, municipal, provincial, and national levels” in order to pursue a brighter future (Cheng, 2010, p.23).

English has been used as the gatekeeper for selection, not only in schooling, but also in professional employment (Zheng, 2010). Among numerous examinations, the CET (College English Test) is regarded as a stepping-stone to academic success in English at the university level. It has been noted that Chinese undergraduates in any discipline, except English, are required to take the College English Test (CET) in China (Huang, 2007; Zheng & Cheng, 2008; Zhang, 2011; Chen & Goh, 2011). Based on the statistics, the number of test-takers increased from 100,000 in the

first CET test to 13,000,000 in 2006. This made the CET one of the most influential national examinations in Chinese higher institutions (Zheng & Cheng, 2008). In terms of test composition, the CET contains several required sections, including listening, reading, and cloze as well as writing and translation, leaving the oral test as an option. Since EFL teachers' career advancement and students' academic achievement are connected to the passing rate of the CET test (Wang, 2012), both teachers and students concentrate on studying the content, which helps to increase the test scores (Zhang, 2011). Because of the huge pressure to increase the passing rate of the CET test, a large proportion of college EFL teachers spend most of their time teaching "grammar items and structural forms" (Huang, 2007, p.88). From the learners' perspective, the goal of English learning at the university level is to pass the CET rather than to learn proper English (Zheng & Cheng, 2008). Since the speaking component of the examination is optional in the CET, little attention and time is given to the cultivation of communicative competence in English. This leads to the marginalization of spoken English teaching (Wang, 2012; Zhang, 2011; Rao, 2001; Huang, 2007; Chen & Goh, 2011). Unfortunately, this marginalization conveys a wrong message to students: that communicative competence is less important than the ability to read and write. According to Horn (2010), high stake testing poses a threat to students' learning achievements. In the Chinese school system, the learner's pursuit of high scores in the high-stake test-oriented pedagogy harms students' spoken English learning as a whole.

## THE QUALIFICATION OF EFL TEACHERS IN CHINA

The qualification of EFL teachers in China is regarded as one of the challenges of Chinese students' oral English learning (Hu, 2002; Chen & Goh, 2011). According to Hu (2002), many EFL teachers in China lack English language proficiency. This constrains students' oral English learning. The result of Chen and Goh's

(2001) qualitative research regarding university EFL teachers in China supported Hu's (2002) point of view. Specifically, data from Chen and Goh's (2011) semi-structured interviews and questionnaires surveys of 301 EFL college teachers showed that many of the participants were less than confident in their oral English proficiency. Moreover, many participants believed that their inadequate English knowledge is a barrier towards spoken English teaching in higher education. One of the teachers interviewed in Chen & Goh's (2011) study indicated that with a poor oral English proficiency, he was not able to communicate clearly. Hence his ability to judge students' communicative performance was affected. "I don't have good oral English proficiency. Sometimes I can't express exactly what I mean and I can't judge whether students express themselves in the proper way or not. (T1)" (Chen & Goh, 2011, p.337). From the research studies mentioned above, it seems that the Chinese university English teachers' low confidence and inadequate capacity to teach oral English contributed to the unsatisfactory application of Communication Language Teaching pedagogy in the Chinese context.

EFL educators and specialists in Asia have come to realize the significance and necessity of EFL teacher training. They shed light on the need for EFL teachers' language proficiency. According to Butler (2004), EFL teachers' language proficiency has been regarded as a significant qualification for successful English teaching. Wichadee (2011) from Thailand also highlighted the general agreement that EFL teachers equipped with four competent language skills (reading, speaking, listening and writing) are better at teaching student English. Based on this agreement, he suggested that EFL teachers must meet the demands in terms of English proficiency. Similarly, Lee and Fan (2012), who conducted a research study in Taiwan specifically aimed at EFL teacher education and professional development, came up with the same points regarding this issue. Like Bulter (2004), these two authors agreed with the idea that English teachers' quality is one of the most import-

ant factors contributing to the quality of English teaching in an EFL context. Based on the analysis by researchers in China and other Asian countries, which have contextual similarities to China, the proficiency of EFL teachers in spoken competency is especially important in students' oral English learning process. Therefore, the qualification of university EFL teachers in China deserves more attention.

## THE IMPACT OF CHINESE TRADITIONAL CULTURE

Culture not only influences human beings' behavior, but also makes a difference on academic learning (Lee, 2005). Confucius, in Rao's (1996) and Hu's (2002) opinions, underscores Chinese education and affects Chinese education in different ways. Specifically, the influence of cultural values on students' oral English learning is seen in two areas, namely: the relationship between teacher and student and the culture of saving face.

The relationship between teachers and students in China is the subject of heated discussion. Many researchers at home and abroad have criticized the teacher's authority and the students' passive role in terms of EFL in China. Cultural attributes are often regarded as the source of students' reticence and passivity in Asian countries such as China (Cheng, 2000). Influenced by Confucianism, treating one's parents with filial piety is strongly highlighted in Chinese society (Eng, 2012). A traditional Chinese motto about the relationship between teachers and students says, "一日为师, 终身为父" (Yi Ri Wei Shi, Zhong Shen Wei Fu), which literally means "the teacher who teaches a student for one day will be his father for his whole life" (Wang, 2001, p.27). In line with this old saying, Chinese students are expected to respect and maintain a harmonious attitude (Hu, 2002) toward their teacher as they do toward their fathers. Young's (1987) research review claimed that Chinese ESL teachers preferred a more teacher-centered classroom because they felt more authoritarian in the classroom. In investigating the cultural characteristics of Chinese students, Wang (2001) provided the data that

94.95% of the participants held to the idea that it is a student's responsibility to show great respect for their English teacher and expect him/her to teach them adequate English knowledge. Therefore, teachers and students have to maintain a "hierarchical but harmonious relationship" (Hu, 2002, p.98) in Chinese traditional education, students who argue or negotiate with the teacher are regarded as impolite and disrespectful (Rao, 1996). Moreover, a student who is talkative or expressive runs counter to the traditional cultural values (Lim, 2009). Therefore, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which calls for a learner-centered classroom in a relaxed environment, presents a major challenge to the traditional, relational culture of an EFL classroom in Chinese universities.

Saving face is another cultural component that has a negative effect on students' oral English learning. Confucian culture emphasizes the importance of "面子" (face) as the public image (Jones, 2004). This cultural phenomenon is strongly related to the nature of Chinese society (Lim, 2009) that has been influenced by Confucian culture for more than 2000 years. China is viewed as a collectivist-oriented society (Lee, 2007; Lim, 2009; Zheng, 2010) where external features such as status, roles and relationships are emphasized in the social context (Lim, 2009; Zheng, 2010). According to Lim (2009), people in a collective society tend to be interdependent. As a result, they are sensitive to others' evaluation of them and seek to conform to the larger group. Being afraid of negative evaluation, Chinese students tend to avoid speaking in their additional language in public (Lim, 2009). This dynamic not only decreases students' oral English learning opportunity (Lee, 2005; Liu, 2005) but also causes a higher language anxiety compared with other ethnic groups (Jones, 2004; Woodrow, 2006; Lim, 2009). In a nutshell, such cultural behaviors and attitudes become significant obstacles, which limit students' ability to improve their oral English competency in the classroom (Chen & Goh, 2011; Liu, 2012).

Although some researchers believe that Chinese EFL students are negatively in-

fluenced by the traditional cultural values, some of the other researchers asserted that the Chinese EFL learners are stereotyped as passive learners by over-generalizations about cultural values. With regard to the cultural influence in second language teaching and learning, Stephens (1997, p.33) said in his research, "...there is a danger of overlooking what gaps may exist in students' language proficiency and experiences, and at the same time resorting to over-generalizations about culture which have a surface appearance, but which are not supported by strong research evidence" (as cited in Cheng, 2010, p.438). A survey conducted by Liu and Littlewood (1996) showed that there is no evidence of any reluctance to adopt an active speech role in the ESL classroom. Moreover, students in Hong Kong are found to have a strong desire for classroom discourse participation. These findings obviously run counter to the statement that students play a passive role in a teacher-centered classroom (as cited in Cheng, 2010, p.438). Researchers in China also critiqued the misconception of Confucian culture. Cheng (2010) challenged the notion that students are not encouraged to challenge their teacher in Confucian culture. This is manifested in Confucius' saying "勤学好问 Qin Xue Hao Wen" which means that a good student is encouraged to be diligent and ready to ask questions (Cheng, 2010). Cheng (2010) also gave another Chinese motto to contradict the idea of a Chinese teacher's authority, "师不必贤于弟子, 弟子不必不如师" (Shi Bu Bi Xian Yu Di Zi, Di Zi Bu Bi Bu Ru Shi) which says that "the teacher does not always have to be more knowledgeable than the pupil; and the pupil is not necessarily always less learned than the teacher" (p.440).

In terms of the argument that language anxiety is closely connected with the culture of losing face, the conclusion of Tsui's (1996) study showed that teachers' teaching strategies to a large extent determine the learners' language anxiety level in the second language classroom (as cited in Cheng, 2010). In other words, there is no direct evidence to prove to what degree cultural values result in Chinese EFL learners' language anxiety in spoken

English.

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS IN THE FUTURE

In terms of the possible solutions and implications for the future, Liu (2012) gave an objective and critical comment, which explored the relationship between language education and various components in the society:

Language education is situated in the educational system, which is further situated within the cultural, historical, economic, social, and political environment. Difficulty in changing one element in the language education system might stem from factors in the larger environment, which cannot be controlled by language educators alone. (p.216)

It is not easy to make a difference that improves college students' spoken English competence in an educational system (Liu, 2005). It's not realistic to expect a reform in terms of spoken English teaching pedagogies within a short time (Huang, 2007). Many research studies have come up with various solutions in an attempt to improve college students' oral English proficiency. Recommendations from EFL scholars are listed below.

## CALL FOR ESTABLISHING ENGLISH TEACHING AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Since the environment for teaching and learning oral English is unsatisfactory, the creation of a better language environment for EFL students in China to learn oral English becomes an urgent issue (Rao, 2002; Huang, 2007; Liu, 2009; Zhang, 2011; Chen & Goh, 2011; Jin, 2012). A healthy English environment should be created through various activities inside and outside classrooms (Huang, 2007; Liu, 2009).

As for the micro environment inside the classroom, it is stressed that a "light-hearted ambiance" (Zhang 2011, p.196) and "harmonious communicative class climate" (Jin 2012, p .60) could not only ease students' speaking anxiety, but also enhance students' motivation, and learning autonomy in spoken English practices. For students in larger classrooms, Khazaei

et al. (2012) suggested that teachers apply more communicative strategies, so as to give more opportunities for students to practice spoken language. When it comes to improving the macro learning environment outside the classroom, extracurricular activities such as English Club and listening to BBC news are recommended to improve students' understanding of English (Huang, 2007; Liu, 2009).

#### Call for Assessment of Spoken English

The gap widens between the increasing societal and global demands for individuals who can speak English and the reality that university students in China are lacking English communication proficiency. Therefore, it is suggested that spoken English should be a component of test assessment, so as to enhance university students' communicative competence (Yu, 2001; Huang, 2007; Zhang & Cheng, 2008; Liu, 2009; Chen & Goh, 2011). In terms of English assessment, Zhang and Cheng (2008) analyzed the positive reform of CET assessment in China. Efforts have been made to reform the College English Test (CET) by adding speaking as one of the assessment sections (Zhang & Cheng, 2008). Nevertheless, some scholars such as Chen & Goh (2011) challenged that idea by suggesting that communicative competence is still being overlooked by teachers and students because it is an optional test, as compared to reading, writing and listening. On account of the arguments, few studies have shown solicitude for the effect of CET-SET reform and whether it should be a compulsory part in CET. Therefore, it is suggested that further study pay more attention to the reform of assessment in China, in terms of communicative competence.

#### CALL FOR EFL TEACHER TRAINING

Lee and Fan (2012, p.60) stressed, "The quality of English teachers is crucial in determining the quality of our English education". According to Yu (2001), a qualified English teacher is supposed to not only be capable in four skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing, but also master knowledge about linguistics, psychology, and pedagogy. According to Wu (2001), Chinese EFL teachers lack

the following: "(1) English proficiency levels; (2) knowledge about language in general, English in particular, and language learning; and (3) language teaching philosophies and methodology" (p.193). As awareness of the significance and emergence of teacher education increased (Wu, 2001), several studies appealed to English teachers' professional development as well as teacher education in the current Chinese ELT situation. The EFL teachers in the Chinese school system are, in fact, eager to "take advantage of the opportunities" to improve their language proficiency (Wu, 2001). In light of EFL teachers in the post-secondary institution, Chen and Goh's (2011) research study stated that EFL teachers in higher education call for training programs to improve their oral English proficiency.

Furthermore, EFL specialists in China pointed out that Chinese EFL teachers need to learn more theories of pedagogical approaches to achieve the goal of improving students' oral English proficiency (Rao, 1996; Rao, 2001; Yu, 2001; Huang, 2007). Rao's (2001) research showed that Chinese EFL learners prefer a combination of communicative activities and non-communicative activities. Hu (2002) suggested that teachers need to keep a balance between the Grammar-Translation (GT) approach and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach by considering potential traditional cultural resistance. Therefore, it is suggested that a combination of valuable elements in GT and revolutionary principles in CLT be implemented in the Chinese EFL classroom (Huang, 2007). It is important for Chinese EFL teachers to know how to cautiously select teaching pedagogies to improve students' English communication skills based on a clear understanding of Chinese sociocultural contexts (Rao, 1996; Rao, 2001; Hu, 2002; Song, 2009).

To sum up, adequate teacher training should be given in order to cultivate qualified EFL teachers in higher education institutions so that they are empowered to create a "learner-centered, communicative, intercultural classroom" (Song, 2009,

p.81; Chen & Goh, 2011).

#### CALL FOR UNDERSTANDING SPECIFIC SOCIOCULTURAL VALUES

It is suggested that the sociocultural context should be taken into account in English language teaching and learning (Young, 1987). From the teacher's perspective, Liu (2005) supposed that EFL instructors should find a balance between different cultures. The teachers in the Chinese sociocultural context are also encouraged to adapt to the application of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach based on the integration of Chinese traditional teaching methods (Rao, 2002). From the students' perspective, Wang (2001) gave his solutions based on the analysis of Chinese students' cultural characteristics. According to Wang (2001), Chinese students' inactive participation in classroom discourse is more related to their self-conscious characteristic, which makes them feel shy and anxious when they speak English in the classroom. In this case, more interaction between teacher and student and students themselves is encouraged in the Chinese EFL classrooms. According to Cheng and Lau (2011), positive feedback not only raises students' learning interest, but most importantly, helps students build a strong sense of confidence towards their target language. As such, Chinese EFL teachers are encouraged to praise more and criticize less in order to create a low-risk, supportive, and motivating EFL classroom with effective teacher-learner interactions (Cheng & Lau, 2011).

#### CONCLUSION AND FUTURE STUDY

The current literature review analyzes students' oral English learning difficulties at the university level in the Chinese sociocultural context. This includes the learning environment, high-stake testing, the qualification of EFL teachers, and the challenge of cultural values. Researchers, abroad and at home, give valuable insights and suggestions, which are beneficial for further study in the field of oral English learning. Nevertheless, some limitations and gaps deserve attention from both EFL

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educators and policy makers. First, there are few research studies that systematically analyze high-stake testing in the Chinese school system. The effect that this type of testing has on students' oral English learning in terms of learning attitudes and learning strategies needs more study. In addition to this, since most of the spoken English tests in China are optional, a research puzzle exists as to whether these tests actually enhance students' communicative competence as they were expected to do. Or will the suggestion, from some EFL specialists, to offer oral English tests nationally, get into the same cycle as the current test-oriented culture? It is suggested that more qualitative research studies from both the teacher and student should be conducted to provide policy makers with an in-depth understanding of the current situation and the future needs of

oral English teaching and learning. Second, since researchers still doubt the effects of Chinese traditional culture on students' oral English learning, more convincing research findings and reliable insights are needed. There is no doubt that cultural factors are a complicated issue in any aspect of language education. Overbearing cultural issues can cause a negative bias in EFL learners. Nevertheless, underestimating cultural influences threatens to perpetuate misunderstandings and mismatches in oral English teaching pedagogies and learning strategies. In conclusion, there is an urgent need to help Chinese students in higher education institutes overcome the challenges in oral English learning. This goal calls for educators, policy makers, and students themselves to implement changes.

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# A Day In The Life

By Jennifer Nicholson

Now in its fifth year, Marial Bai Secondary School (MBSS) is one of the only fully operational high schools in the Northern Bahr el Ghazal State (NBG) of South Sudan. It is the first major initiative of the non-profit organization, The Valentino Achak Deng Foundation (VAD) named after the South Sudanese “lost boy” who helped to establish it. It currently has 210 grade 9 to 12 students (32 of these are girls) and 10 teachers. At least 80% of the staff and students are boarders at the school.

In my 5th and 6th years of teaching EAL students math at Daniel McIntyre Collegiate, I spent my summers with a group of volunteers at the school helping to train the local teachers who were just high school graduates themselves. We also helped to develop the school’s framework, policies and procedures. Then, inspired by the community’s commitment to education and development, I embarked on the adventure of a lifetime. In 2012 I was privileged to join the school as a volunteer teacher and support staff member for an entire school year. This venture coincided with South Sudan gaining its independence. It excited me to invest my energy into the future of hopeful youth in this newly birthed nation.

Before heading to South Sudan, I shared stories of life in South Sudan and work at the school in Marial Bai with staff and stu-

dents at DMCI. I then partnered with one of my colleagues, Rebecca Perlmutter, to collect stories from our EAL students that described a typical day in their lives as students in Winnipeg. I shared these stories with my students in South Sudan who were eager to exchange stories in return. The article that follows is a compilation of what they wrote with some of my own comments and observations to fill you in on some of the background information and statistics. Please feel free to use the students’ stories to illicit discussion with your own EAL students about their lives as students before coming to Canada versus their lives as students now in Canada.

## WEEKDAY MORNING ROUTINE

Titiana (boarding student): We wake up at 7 am. We rush to fill our buckets with fresh water from the hand-pump, which is near the teacher’s compound, two minutes from where we sleep. We are forced to start bathing early because we are using three bathrooms for thirty girls. After we take a cold shower, we put on our uniforms, which are brown skirts, white shirts, black shoes, brown ties and white socks. We wear light, white shirts because the weather here is really hot. We brush our teeth using a stick and homemade paste made from charcoal and salt. This

paste makes our teeth clean and white. In the morning, we feel happy. It is quite cool and we like that coolness. We feel hungry but are happy that we are well and not sick.

[South Sudan is one of the most under-developed countries in the world and the Northern Bahr el Ghazal State in which the school is located was one of the hardest hit during the previous decades of civil war. As such, there is no running water or electricity outside of a few expensive, fuel-powered generators in the main market of village centers such as Marial Bai.]

## TRANSPORTATION TO SCHOOL

Adhel (day scholar): We leave for school at 7 am. We do not feel okay because the school is very far from our home and we have to walk. It takes one hour to walk to school. The rainy season is the very worst because the rain falls every day and there is a lot of water on the muddy roads.

[92% of the NBG lives in rural communities. Marial Bai currently only has one mud road that passes through the village. The path to the school is a 40-minute walk from this road. In the rainy season, the area surrounding the school becomes impassable, even by a Land Cruiser! Day scholars roll up their pants and make the journey barefoot or in flip flops, carrying their compulsory black, close-toed shoes in a sac with them].

## BREAKFAST

Akoon (boarding student): I sometimes go for breakfast at 8 am at the small market next to the school. I mostly take tea. If I have enough money, I enjoy my tea with “mandazi” and even groundnuts. Mandazi is made out of yeast, sugar, oil and flour. It is rolled into balls and fried in oil.

[MBSS does not have a budget to provide students with breakfast and only those with cash can sometimes afford to buy a snack. Most villagers do not eat breakfast but will have tea and peanuts when they're in season. The few who can have a type of porridge made out of sorghum flour.]

## PREPARATION FOR SCHOOL

Ahok (boarding student): Once we are ready, we go to the school for general cleaning. We don't have garbage cans in our community so the wind blows trash around the school compound. Also due to the unfinished fence around our school, some neighborhood cows can pass through the school sometimes dropping dung which makes the environment untidy. These are the things that we have to clean using sticks and grass that we make into brooms.

We also have designated plots around the school compound so that each and everybody has a space to clean on Fridays. To clean these plots we use a tool called an “ajaray” to uproot all the long grass and bushes. This is to help keep the compound safe from living things that hide in the grasses like snakes and scorpions.

Every Monday morning we have an assembly. In the assembly, we stand in a line and begin by singing the National Anthem with our arms down at our sides. We are humble when singing

the National Anthem because it is a word of prayer and shows that we love our country. This is followed by a word of prayer by one of the students and then if any teacher has an announcement to put forward, he or she will make it at this time. The teacher on duty and headmaster will make the final comments and then, before we go to class, we each have to bring the piece of firewood that we brought to school with us to the kitchen to be used to cook our food.

[97% of the population of NBG uses firewood or charcoal as their primary fuel for cooking. Firewood is collected from nearby forests and bush by women and children who can often be seen carrying a large bundle over their heads on their way home or to the market.]

## WEEKDAY MIDDAY ROUTINE: SCHOOL LIFE

Nyanut (boarding student): Our classes start at 9 am. Before we enter class, the teacher on duty ensures that all students are in full uniform with their shirts tucked in. If not, we are punished to do some more general cleaning around the school. On Monday, our lessons start with Chemistry which is Regina's favorite because she wants to be a doctor, followed by English, Magdalene's favorite, and Biology, which I enjoy most. Each lesson lasts 35 minutes and we have four lessons before a 30-minute break. These are not the only subjects. We learn nine including Agriculture, Christian Religious Education (CRE), Geography, Math, Physics and Commerce.

Adhel is the class prefect. Her job is to control the class, take the attendance, collect the students' work for marking to bring to the teachers and set up a schedule for cleaning the classroom. If students are making noise during class time when no teacher is present, she will write down their names and report them to the teacher or prefect on duty. They will be punished by doing work like cleaning rubbish from the compound. Another rule is that bullying and fighting between students is prohibited. Students who fight will be expelled from school. The time of arrival and departure must also be respected. Students who are late are also punished. English is expected to be the main language of communication during school hours. We have to always stay in our classrooms during class time. If a teacher doesn't come, we just read on our own preparing for the next lesson.

There are seven girls and thirty-eight boys in our Form 1 [grade 9] class. The reason there are few girls is because many girls marry before finishing school. We do not feel happy that there are not many girls.

[In South Sudan, “less than 10% of children complete primary school.” Eighty-five percent of the South Sudanese population is illiterate. Furthermore, “Nearly half of all civil servants in South Sudan have only a primary education.” This includes primary school teachers many of which are also volunteers. This makes teacher-absenteeism a common problem. Currently half of the teachers at MBSS are trained professionals from Uganda and Kenya while the other half are South Sudanese who completed



high school in either Kenya or Uganda.

Looking at gender disparity, less than 1% of females attend high school in South Sudan. “The maternal mortality rate is the highest in the world and gender based violence and rape devastates both individuals and communities. A 15 year old girl has a higher chance of dying in childbirth or pregnancy than finishing secondary school.” MBSS prioritizes female education by offering full scholarships to all girls who are able and willing to attend.]

## LUNCH

Adhel: We eat lunch at 1 pm. The kind of food we eat is sorghum flour and lentil soup. Other days we eat maize flour with the same broth. We don’t have another type of broth here in our school.

[In South Sudan, “At least 80 percent of the population is income-poor, living on an equivalent of less than USD 1 per day. More than one third of the population is food insecure and even in a good year, 20 percent of households cannot support themselves.” In order to make the school more self-sustaining and provide more nutritionally balanced meals to students, MBSS students and staff have cultivated a large piece of land next to the school and this year successfully collected a bountiful harvest of sorghum, maize, sesame, eggplants, watermelon, okra and pumpkin.]

## WEEKDAY AFTER SCHOOL ROUTINE

Akoon: From Monday to Thursday our classes end at 3:20 pm. We do not have classes on Friday afternoon. I have to go to the dormitory prefect if I want to get permission to go home for the weekend. I first have to clean a small plot of land near the dormitory in order to get permission. Students who are day scholars don’t have to ask for permission but have to wait until departure time which is 3:20 pm. When I go home for the weekend, I use a bike to get home. I really feel happy because I usually visit my relatives on that day. The weather is hot and travelling is boring because my home is so very far away. It takes one hour and a half to reach my home by bicycle. I usually feel tired when I get there.

Nyanut I live too far from the school. I only went home two times this school year because of the cost and the distance. If I want to go home, I have to wait until Saturday morning. I walk

45 minutes to the market to wait for a bus. It costs 50 pounds [\$12 CAD] to get to Aweil and then 15 more pounds [\$4 CAD] to get to Winjok. It takes 2 hours to get to Aweil and one more hour to get to Winjok. That means if I catch a bus at 9 am, I will arrive home by 1 pm. The road is not good. My body hurts. I have pain once I get home but I am happy to see my family.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

Adhel: At home, our responsibilities include fetching water and firewood, cooking, washing clothes and utensils, taking care of our younger siblings, going to the market to buy food for supper and grinding the flour. To grind the flour we take it to the grinding mill. During the rainy season, we help our families by cultivating, weeding and harvesting maize and sorghum; during the dry season we re-thatch our houses. We use dry grass. It is easy work and I enjoy doing it. We feel happy because we are their daughters and we must work happily with them.

Bol and Dhieu (day scholars): When we get home, we help our parents by looking after our cattle and washing their clothes. We have to fetch enough water to wash our clothes. We use our hands to wash them and then hang them out in the sun to dry. We feel upset because we do it manually and a lot of energy is wasted. We don’t help them in cooking food because it is not acceptable in our culture for boys to cook food for the family. It is actually a task for the girls at home. We enjoy our leisure time by playing football with our friends in the evening time. While playing football we feel happy because we play with our friends and the girls are there watching as an audience.

## SUPPER

Ahok: We take our dinner at 6:30 pm. Our dinner at the school is always lentils with sorghum.

Adhel: We eat our supper at 8 pm. Depending on the season, we eat meat, dry fish, okra, pumpkin leaves, kale, tomatoes, potatoes and sorghum or maize flour.

## BEDTIME

Titiana: After dinner, we again fetch water to shower. At 8 pm we all go to evening prep up to 10 pm. I am the girls’ boarding prefect. Before night prep I go to the teachers’ compound to fetch the solar lamps. Since we don’t have electricity at the school, the solar lamps give us the light we need for studying and getting ready for bed afterwards. They help us to see the crawling animals like snakes and scorpions, which are so many in our new compound. I bring the lights back to the teachers’ compound the next morning for charging.

Night prep lasts from 8 pm until 10 pm. Failure to attend prep will lead to a punishment such as cutting of huge poles to be used to build our school fence. Night preps are important because this is the only time we can go through the work we did during the day and get ready for our morning lessons. After prep, sometimes we listen to the news through the radio and sometimes we listen

to music through our cell phones. We also like to tell funny stories. Sneaking out of school will lead to suspension. We go to sleep at 11 pm. If we can't fall asleep, we can turn on the lamps or our flashlights to go through our notes some more. The day was very nice and we feel happy.

Akoon: On Friday and Saturday we go to sleep at 12:30 am because we usually go to the drum after supper. Young men and ladies will beat the drum at nighttime in an open place. Other youth will come to the drum to meet their girlfriends/boyfriends to talk with them. Some people will also dance near the drum. I spend most of the evening there which is why I go to bed late. Sometimes I talk to my friends the whole night, which will make me feel especially tired the next day.

Despite the daily struggles that students face at Marial Bai Secondary School, I am excited to conclude this article with the report that the school ranked third out of thirty-eight high schools nationwide on its grade 12 national exams. The sixteen students who sat the exams were the first group of students to pass through the school. This was a remarkable achievement and

speaks volumes of the efforts of the teachers, the students and VAD and all of its donors. If you would like more information about the school and how you can be involved in its progress and development, please visit [www.valentinoachakdeng.org](http://www.valentinoachakdeng.org).

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[http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/julyhls/pdf11/has\\_lise\\_grande.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/julyhls/pdf11/has_lise_grande.pdf)

<http://www.unops.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/EB%20documents/2011/110901%20Joint%20disc%20S-Sudan%20final.doc.pdf>

<http://www.unops.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/EB%20documents/2011/110901%20Joint%20disc%20S-Sudan%20final.doc.pdf>

[http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/SSD\\_UNDAF\\_RoSS\\_Distribution\\_Draft\\_-\\_3-10-11.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/SSD_UNDAF_RoSS_Distribution_Draft_-_3-10-11.pdf)

[http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/SSD\\_UNDAF\\_RoSS\\_Distribution\\_Draft\\_-\\_3-10-11.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/SSD_UNDAF_RoSS_Distribution_Draft_-_3-10-11.pdf)



# TEAL MANITOBA SAGE CONFERENCE



## EAL Language and Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Sandra Melo and Chrissy Spafford, Co-Chairs

This year's conference held on October 25, 2013 at Collège Sturgeon Heights Collegiate was again a huge success. Participants were treated to a vibrant keynote presentation by Rita Platt and John Wolfe. These two EAL colleagues from Minnesota and Wisconsin gave TEAL Conference participants an excellent, thought-provoking keynote address that left us with much to ponder and discuss in our own Manitoban EAL contexts. As well, participants attended many breakout sessions by our own teachers who were willing to share their expertise with others. Tons of great learning and discussion was evident around the building throughout the day!

The success of this conference is due to the many people who have given their time and energy to make it happen. We would like to formally thank the keynote presenters, the breakout session presenters, the conference planning committee, technical staff, students, school administration, custodial staff, publishers, vendors, caterers and participants. Without you, this conference couldn't have happened!

We hope that the conference has inspired more dialogue and that teachers are able to bring back to their schools helpful information with regards to EAL Language and Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.



# Activity Box

Yi-Fang Chen

Review squares	
<b>Purpose/Aim</b>	To review what students have learned on a specific topic. To engage every student in a small group.
<b>Target Level</b>	All levels (depending on the design of the questions)
<b>Language Skills</b>	Reading, Listening and speaking
<b>Preparation</b>	1. Two dice. 2. A sheet of 12 questions (Please see the attachment A).
<b>Instruction</b>	1. Divide students into groups of 4-5 people. 2. Give each group 2 dice and a question sheet. 3. Assign a leader in each group. The leader has to read the questions to his/her group members. 4. Everyone takes turns throwing the dice to decide which questions he/she has to answer.
<b>Variation</b>	Basic version: it can be target vocabulary or target sentence structures. Advance version: It can be questions requiring series of names, locations, meanings...etc.
<b>Description</b>	This activity is beneficial for reviewing learned information or target vocabulary and sentence structures.
<b>Special Point</b>	The activity takes about 15-20 minutes depending on how familiar the students are with the topic and how many rounds they do.

# ACTIVITY BOX

<p>1. What is your phone number?</p>	<p>2. What is your address?</p>	 <p>3. What language do you speak? I speak _____.</p>
<p>4. How many children do you have?</p>	<p>5. Do you have other family members who live in Canada?</p>	<p>6. What is the phone number for YMCA?</p>
<p>7. What time do we start our class?</p>	<p>8. How many lates can you have in one month?</p>	<p>9. At what age your child can start the swimming class?</p>
<p>10. What is the date today?</p>	<p>11. What is your birthday?</p>	<p>12. Spell your name.</p>

