# TESL ⚓ NS Newsletter

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## EDITORIAL
Summer/Fall Edition (2006)
Theme: Beyond Teaching

Here is the Summer/Fall Edition of our newsletter.  As exciting as the changes of the seasons, we have articles/reports on a variety of topics-- professional development and conferences; changes regarding some of the TESL NS board members; extra activities offered to students in addition to the teaching of ESL;  a book review, and contributions from some ESL students, evidence of how well we have helped them, at least linguistically.

Goes without saying that we teachers of ESL do more than help our students linguistically.  We are their surrogate parents, their tourist guides, their health counsellors,  their love counsellors, their culture/freedom-shock therapists, their entertainers and more.  Our recent conference encouraged us to have HUMOR  in the classroom.  Laughter, the "Readers Digest" tells us, is the best medicine.  However it is not easy to explain why people laugh.   A one-time Psychology professor of mine offered these three theories: we laugh because of feelings of superiority, of incongruity and of relief.  What complicates matters in the mini-united nations setting of the ESL classroom is the fact that a joke which makes people from one culture laugh may embarrass people from another culture.  This goes for the teacher too.  A joke that may give the teacher fits of laughter may be met with blank stares by the students.  But that in itself can be funny. Besides, language itself is a big factor re the success or failure of a joke.  Being able to hold one's own in basic conversation may not be nearly enough to understand the subtleties of a joke.  Humor is the last thing the student of a foreign language understands.  Difficult as it may seem for some of us to be humorous in class, we can always try. The attempt in itself and the experience that comes with it, can be funny.

Another major focus of the recent conference was on CULTURE.  How do we deal with cultural differences, especially those of us who are not very familiar with other cultures?  I commend Canada's efforts to accommodate the cultural practices of its people, especially of those who are new to the country.  What personally disturbs me, though, is the fact that Canada has to give up some of its own cultural practices to be "politically correct" vis a vis certain minority groups. The question is whether it is possible to be equally sensitive to the cultures of all the people who are in Canada? Do we tend to be

more  "sensitive"  to people who come from  more influential or more moneyed countries and less so to people and refugees from not-so-important countries?  My suggestion is that foreign students and potential immigrants to Canada should be told by Canadian embassies overseas issuing visas what difficulties they are likely to encounter while studying or living in Canada.  If, after that, they still want to come, to study or live here, "sensitivity" matters might be less of a problem.  One could argue that we, being the "bigger" people,  can afford to  accomodate everyone's culture;  that, in fact, this would be globalization in one of its best forms.   However, in our little world of ESL teaching, coping with cultural difference will always be a challenge. Who says teaching is not a noble profession?

 We will miss those who are leaving the board --  Sandee and her whirlwind meetings as well as Beth and Jill,  but I am sure we can still count on their support.  Welcome aboard new board members (Jennifer, Caroline L, Kristy, Caroline HP) and new TESL NS members.  Please read the reports from our board members  and  some inspiring contributions from two  ESL students, one from  China  and one from Guatemala -- eye openers for us all.

Enjoy what's left of the falling leaves drifting down your windows and get ready for the season of the falling snow flakes.  Get your winter coats out of moth-ball storage and let us hope that the winter knocking on our doors will be as mild as the last one.

Take care everyone.

*Ms. Fe Leonor Baculi*
(Instructor)
TESL Center / SMU

## President's Report:
**October 14, 2006**
Thank you all for coming to the conference this year and for coming to the board meeting! This is one of the only times of the year where we can all come together to meet new people, catch up with old friends and past colleagues, discover what is new in our chosen profession and, hopefully, get a few more ideas for our classes.  It is also a time to say good-bye to board members who are choosing to do new things with their time or who are stepping aside to let others join in the wonderful experience of being on a board of directors!

**Membership:**
Last year, we had 97 members by the end of the yea. At present, we have 86 TESL NS members, and more I am sure, will join us throughout the year.  A number of members have applied for and received their TESL Canada standardization as well, so congratulations to all who have taken this professional step forward.  It is great to advance our professional standing and to support the work of our parent agency, TESL Canada.

**Changes to the board:**
This year, we will be saying 'goodbye' to three people. Beth Vye, Vice President for two years, Jill MacLean, Recording

Secretary for one year and I, are resigning. We wish Jill well with her new chocolate making business venture and hope that both she and Beth remain involved in TESL NS in the coming years. Current members of the board have shifted positions in order to fill the Executive positions and TESL Nova Scotia members have filled in the remaining spaces. I would personally like to thank three TESL Nova Scotia members, all of whom I have had the pleasure of working with at some point or other in the last couple of years, who have come forward as nominees for board positions: Caroline Lodge, Jennifer Broomhead and Kristy Walsh. Welcome! Also, thanks to all who have served on the board this year. It has been a pleasure.

**Life Membership Award:**
TESL Nova Scotia has nominated Catherine Eddy for the TESL Canada Life Membership award and Ellen Pilon and I will present it to her at the TESL Canada conference next weekend. Catherine started out in the Maritimes and then ventured out west as so many do! She was actively involved in BC TEAL, various committees on the TESL Canada board and was President on at least one occasion. Catherine is an author, teacher, mentor and moderator extraordinaire and we are delighted that Maureen Sargent (SMU) suggested we nominate her.

**Board Activities:**
Over the last few years, the board has desperately tried to fulfill the wishes of its membership. This has meant, for the most part, planning conferences and

mini-conferences focusing on practical things we can all use in our classrooms. As a result, we have workshops every six months where we try to provide workshops that the membership has asked for.

***Spring 2006 Mini-conference:***
In the late spring, we held our annual Mini-conference for teachers at MISA/HILC. There were three workshops that morning, all set to follow on the heels of Rebecca Oxford's plenary topic last year. Sarah Sampara got us all involved with our various learning styles, Caroline Higgins Poole focused on reading skills and I finished the morning with an introductory workshop on Neuro-lingustic-programming (NLP). It was an active morning which engaged all of our senses and ensured that everyone participated in some capacity. There were approximately 40 participants, many from the volunteer sector, and we all walked away with some little tidbit of information that we didn't have when we entered the room. We greatly appreciate the time volunteers spend planning, organizing and presenting at our conferences and I would like to thank Sarah and Caroline for taking time out of a lovely spring weekend to present for us.

**TESL Canada conference in 2008:**
Talks have also continued regarding the co-sponsoring of the TESL Canada 2008 conference and Ellen Pilon will be our Chair here in Nova Scotia. Barbara Clayden and Sandra Foreman will be the co-chairs in New Brunswick. I am sure they will be looking for folks to help

run and/or work on various committees so please let us know on your conference evaluation form if you are interested and what capacity you would like to be involved, if you know. We will need all the volunteers we can get between now and May 2008 so please don't be shy!

Our two plenary speakers have been approached and approved by the TESL Canada board and I am delighted to announce that both Scott Thornbury and Jeremy Harmer will be with us in May 2008! Scott Thornbury is currently the Cambridge DELTA joint chief assessor and is noted for his accessible EFL books, his witty articles and his belief in everything authentic! His most recent ventures include "Grammar", which came out this year, and "The CELTA Coursebook" which has not yet been released, as well as "How to teach Grammar" and various other texts which focus on the Lexical Approach. Jeremy Harmer is well known for his EFL teaching 'bible' "The Practice of English Language Teaching" as well as a number of the "How to Teach…" books. Both have written back to tell me they are excited to be coming to the Maritimes so we have them to look forward to 18 months from now!

**TESL Canada, 2006:**
A few TESL NS members will be presenting at the TESL Canada 2006 conference this year and I am sure they will represent our province well. Our TESL Canada Representative, Ellen Pilon, will be involved in meetings all day Wednesday and will update us on the issues at hand in the newsletter at

the end of the month. If there is anything you want to ensure Ellen brings up at the conference, please find her today or leave a note for her at the registration desk.

**Learners forum at the TESL Canada 2006 Conference in Manitoba:**
One lucky candidate will be sent to Manitoba next weekend to represent Nova Scotia at the Learners conference. As with last year, applicants were asked to send in an essay and then went through an interview process. The lucky winner is Alina Guk, from MILS schools in Dartmouth and we look forward to hearing from her regarding the conference in our next newsletter at the end of October.

**Good bye:**
And one final note, I would like to thank all the present and past board members that I have had the honour of working with on this board over the last nine years. I cannot thank them enough for this invaluable learning experience both in my various capacities on the TESL Nova Scotia board and the Teacher Training Advisory Committee on the TESL Canada board. While the politics involved with being on a board with such diverse opinions and outlooks on life have not always been easy or pleasant, I have grown from the experience and have learned when to express my opinion loudly, when to express it softly and when to keep silent….not always an easy task for me as anyone who knows me will agree!

I would especially like to thank Maureen Sargent for her guidance and

encouragement during the first few years I was on the board and to Ellen Pilon during the last few for her attention to detail, support and undying energy. Without volunteers like these two, you would not have such an efficient board.

Thanks again to all I have worked with. It has been an absolute pleasure!

On that note, I would like to thank you all for coming to this year's conference. Learn lots, participate as if it is the last one you will ever go to and try to talk with at least one new person in every workshop you attend!

Thank you.
Respectfully submitted,
*Sandee Thompson*
TESL Nova Scotia President,
October 14, 2006

## In-coming President's Message

Greetings everyone!
Thank you to everyone who attended and helped out at our TESL NS Fall 2006 Conference, *A Funny Thing Happened on my Way to the Classroom: Laughing and Learning*. The conference was a great success, with about 70 members attending. We received very positive feedback on the workshops, food, and facility. All of your comments will be very useful for the planning that we have already started for next year's conference!

On behalf of the TESL Nova Scotia Executive, I would like to thank our out-going board members, Sandee Thompson, Beth Vye, and Jill McLean, for all of their energy, enthusiasm, and hard work over the last number of years.

I am pleased to introduce the new executive for 2006/2007.
*Emily Amos* – President (Université Sainte-Anne, SMU)
*Erica Butler* – Vice President (Halifax Regional Libraries)
*Ellen Pilon* – TESL Canada Representative (ILI)
*Angela Campbell* – Treasurer (ILI)
*Caroline Lodge* – Recording Secretary (HILC)
*Sarah Sampara* – Membership Secretary (HILC)
*Fe Baculi* – Newsletter Editor (SMU)
Jennifer Broomhead – Member at Large (ECSL))
*Shawn Deleu* – Member at Large (SMU)
*Christine Grimshire* – Member at Large (CLLC)
*Kristy Walsh* – Member at Large  (ILI)
*Caroline Higgins-Poole* – Member at Large (Halifax Regional School Board)

We would especially like to extend a warm welcome to our new board members, Caroline, Caroline, Kristy, and Jennifer.

We have another event-filled year coming up. We are busy planning for another mini-conference in the spring, and our annual fall conference. If you would like to be a presenter at either of these conferences, please let us know by contacting the webmaster at webmaster@teslns.ca.

Have a great holiday season, and we hope to see you at the spring mini-conference!

*Emily Amos*
TESL NS President

## CONFERENCES NEWS
**Ellen Pilon**
**TESL NS 2006 Conference**
**Westin Hotel October 13-14**

Once again our members enjoyed an excellent conference, this time with guest speaker Jim Howden, a fascinating, knowledgeable, amusing speaker who enlightens and entertains at the same time.

Although the Westin Hotel is a very busy conference centre, we are able to obtain ample workshop space without having to pay for hotel bedrooms. A few years ago the executive researched every hotel and university in the area to compare prices, facilities, and availability, and the Westin was the most cooperative and reasonably priced for our needs. Overall, evaluations showed that the Westin is popular with our members. The hotel is also willing to accommodate the book shipments for publishers, which has been a problem when we weren't based at a hotel. One disadvantage of holding the conference at a hotel is the cost of A-V equipment, which is prohibitive. Therefore TESL volunteers bring equipment for use in the workshops. Unfortunately this year one of the OHPs broke down Friday night and wasn't replaced on Saturday,

with the result that we had only one OHP and 2 CD players for 3 simultaneous workshops, and no screen. Renting professional A-V equipment would require approximately $20 per person increased conference fees.

A few delegates recommended that the conference be held at a school. If this person would please email us, we would be happy to organize the conference at their school. The mini-conference is often hosted by HILC, which has been very hospitable. ILI has hosted conference workshops and the mini-conference in the past. However, neither facility is well-suited to accommodating 70 to 90 delegates, including lunch.

To help pay for our annual conference, the Executive has been using some funds remaining from the TESL Canada 2000 conference which was held in Halifax. We feel this is using the money for as many members as possible. The funds yet remaining from that national conference will be used to help fund some TESL NS delegates going to the TESL Canada 2008 conference in Moncton at the end of May, 2008, which is being hosted by TESL NS and TESL NB together. If anyone has ideas about how to do this fairly, please email us (webmaster@teslns.ca).

Workshops this year were given by Carol Derby and Alicia Daley, Donna Mclean and Sarah Sampara, and Jayne Geldart and Carol MacAskill, all of HILC; Sandee Thompson and Julian L'Enfant of ILI; Pat Meek of CLB; Christine

Grimshire of CLLC; Christa Beaudoin-Lietz of SMU; and Louisa Horne of Sylvan. 70 of the 89 members for 2006-2007 attended the conference.

Thanks in particular to Sarah Sampara for name tags and membership cards, to Fe Baculi and Jill Maclean who spent considerable time at the registration desk, and to Jill Maclean for her homemade chocolates which were gifts to the speakers.

## TESL Canada 2008 Conference
**Delta Beausejour, Moncton, NB**
**May 29-31, 2008**
*Ellen Pilon, NS Chair*

I have the honour of representing TESL Nova Scotia in co-chairing this national conference with Barbara Clayden and Sandra Foreman of TESL NB. We have met several times with the hotel and with the Executive Officer (EO) of TESL Canada to ensure the hotel is a suitable location: it is. Hopefully we will attract between 300 and 350 delegates, in which case we will occupy most of the hotel and all of the conference facilities.

Guest speakers will be the renowned Scott Thornbury and Jeremy Harmer and the topic is discourse. Our title is *Uncovering Discourse*. Soon the colourful poster designed for us by TESL Canada will be on our TESL NS website, which will host the conference information. Essentially TESL NS will look after off-site affairs such as pre-registration, the program, etc. while

TESL NB will look after on-site affairs. Both TESL NS and TESL NB will approach potential presenters and coordinate who gives what workshop when. The Learners Conference chair has yet to be decided, so if anyone is interested in this role, or in helping the committee, please let me know. (webmaster@teslns.ca)

The Call for Papers will be posted early next year, both on our website and in the spring TESL Canada Journal mailing. However, why not start thinking now that this is a wonderful opportunity for your professional development, and prepare your workshop ideas? At TESL Canada conferences presenters do pay all their expenses themselves, however.

On another note, with each national conference there are vacancies on the TESL Canada Board. If anyone is interested in taking on a position on the TESL Canada Board, please let me know and I will give you some information. A Board member has a complimentary hotel room at the national conference, paid for by TESL Canada, but has to pay for the other expenses or arrange their own funding.

Barbara, Sandra and I met with the Winnipeg conference chairs and learned about the highpoints and pitfalls of conference planning. Nonetheless we are excited about the next 18 months and are reassured by the invaluable support of the TESL Canada EO, Louise Aerts.

## TESL Canada 2006 Learners' Conference
By Alina Guk

First of all, it was a pleasure for me to attend the TESL Canada 2006 Learners' Conference that was held in Winnipeg, Manitoba from October 19 to 21. I would like to thank TESL Nova Scotia for giving me an opportunity to be present at this conference. I really enjoyed all the presentations and social activities, and I'm very glad to share my experiences with you.

This conference was run at the same time as the TESL Canada/TEAL Manitoba National Conference, and it was for newcomers to Canada who are learning English as an Additional Language. The goals of the conference were:

- To provide useful information to newcomers in Canada about important aspects of living in the community that may not always be discussed in regular EAL classes
- To give learners an opportunity to talk with each other and to representatives of various educational, social and government organizations
- To give learners a chance to communicate the needs they feel for additional language training and accessing settlement resources from organizations such as the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks.

Co-Chairs Sandra Kouritzin and Diana Turner as well as other speakers gave us some instructive and vivid presentations and a lot of information, which are very supportive of our life in a brand new country.

For our workshop sessions, we had various interesting topics which I found very educational and informative:

The first session was on employment. Using the technique of Stop Theatre, the young actors showed us three scenarios: Construction Site, Human Resources Officer's Office, and At the Restaurant. We had the opportunity to work through these situations involving workplace safety, harassment, violence, and workplace dynamics. Our group came to the conclusion that most of the employers are fair, but you have to show them that you know your rights. This is especially difficult for people from another country. They need a lot of encouragement and courage. If you don't know English, it doesn't mean that you can't fight for your rights. Theoretically, we all want to fight for our rights, but practically there are many other things to consider. However, Canada seems to be a more polite society and treats their immigrants better.

The next session was a CCLB session on "Learner Management of Language Learning" by Pauline McNaughton and Maryanne Kayed. We discussed learners' experience with language learning, how we were introduced to the Canadian Language Benchmarks, and what helped us most to learn English. I

shared my experience with other learners from different parts of Canada. From our conversation, I understood that our province has a lot of benefits for newcomers. For example, we have many great MISA, MILS and YWCA programs that help us integrate into our community. I'm very lucky living in Halifax.

There were quite a few suggestions from our group of learners about the language assessment process. We felt that there:
- should be more information on the process before you do the assessment
- assessments should be more thorough, for they do not accurately reflect our level of competence
- should not be one assessor for four skills (writing, reading, speaking and listening)

In my opinion, listening to songs, radio, watching movies with subtitles, reading novels, fiction or children's books will help a lot to improve your English.

Another workshop session was on education by Hetty Roessinghh from the University of Calgary. She led a discussion of the Canadian public school system on the topic of how to facilitate the education of yourself and your children in Canada, including recognition of experiences that they have already had, identity development, unrealistic expectations from parents, problems in communicating with schools and the need to become more familiar with the Canadian school culture. We

learned that there are many things that connect us to our child's school:
- report card
- volunteer (reading to the children, going on field trips)
- parent council (getting involved in our child's school)

In addition, we had a workshop session on justice facilitated by Patrol Sergeant Cecil Swinson and Constable Joanna Quail of the Winnipeg Police Diversity Unit. They did a PowerPoint presentation on the topic of gangs followed by a question and answer session.

The last session was on social services given by Esther Blum from the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work. She presented the topic of women's shelters using case studies. In small round-table groups, we discussed how we could resolve different situations and manage them correctly.

It is not easy to describe all my feelings I experienced during the conference. I felt very proud to be chosen to represent all the learners from Nova Scotia at this conference. I hope in a very small way that I have made a little contribution to improving the way things are done. By taking part in many lectures and workshops, I have learned how conferences are organized in Canada. I felt a huge sense of equality when government people, social agencies, experts, teachers and learners were together in one place sharing their experiences and learning from each other. The strongest feeling was, I guess, that the people around us do

care about us -- immigrants. They are doing everything they can to make our adaptation easier. It is our pleasure to stay here, to live and to become part of the Canadian community.

TESL NS Learner to the Learners Conference 2006 – *Alina Guk*

## TESL Canada 2006 Conference - Winnipeg
### October 17-21, 2006
*Ellen Pilon*

First of all, I'd like to say that I really appreciate the opportunity of representing Nova Scotia on the TESL Canada Board and of being able to attend the conference. TESL Canada pays for the hotel room, but TESL NS pays the air fare and the conference registration. This year I paid my own airport transportation costs and all incidentals since the airfare from Halifax to Winnipeg return isn't exactly cheap.

My first day at the conference was spent in an 8-hour board meeting, followed by a one hour meeting of the *TESL Canada Journal* Advisory committee on which I serve. Although lengthy, the time speeds by when so many interesting people from all over the country share ideas and opinions on the business of the organization. This is the first conference with Executive Officer Louise Aerts who succeeded Carol May in the fall of 2005. Carol May retired at that time to enjoy golf and vacation time with her husband. None of the business this year was controversial, so I won't go into details except to mention that TESL Canada would like to see more participation from K-12 ESL teachers. Also, the *TESL Canada Journal* is going to go online, hopefully next year, but will be available only through a password. The new editor is Dr John Sivell of Brock University, succeeding Sandra Kouritzin of the University of Manitoba.

Here are a few tidbits about the workshops I attended. I find conference workshops highly stimulating. The next conference is the TESL NS - TESL NB one in Moncton, so you'll all be able to attend and enjoy your own professional stimulation!

**Symposium**: "The European Language Portfolio and Its Potential in Canada."
        Some of this symposium was about portfolios, but much of it was about frameworks such as CEF and CLB. The advantage of CEF, the Common European Framework, is that other tests can be equated to this system. Eventually an equivalency between CLB and CEF will be available. Some ESL textbooks now include a CEF level; many Cambridge tests have equivalences to CEF. An advantage of CEF is that it is for any language, not just English. Each of the 6 levels is organized into 3 holistic summary groups that includes can-do statements to help learners appraise their own language development. If learners have succeeded in 80% of the can-do statements, they have achieved that level.
        Also discussed was the importance of learners being aware of their achievements at a level of

language, and what they need to achieve for the next level.  Self-assessment and reflection based on the can-do statements are important factors in a learner's progress.

Not only are can-do statements useful goals for learners, they also give learners a sense of accomplishment.  If in grade 2, for example, a language learner has met the can-do statements for CEF A1, then they have met one tangible goal and are ready to move on to the next one.  One school system developed this idea even further by introducing the Public Service French exam to its high school students who studied for the exam which they wrote at the end of high school.  This gave them a test score that was nationally recognized, not just a credit in a school; it also gave the students increased motivation to learn the language. Public schools that introduced this feature to their language programs experienced substantial increase in enrollments.  It brings to mind the carrot dangling in front of the donkey, which can certainly be effective motivation.

There was a wealth of ideas in this 3-hour symposium, but I have space to only touch on the topics.  See http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/Portfolio/?L=E &M=/main_pages/levels.html for details on the CEF levels.

Friday 8:30:  **Program Administration - Problems with People**.
Virginia Christopher, Vancouver YMCA International College
This was an excellent workshop where we learned how to decide what responsibilities should be kept by a senior manager and what could be

delegated to a more junior manager. The workshop could have been called "learning to let go". We also learned about different structures of organizations and that language schools are often a mix of structure types.

In groups we discussed a case study where a student wrote an essay for his teacher on the effects of 911. The essay is very strong and biased against North American values; the student is an immigrant to North America.  The teacher wrote comments on the essay, trying to respect the student's opinion yet emphasize that there are many points of view.  Then the teacher worried that the student was a terrorist, and talked about it in the teacher lunchroom.  How should an administrator deal with this?  How should the teacher have behaved? It was an interesting discussion, of course with no right or wrong answer.

An interesting aside from this was that if student writing is going to be made "public", meaning available for someone other than the teacher to read, then there should be a signed agreement with the student.  This made me think that so often we encourage students to write something, then their work gets displayed on the walls of our classroom.  Do we even ask the students if this is OK, or give them a choice?

Friday 10:15:  **Facilitating Group Work in the ESL Classroom**.
Stephanie Olson, U. of Manitoba.
This was quite an interesting lecture, combining ideas from *Classroom Dynamics* and *Group Dynamics in the Language Classroom*

with task-based learning. "Groups" she defined as more than a pair but less than the whole class. A group has two major characteristics: first, interdependence, where every person in the group has to participate and second, independence, where the group works independently of the teacher. She stressed the importance of taking the time to prepare learners for this shift in power.

There are several stages to follow. First are the pre-group work strategies such as providing the language needed, explaining rules and getting students to set rules, ensuring they understand the advantages of group work, giving them an appropriate and meaningful task, etc. Second is allowing students time to bond and learn about each other before they begin the task. During this stage, learners have to feel accepted and comfortable within their group. The teacher ensures that each learner has a role and monitors the task without interfering.

In the post-task stage, the group should be debriefed by reinforcing the new linguistic skills and discussing social interaction: how did the group work together.

Should groups stay together for all projects, or change? Although most literature suggests groups should change, there are advantages to keeping the same groups since the comfort level is high.

Friday 11:30. **Development of In-house Placement Tests in an Adult ESL Program** Ruth Heinrichs, University of Regina

This was an interesting rather statistical presentation about placement tests to gauge readiness for university. Validity and reliability are important in any kind of test. We learned about the difference between tests of literal comprehension and of inferential comprehension. The latter have more validity. A placement test is valid if the student can succeed in the level you place him/her in. She uses one placement test to assess which of 5 levels of English a student needs to enter. At the end of the 5th level the student can enter university. The placement test covers listening, reading, writing and speaking.

A number of points were raised in the presentation. In the reading test, points shouldn't be deducted for spelling; a listening test shouldn't require or activate prior knowledge; the test should have the same score no matter who scores it; the longer the test, the more reliable it is, partly because a longer test has a variety of tasks; and instructions must be crystal clear. All tests need to be field tested; don't just hope it works. Test it on teachers, test it on students. At least 20% of students should be able to succeed on a test question for it to be a good question. It is important that students can't guess the answer from the grammar. In multiple choice, be sure to have enough choices to eliminate accurate guessing. Each writing is marked by two writing teachers who are given marked samples as a guide.

A placement test is for initial placement in a level of study. A challenge test is used when a student fails a level test but want to go to the next level anyway. Different versions of

the challenge test are needed because the student may challenge again. They charge $50 for a student to write a challenge test.

This was a particularly interesting workshop because it emphasized the difficulty and huge time commitment in preparing reliable, valid tests.

Friday 1:30  **Dr Anne Burns**
Macquarie University, Australia.

Unfortunately Dr Burns' speech was shortened by conference presentations. Fortunately she touched on the importance of discourse, and mentioned Scott Thornbury as our speaker at the TESL Canada 2008 conference. She talked about the differences between transactional talk and casual talk. The first is more predictable and easier to use in identifying text structures and grammar. Casual talk includes unpredictability, digression, interruption. Both have value in the classroom, although controlled dialogues are more useful in lower level classes.

2:45 - 3:45:  **Do Observations and Evaluations Improve Instructor Performance?**
Calum MacKechnie and Michael Twohey, York University.

This was a particularly interesting workshop, mostly about student evaluation of their teachers and how useful these are. There are different types of evaluations: supervisor, peer, self and student. At York University they encourage peer evaluation, considering it most useful, but they implement all 4 types.

Student evaluations are distributed every 8 weeks at the end of a term. Some teachers feel that student evaluations are in fact popularity contests. The speakers agreed that this happens, and admitted that the entertainment level can obscure professionalism. If the evaluation is given the day after a party, or after a particularly difficult test, the teacher may be given a lower assessment than otherwise. Other factors include personality clashes between teachers and students, or students who rush through the evaluation and just check "good" for everything. The question also arises: since students aren't teachers, how can they evaluate a teacher.

If student evaluation results suggest that a teacher would be better teaching at one level than another, the teacher should be scheduled to his/her better level. If the teacher is teaching a difficult class where student success is minimal, then teachers who can cope with low student evaluations should be asked to teach these courses.

If over a period of time the student evaluations from different classes suggest a teacher's score is dropping, the supervisor meets with the teacher for a non-threatening, non-punitive discussion. Often this helps identify a possible problem experienced by the teacher and helps restore good evaluation results. A positive effect of evaluations is that they encourage self-reflection by the teacher.

York did a study of some other academic institutions and their supervisor and student opinions of evaluations. Findings suggested that evaluation can be a positive influence

on teaching and that student opinion is important for an organization.

4:00 - 5:00  **Measuring Item Difficulty for EAP Reading Tests**.
Dr Usman Erdosy, Carleton

Dr Erdosy was brilliant; he spoke extremely fast about innumerable factors relating to the topic.  He is engaged in rewriting the reading component of the CAEL test.  For a reason no one is sure about, the reading part of the test doesn't work.  Students achieve low scores on the listening, speaking and writing parts, but high scores on the reading.  Erdosy established that the reading score is not accurate.

Part of the CAEL reading problem is that questions can be answered without understanding the text and large chunks of text can be copied to answer a question.  This shouldn't be allowed:  give a word limit.  There should be a variety of question types, and the text shouldn't provide the exact answer.   Length is a discriminator where very low level students can't finish because they can't understand.

The average score on the CAEL test is constant, suggesting that even if candidates have memorized answers or seen the test before, the score is valid.  The speaking test has been revised; the listening doesn't need much revision, and the reading is undergoing extensive change.

Among his ideas on tests in general were that linguistic competency helps a test-taker no matter what the topic is, and a candidate with low competency and prior knowledge of the topic won't succeed on the test.

## Beyond Teaching
*Shawn Deleu*
Student Programs Coordinator
TESL Center /  SMU

What does a Student Programs Coordinator do?  The main aspect of my job is to think up, promote and organize activities for our students here at Saint Mary's University, beyond what they would do in their classes.  This is to assist the students in enjoying their time here in Halifax while they study English.  We do the leg work for the students: research various activities, find the best price and organize transportation and supervision for these activities.

Some examples of what students can participate in include: whale watching, ice skating, skiing, horseback riding, street hockey, intramural sports at the university, and shopping of course!

As Coordinator, I also wear an administrative hat, where I assist in the overall supervision of the TESL Centre.  I track attendance of the students and do follow-up when students are not attending.  I maintain two programs that give the students chances to meet up with Canadian students.  I oversee a Welcome Luncheon  for all students and a Closing Ceremony each semester.

Because of this, every day is different and it allows me to have a lot of contact with the students, which I love.  When I walk in the door to the TESL Centre each morning, I never know what to expect - and I like  that!

**ESL Classics: Songs for Learning English**     By Maureen Stewart
*Book review by Ellen Pilon*

*ESL Classics: Songs for Learning English* is a "multi-level songbook combining classical music and illustrated verses". The spiral book of 118 pages, accompanied by a CD or cassette, includes 9 lessons and 9 different songs. The purpose of the book is to make vocabulary learning and grammar awareness more fun, memorable and interesting. Stewart combines picture stories with lyrics set to classical excerpts. Music, she points out, brings "color and emotion to our every day existence".

The songs were written by Stewart herself. Her lyrics are sung to the tunes of famous classical passages from composers such as Mozart, Beethoven, Vivaldi and Bach. Each of the 9 lessons has a different tune and a different theme: for example, daily activities vocabulary is set to "Dance of the Hours" from Ponchielli's La Giaconda, fast food restaurant vocabulary to Vivaldi's "Four Seasons". The lyrics are clear and fairly basic, lively and fun. Many students will recognize the tunes and be ready to hum along at first listening. Most of the songs are well written with natural sentence structure and rhythm, thus easy to sing along to. Repetition of the vocabulary and grammar will never get boring with these songs which could be used over and over again.

Each unit is between 10 and 14 pages long and offers a number of activities for the target language. Units follow a similar pattern, although there is some variety. The target vocabulary and grammar are listed on the first page of a unit, followed by a short biography of the composer, graded to the level. Following the biography is a write-the-question type activity about the composer's life. The tapescript of the lyrics is included for each song and also is reprinted as gap-fill and sentence-strip-arranging activities. The cartoon drawing for each unit consists of 12 frames repeated 3 times: the story in correct order, the story in mixed order for numbering, and the story in correct order with empty speech bubbles. Other activities practicing the vocabulary and grammar include jig-saw dictation, questions to ask a partner, gap-filling a similar story using other related vocabulary, jig-saw crossword puzzles, spot-the-differences pictures, questions to answer, and matching.

Most units are designed for beginner to intermediate level learners, but the last two are for intermediate to advanced levels. In fact, each unit could easily be adapted to almost any level of language learning. Themes are suitable for young adults or adults, although most are relevant to an adult's experiences. Fun and refreshing, *ESL Classics* will provide many hours of enjoyable learning. Teachers will enjoy selecting from the well-prepared variety of activities in the book's extensive repertoire.

*The book is $34.95 and the CD is $24.95. Order from the website:*
http://www.eslclassics.com/

## Pain and Progress

An article by Veronique Theriault, a TOEFL Student at CLLC

Over the last few decades feminists have fought for equality between men and women. Even though lots of progress have been made for women's civil rights, most feminists argue there is still much to be done on these fronts. Yet many cultures are still living under repressive patriarchal hierarchies. Thus, women are oppressed by men and are often considered to be inferior individuals, especially in the Hispanic cultures. In Guatemala, for the last five years, over 2,000 teenaged girls and women have been kidnapped, beaten, raped, mutilated, and murdered (Toomey, 2005). Moreover, no one seems to care; they deserved to die. Similarly, Quebec faced a situation with the Polytechnique Massacre of 1989 in which 14 female engineering students were shot and 13 others were wounded in Montreal (Ramsland, 2005). These are serious situations that need our full attention.

The root of this problem stems from machismo. Machismo, or male chauvinism, can be defined as a male attitude of superiority toward members of the opposite sex. In patriarchal societies such as the Hispanic world, men are the head of the country and women are considered inferior. However, machismo is not a feature of only Hispanic cultures. Women are threatened all over the world.

Depending on the country, machistas, arrogant male chauvinists, are viewed with either respect by their fellow countrymen, or criticism. To get back to the point, anti-feminism goes against these machistas. Nowadays, women participate in all aspects of society. They are coming out of their old housewife roles and breaking long-established rules. Lots of men tend to be shocked and distressed with this new equality of genders. Moreover, some machistas cannot accept that situation. In order to get rid of these women, discrimination, and unfortunately, violence against women proliferate all around the world. Nowadays, women are being preyed upon.

In one Central American country a man can escape a rape charge if he marries his victim, providing she is over 12. There, it is socially acceptable for fathers to introduce their daughters to sex. In this country, Guatemala women are punched, disfigured, stabbed, strangled, raped, mutilated by having obscenities carved into their flesh, beheaded, and dumped on roadsides (Toomey, 2005, p. 1).

According to recent statistics, Guatemala City is one of the deadliest cities in the world with a per-capita murder rate five times higher than Bogotá (Colombia). For the last five years more than 2,200 women have been gruesomely murdered. Moreover, only 9% of these cases have been investigated (Amnesty International, 2005). This lack of investigation in cases of women being killed sends the obvious message that violence against females in the country is acceptable. Most of the victims were housewives, students, and professionals working women in low paid jobs as domestic employees, factories, or prostitutes.

Maria Isabel was one of them. On December 15, 2001 she went to school, but never came home. Shortly before Christmas, the police found her body in a bag. Her hands and feet were bound. She had been punched, stabbed and strangled. She was totally disfigured. Moreover, her body showed evidence of rape. She was only 15 (Amnesty International, 2005, ¶ 1).

This extraordinary climate of violence towards women in Guatemala arises from two main influences. Firstly, Guatemala has a ruthless history. It has been ruled by military dictatorships for decades. As a result, machismo seems to be a mantra widely held in this Hispanic society.

Conversely, feminism has also become more influential there. Women now tend to play a more and more important role in the Guatemalan society, coming out of where society has placed them traditionally, and participating in all aspects of life. Women are now breaking down the old societal barriers: women were created to stay home, to be mothers and faithful wives. For this reason, many Guatemalan machistas hate women.

Next, there is a serious proliferation of illegal arms which contributes to an increase in the numbers of crimes committed by rivaling street gangs (maras) and organized groups (Toomey, 2005, p. 2). Thus, marginalized groups such as women, tend to be discriminated against by men who consider themselves superior; therefore the violent doctrine of machismo may often be called appropriate or justifiable.

In a different way, not only developing countries exhibit these dreadful situations. Women are marginalized and violently oppressed all around the world. Despite many battles that have been won for their civil rights in developed nations, especially here in Canada, females are still discriminated against. Anti-feminism is not a myth.

For 45 minutes, on December 6, 1989 a gunman roamed the corridors of Montreal's Ecole Polytechnique, killing 14 women, and wounding 13 others. While in an agitated state, he separated the men from the women. Before opening fire in the classroom, he screamed: "I hate feminists!" He asked the men to leave. Marc Lepine, 25, was waging war against feminism. His father, an Algerian Muslim, taught him how to hate willful women. At that moment, Lepine entered in the largest engineering school in Canada with the fervent conviction to scare women back into their traditional roles. (Ramsland, 2005)

In a nutshell, I have come to realize that we face a worrisome social problem as a developed nation, as well as worldwide. Throughout the ages, women's battle has been painful.

From the creation of Eve from Adam's rib to the feminism of 2006, women have fought over centuries for their place in society. However, there is still much to be done. One wonders, however, whether there is a possibility for gender equality, or whether the female was definitely created inferior, weak, and obedient.

Even though lots of countries nowadays recognize gender equality on paper, thousands of women are still psychologically harassed, beaten,

strangled, raped, mutilated, and murdered daily.  The battle has not been won.  Discrimination against women is an important thing to consider. On the other hand, the violence rooted anti-feminism is also an actual taboo, in order to be hidden and more 'acceptable' by societies.

Finally, there is no international law, or organization which effectively protects women against domestic violence. No one prevents this kind of crime. Many women are frightened and without resources. Canada is not a society controlled by machismo, and yet several times a year we hear of normally law-abiding husbands estranged from their wives losing it and killing their wives. They are usually given a slap on the wrist and made to promise never to do it again. Our police force claims it serves and protects. Canada asserts itself as a guardian of freedom. As a developed nation, how can we turn a blind eye on these awful situations? What about machismo countries where it is socially acceptable for a father to introduce his daughter to sex?

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## Autonomy in Chinese EFL Teaching: Some theoretical and practical considerations

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**Abstract:** This paper explores some of the key concepts of learner autonomy and considers their implications in Chinese EFL teaching. The fostering of autonomy is not necessarily incompatible with all existing practices in Chinese EFL contexts. Our goal of promoting learner autonomy is to help learners enhance their motivation and the quality of learning. A pedagogy for fostering learner autonomy can be interwoven into a regular EFL program in China.

## 1.Introduction

Over the last 20 years, autonomy has been a focus of concern of language learning in the West. "There has been more focus on learner training, learning to learn, learner development, and learning strategies in language courses and material design; great progress has been made in the exploration and implementation of the concept of autonomy (Wang Xiaoling, 2002). However, much less attention has been paid and " little formal academic discussion about learner autonomy"(Wang Hongyun, 2001) has been held in China.

In this paper, I intend to review some of the key concepts of autonomy and to suggest means of implementing learner autonomy in Chinese EFL teaching. Further, I hope that more interest will be aroused and more efforts will be made in developing and promoting learner autonomy in language teaching in China.

## 2. Necessity of  Learner Autonomy in Language Learning

It has been said that teaching is nothing more than showing someone that something is possible, and learning is merely discovering that something is possible. The objective of learner training is to improve the effectiveness of learning, and effective learning is part and parcel of autonomy. Training should be a course in learning how to learn, as Trim (1988:) reminds us that: "No school, or even university, can provide its pupils with all the knowledge and the skills they will need in their active adult lives. It is more important for a young person to have an understanding of himself or herself, an awareness of the environment and its workings, and to have learned how to think and how to learn".

McDevitt (1997) points out: "The end product of education is an independent learner". It is no doubt that learner autonomy is the best way to reach our educational goal. Autonomy and independence are used more or less as synonyms in language teaching. Both terms imply that students take a greater degree of control over the content and methods of learning than is usual in classroom language learning contexts. Taking control over learning also implies that students have or develop the capacity to learn independently and that the institutional context in which they are learning allows them to do so. It has been claimed that all learning is ultimately autonomous learning in the sense that it depends on the efforts of the learners themselves. Allowing students greater freedom in learning and helping them become more aware of their capacities for autonomy may therefore enhance motivation and the quality of learning. A common argument for justifying learner autonomy both in general education and language learning is that autonomous learners become highly motivated and that autonomy leads to better and more effective work ( Dickinson, 1995). " There is convincing evidence that people who take the initiative in learning learn more things and learn better than do people who sit at the feet of teachers, passively waiting to be

taught"(Knowles, 1975).

Naiman et al (1978) report that most successful language learners assumed responsibility for their own learning. Littlewood (1996) explains the popularity of autonomy like this:"The concept accords well with several of our central pedagogical preoccupations, notably our view that language learning requires the active involvement of learners, our attempts to introduce learner-centred methods, and our goal of helping learners to become independent from their teachers in their learning and use of language".

With the development of globalization, learner autonomy has been becoming more important in language learning. The students in schools and universities are expected to acquire higher foreign language competence to meet the demand for international communication. The variety of purposes for language learning has encouraged the development of new trends and new means of language learning and teaching. Benson and Voller (1997) mention that "In the face of scale and complexity of language education, the concept of autonomy has emerged as a keyword for flexible approaches and responsiveness to diverse needs and circumstances".

Consider China's higher education at present, which has faced a challenge between the continuous expansion of enrollment and the shortage of English teachers. Promoting learner autonomy and providing access to independent learning have been justified on ideological and economic grounds. The development of autonomous learning is not only an economical solution pedagogically, but also a remedy for lack of concern for individual needs.

The impact of the Internet on EFL teaching has also become very significant and is constantly increasing. The development of CALL and On-lined learning have strongly supported the growth of self-access and independent learning. Autonomous learning has become more important in language learning with the increasing involvement of technological facilitation.

## 3. On Defining Autonomy

### 3.1 Different Definitions of Autonomy

Collins Cobuild English Dictionary defines autonomy as the " The ability to make your own decisions about what to do rather than being influenced by someone else or told what to do".

Holec (1981) has defined autonomy as the " learners' taking responsibility for their own learning". Learner autonomy is "a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making, and independent action" (Little 1991). Even in this simple definition it is clear that "autonomy" is not any one specific thing; it is a capacity, and like any other capacity, it will grow with practice, or be lost through inactivity.

Young (1986) suggests that the fundamental idea in autonomy is that of authoring one's own world without being subject to the will of others.

Independent learning is also used by some authors to denote autonomous

learning. An all-encompassing definition of autonomy is impossible to define. As Benson states,  Monolithic definitions of autonomy and independence have proved elusive, and it is perhaps more productive to speak of different versions of the concepts which correspond to different perspectives and circumstances (Benson and Voller, 1997). It is perhaps more prudent to describe the characteristics of autonomous learners rather than define autonomy.

### 3.2 The Characteristics of Autonomous Learning

Autonomy in learning means students take more control over their learning than is usual in classroom contexts. Autonomy implies both that students have developed the capacity to take control of their learning and that the institutional contexts in which they learn allow them to exercise this capacity. The key concern of learner autonomy is not so much whether learning is *carried out* by the learner, but whether it is controlled by the learner. In autonomous learning, the learners take their own responsibility for goal-setting, materials selection, learning activities and assessment, instead of a teacher or self-study materials being in overall charge ( Holec, 1981; Brookfield, 1986; Benson, 2001). With full autonomy, learners are completely in charge of their own learning decisions and actions. With partial autonomy, a learning programme combines autonomous and non-autonomous elements. This may happen in the classroom ("classroom autonomy"), where autonomous

activities may play a small or large role (Dam, 1995), or in a teacher-led course.

Autonomous learners take responsibility for working without supervision, choosing material, setting long-term and short-term objectives, prioritising objectives, deciding when and how long to work on an objective, assessing progress and evaluating learning programmes. In addition, learners must have a degree of knowledge of the language system, be self-motivated, self-disciplined and above all, be disposed to take responsibility.

The Good Language Learners are the effective learners who are actively engaged in the learning process. Dickinson (1992: 1) comments: "Effective learners are capable of identifying the learning objective currently being pursued by the teacher. They know what to learn and how to formulate their own learning objectives ... and they restructure the teacher's objectives to suit their own changing needs. They are able to select and implement appropriate learning strategies, monitor their use of strategies and change them if necessary, and monitor the effectiveness of their learning. This is what is meant by engaging actively in the learning process: these are the kind of decisions effective learners take about their own learning".

### 4. The Promotion of  Learner Autonomy

Benson (1997) has identified three basic areas of autonomy in

language learning: 1) autonomy as the act of learning on one's own and the technical ability to do so;  2) autonomy as the internal psychological capacity to self-direct one's own learning; and 3) autonomy as control over the content and processes of one's own learning. Wenden (1991) summarizes: "In effect, successful or expert or intelligent learners have learned how to learn. They have acquired the learning strategies, the knowledge about learning and the attitudes that enable them to use these skills and knowledge confidently, flexibly, appropriately and independently of a teacher. Therefore, they are autonomous."

There are three key elements of autonomy which correspond roughly with the implementation of  learner autonomy:

1) attitudes; i. e. learners have a positive attitude towards learning, have the responsibility for their own learning.

2) capacity; i. e. learners use the knowledge and learning strategies to carry out self-directed learning independently.

3) situations, i. e. learners are provided situations and opportunities to develop their ability in independent learning and practice their capacity for organizing their own learning.

Several parts are mentioned about learner training, which I prefer to call autonomous learning prerequisites (psychological, technical, institutional) here. They are closely related with the three elements of autonomy mentioned above.

## 4.1 Psychological Prerequisites

Psychological prerequisites mainly refers to help learners improve the effectiveness of learning. Learners are willing to take responsibility for their learning and have awareness and self-confidence in working independently of teachers. Raising awareness of learners and changing attitudes of learners and teachers are the core tasks of psychological preparations.

Influenced by social, cultural and educational reasons, many English learners in China tend to play a passive role in learning and believe that to be learners is to dependent on teachers completely. What they do is to learn what teachers teach them which can help them be good English learners. Most Chinese students know they must work hard, but they may not know how to study English very well by themselves. It should be given more attention for learners to be active in learning.

As the main part of psychological prerequisites, learners should realize the importance of their own role in English learning and know that learners' initiatives in English learning will lead to better results. Learner motivation is a major factor in success in language learning. Dickinson (1995) suggests: "motivation can be enhanced through encouraging learners to exert personal control over their learning and to take responsibility for it". Responsibility increases motivation and self-confidence success in learning makes learners more confident of their independent learning.

It is expected that the teacher's role will be that of counsellor and facilitator rather than director. Teachers must focus their attention on how to learn instead of how to teach. Teachers must play different roles in class as guides, facilitators and anticipators. The teachers' job is more demanding and challenging in helping learners become creative and independent learners.

### 4.2 Technical prerequisites

These includes helping learners enhance their knowledge about language learning and learning strategies, select and make use of appropriate learning strategies, and monitor their own learning. As an important part of technical prerequisites, Metacognitive knowledge should be introduced to learners. Metacognitive knowledge are the knowledge of the mental processed which are in which are involved in different kinds of learning. Learners, who become aware of their own mental process, will recognize which kinds of learning tasks cause difficulty, which approaches to learn language work better than others and how to solve different kinds of problems. Metacognitive knowledge is considered a part of technical preparations because it influences the kinds of learning strategies learners choose.

Learning autonomy may be something the students have never heard of. Therefore, learning about learner autonomy should be introduced in the class. Teaches help learners be aware of their own role in learning situation, formulate their own learning objectives, select appropriate learning strategies and monitor the effectiveness their learning. The knowledge and illustrations concerning the nature and process of language learning should be provided for learners in order to help learners build new insights and positive beliefs about language learning.

### 4.3 External prerequisites

External prerequisites generally refer to the external supports and environment for learners in the process of developing autonomy. Autonomous learning doesn't mean "learning on your own" or "self-study". It mostly depends on the changes of teachers' role, institutional mechanism, learning materials, learning facilities and so on.

Influenced by the traditional Chinese education for a long period of years, learners are still used to relying on the absolute supremacy of the teacher in the learning process. Similarly, teachers are used to being the supreme authority in the classroom, and not letting their students share their teaching arrangements and activities. This traditional idea is so deeply rooted in Chinese EFL context so presently, some teachers and learners still continue to maintain it. Development and successful implementation of learner autonomy in EFT depend on teachers' and learners' attitudes to autonomous learning. Little (1995) points out that learner autonomy depends on teacher autonomy. The presupposition is that teachers are willing to change and shift their roles in EFL from information providers to facilitators. Teachers must first provide

learners with appropriate tools and opportunities to practice applying autonomy in their teaching. On the other hand, learners should realize their responsibility for their learning and improve the effectiveness of their learning. Teachers should help them raise their awareness of responsibility and motivation, lead them to plan and carry out their independent learning task, guide them to select appropriate learning strategies, and monitor and evaluate their learning. Learner autonomy can not be used successfully unless teachers and learners have a positive attitude toward it.

The Internet is a very important external support for autonomous learning. The Internet enables learners to access a large amount of both audio and visual materials at one time. Many interactive multimedia materials are provided through the World Wide Web and some language learning websites. Computer-assisted language learning, which stems form theories on second language acquisition and from autonomous learning, has increased autonomous learning. More and more learners carry out their language learning activities by means of computer and Internet. Therefore, teachers should guide learners to make good use of Internet and help them choose the on-lined materials that they feel suitable to their level of proficiency.

## 5.The Implementation of Learner Autonomy

Leaner autonomy may not be a consequence of a particular teaching style. An autonomous learner is one who can learn form various teaching styles and develop and practice autonomy in a number of ways, depending on the context of a classroom. Learner development aims to raise learners' awareness of their role as learners. It may be effective for learners to take charge of their own learning processes. However, the most important point to consider is how far learners are aware of their own role in any learning situation. We cannot deny the possibility or the importance of self-directed learner roles in the traditional classroom. As Crabbe (1996) claimed, "the fostering of autonomy is not necessarily a challenge to a traditional role of teachers. Nor is it necessarily incompatible with all existing practice."

How can the Chinese learners afford the time in class? One possible solution is to promote learner autonomy through the curriculum. It is important to make learners know the explicit goal of a learning programme. To put it concretely, learners should have the opportunity to consciously reflect and question themselves in the different ways. For example:

1) What are my problems? (understand their own responsibility, set their own learning goals)

2) What do I need to do in order to overcome my problems? (adopt independent actions to realize the goals)

3) How am I doing and how can I motivate myself? (select appropriate learning strategies and monitor their own learning )

4) What can I do in the future? (evaluate their own learning and modify their original learning plan )

Teachers ought to promote learners' self-confidence and self-motivation through the language learning process in order to encourage learners to believe in their own potential. Students themselves need to improve their ability of self-analysis and encourage themselves to trust in their own potential. At the same time, it is extremely important for students to get the teachers' support and understanding. The teachers' role is to make an effort to understand the learners' perspectives, and to trust their potential. Lier (1996) argued that "a teacher cannot simply transmit the sort of skills and attitudes to learning that are required, nor can he or she train learners in the way that recruits are trained to march in step." Fostering autonomy is not just a matter of learning a few techniques--it involves changing the way in which we relate to learners (Hoffman, 1997).

Promoting learner autonomy does not necessarily mean a complete rejection of teacher authority and the equal positions of power between Teachers and Students. It is a fact that power differences between the teachers and the students do exist in China. As Widdowson (1987) notes, "The learner really exercises autonomy only within the limits set by teacher authority." For both teachers and students, learner autonomy is a challenge for self-realization, in opposition to the limitations of the status quo, and it is the means by which they can become aware of this struggle. Pennycook (1997) also insisted on students' empowerment: "to become the author of one's world, to become an autonomous language learner and user is not so much a question of learning how to learn as it is a question of learning how to struggle for cultural alternatives". Enhancing learner autonomy should not be undertaken merely in order to make teachers and learners appear equal in power. Instead, we should consider the importance of trust between the teacher and the students. Basically, if students and the teacher do not accept each other, the lessons will not be organized properly.

## 5. Conclusion

It is important to recognize and encourage leaner autonomy in Chinese EFL contexts. Many educators believe that promoting some degree of autonomy is essential if learners are to become effective language learners. In fact, most students do not know how to take responsibility for their own learning and the knowledge and learning strategies for effective learning; therefore, they need teachers' help and support in language learning. Promoting and developing learner autonomy do not mean that teachers are redundant. The fostering of autonomy is not necessarily incompatible with all existing educational practice, but it can be interwoven into a regular EFL program. Teachers should recognize and accept the change of their roles in teaching compared with that in the past. At the same time, teachers might be helpers and counselors to enhance learners' motivation, help them take responsibility

for their learning, and guide them to develop their capacities for autonomy and to improve the effectiveness of learning.

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