



Reflections

INTERNATIONAL VISITING SCHOLARS @ WESTERN

Langa Sarakikya, University of Dar es Salaam

BY DEBRA DAWSON, DIRECTOR, TEACHING SUPPORT CENTRE

For the past four years, the Teaching Support Centre has been pleased to host two to three faculty members from the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. The faculty members have participated in our August course on Teaching at the

University Level as part of Arja Vanio-Mattila's Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) project on **Building Civil Society Capacity for Poverty Reduction**. This is a collaborative project between Huron University College and the University of Dar es Salaam. Langa Sarakikya was one of the faculty members who attended the course last summer. She spent the fall semester at Huron working on her doctoral research on how new media constructs the concepts of gender and development in the urban population of Tanzania.

Tell us about your university

We have around 16,000 students at the University of Dar es Salaam of which about 38% are women.

The language of instruction is English although Swahili is the national language. Most of the students attend our central campus in Dar es Salaam. As part of the undergraduate curriculum, all 3,000 first-year students must take two compulsory courses in Development Studies from the Institute of Development Studies where I teach regardless



Langa Sarakikya
University of Dar es Salaam

of their Faculty of registration. Students are grouped by Faculty so that all education students are taught these courses together. These sections of the courses range in size from 350 to 800. These team-taught courses are a mixture of lecture and seminar. Assessment is by

essay examinations never multiple-choice questions. Therefore grading of exams takes about a month. All of these large classes are taught without the aid of computers in the classroom—typically the only electronic equipment is a microphone, and that is only available when the electricity is working.

What is your role at the University of Dar es Salaam?

Well, I started teaching at the university part-time and it is only in the last year that I received a permanent position in the Institute of Development Studies. Unlike in Canada, the university does not differentiate my time in terms of teaching, research and service, but similar to Western, the focus seems to be more

on my research than on my teaching. Given the tremendous need we have for ensuring that more of our people receive post-secondary training, this seems surprising. It is problematic that although

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effective teaching is needed, the focus is strongly on research. Given that perspective, perhaps it is not surprising that until I participated in the summer course on Teaching at the University Level, I had never really talked about pedagogy before with colleagues.

There are five different ranks faculty can have from assistant lecturer to full professor. To teach at the graduate level you must have a PhD. We also have student evaluations of teaching, but they do not impact our annual reviews. They are used for quality control of courses more than for formative feedback of instructors. Many large first and second year courses are team taught. The quality control of courses also means that external examiners review syllabi and graded examinations, and look at exam questions to see if what is being asked is related to the course material. The results of the external examiners are distributed to the chief course coordinator to aid them in curriculum improvement.

What are the similarities/differences between teaching at Western versus teaching at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania?

Well, the biggest difference is the access that students and faculty have to the resources you need to teach and learn. In Tanzania, our students have limited access to books or journals, so at the undergraduate level we typically teach without required texts and this is even in very large classes of up to 800 students. Even at the graduate level, our classes can be large and access to materials can be limited. This means that even though we as instructors want to go beyond transmission in the classroom, the instructor is often the only source of information for our students. In

these large lecture classes, the involvement of students in discussion is not a common concern. Students are more likely to have the opportunity to participate in the seminar portion of the course. Our style of teaching therefore tends to be very teacher-focused. In addition to the lack of textbooks, our library resources are also extremely limited. We lecture with just a blackboard to these large classes without use of electronics such as PowerPoint. Students have to hang on to our words as we are the only source of information that they have. Exams tend to be based on what was transmitted rather than written materials. Although faculty put some readings in the library, it can be very difficult for students to access them. As there are multiple sections of the introductory courses, we need to ensure that students hear the same material so they are prepared for exams. Therefore, there is not a lot of variation in what faculty members actually do in the classroom. Learning in this environment can be challenging for both our students and our instructors.

To communicate with our students we use our cell phones rather than email. Everyone has a cell phone whereas access to the Internet can also be limited.

In other ways students are the same everywhere. When I compare our students at my university with the students here at Western they seem very similar ... they are late with assignments, they skip class on occasion, etc. and they love engaging in deep learning experiences. Teaching also seems to be teaching worldwide.

In June Debra Dawson and Michael Atkinson will travel to Tanzania to lead teaching workshops for faculty members at the University of Dar es Salaam. If you are interested in finding out more, follow Mike on his twitter feed at: [dratkinsonmike](#) or blog at <http://issuesinteachingandlearning.blogspot.com/>

Tayo Nagasawa, Mie University

BY TOM ADAM, TEACHING AND LEARNING LIBRARIAN, WESTERN LIBRARIES

Last October, The University of Western Ontario, Western Libraries and the Teaching Support Centre (TSC) in particular, had the pleasure of hosting a visiting scholar from Japan for the second time. Tayo Nagasawa is an Associate Professor at Mie University in Tsu City, the capital of Mie Prefecture. Established in 1949 with the amalgamation of smaller teacher training schools and several agricultural research facilities, the university overlooks Ise Bay on the south coast of Japan about 400 kilometres west of Tokyo.

Tayo is also an Educational Developer working out of the Higher Education Development Center (HEDC) at Mie, a facility similar to our Teaching Support Centre. The HEDC was established to assist in achieving Mie University's educational goals with particular emphasis on developing Problem-Based Learning (PBL) tutorials for all faculties and taking the lead in support for creative development advancements in educational activities including recent developments in online learning.

Towards the end of her week-long visit to Western, I had a chance to chat with Tayo about her work, her experience and perceptions of teaching and learning in Japan, and her observations about higher education in Canada.

Tell us about your research

The topic of my doctoral dissertation is building collaboration between



Tayo Nagasawa
Mie University

faculty members and librarians. I have conducted three case studies: Earlham College in Indiana, University of Michigan, and Western. From the case studies, I identify successful strategies librarians use in order to build evidence of best practices.

Why did you choose Western?

While attending POD (The Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education) in Montreal in 2004, I was introduced to Nanda Dimitrov [TSC Associate Director]. It was interesting for me to learn that Western has a librarian working in their Teaching Support Centre. I had never heard of such a situation, so I got a grant for a research visit and came to Western first in 2009 and again in 2010.

Can you tell us a bit about your center and what your role there is?

Besides the Director, I have three colleagues in the center; however, I am the only faculty educational developer and the only person who works for the center full time. The center was founded in 2005, and I began working there in 2008. We have adjunct faculty members at the center; there are 20 who represent the five faculties in Mie University. In

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addition, there are three faculty members hired about a year ago who concentrate on education.

What role do these adjunct faculty members assume; is teaching for the center part of their mandate?

We provide two workshops a year concerning Problem Based Learning because it is a characteristic of our education in Mie University. We plan the workshops together. I'm very pleased to say that many faculty members participate in the workshops, but our Director still thinks we need more participants. He would like all faculty members to come to our workshops. Before I came to Mie, the approaches to faculty members by the center were too aggressive, and the faculty did not like it. Recently, I have tried to work with faculty members in an informal kind of situation, and I think that works well.

Is there much opportunity for faculty to learn to teach?

Many faculty members in Japan were not prepared for teaching when they were graduate students. Some universities now provide teaching workshops as well as orientations for new faculty members. However, even though they have teaching responsibilities, many faculty see themselves as researchers first and attending teaching workshops is not a high priority for them.

Is the faculty librarian relationship different in Japan?

It is totally different because in Japan it is very difficult for librarians to work with faculty members. In North America, I have noticed that many people work together and there is a lot of collaboration between faculty and librarians. I am trying to do this in my centre in Japan. I recognize that it would be beneficial to incorporate the professional knowledge and expertise of librarians into our programs.

There are many faculty members who have never used libraries and believe they are just buildings of books. Furthermore, some faculty members have no idea that librarians manage the databases they use to find information online. Librarians are not regarded as specialists in Japan, and it is hard for librarians to accumulate knowledge and expertise.

I feel very comfortable in London and The University of Western Ontario. The people are very kind to each other and help each other out. I have spoken with many librarians here who have established very collegial partnerships with faculty.

Are there opportunities for distance studies and learning online?

It's available, but it has just started. There are some universities that just teach online, but at Mie University we don't have a course that is conducted completely online. Our

students are mainly commuter students, but the situation will change in the future as more of our graduate students study part time.

What about information literacy, teaching students how to manage information effectively?

In Japan, many faculty members think information literacy means computer literacy—it is a mainstream idea. It is important for librarians to let them know what information literacy is all about, but we are just at the starting point. I think the information explosion will be helpful to encourage Japanese librarians to work with faculty members both to teach information literacy and to help them manage and find information effectively.

Although oceans apart, both geographically and in the cultural foundations of our traditions, I was struck by numerous parallels in the experience of higher education revealed in our conversation. We do remain in contact. Although not untouched by the recent earthquake, tsunami, and resulting devastation throughout Japan, Tayo is safe and continues her work and research. She is moving this April from the HEDC to a new position in the Research Development Office in Mie University Library, where she will be able to concentrate on the coordination between education and learning and libraries more than before. We look forward to the results of her investigations and perhaps visit number three.



STLHE SAPES

Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education
La société pour l'avancement de la pédagogie dans l'enseignement supérieur

2011 STLHE Conference

The **STLHE 2011 Annual Conference** will take place from June 15 to 18, 2011, in Saskatoon.

The Conference will be hosted by the University of Saskatchewan.

The theme of the 31st Conference will be ***From Here to the Horizon.***

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Note: Western has an institutional membership with STLHE. This allows the Western community to join the Society at a reduced rate. For membership information, go to: www.stlhe.ca

How do international teaching assistants learn the norms surrounding teaching communication in Canada?

BY NADINE LEGROS, LANGUAGE & COMMUNICATION INSTRUCTOR, TSC

Studying in a foreign university has its challenges: over and above the fact that international students are uprooted from all things familiar in their previous lives, they are transplanted into an academic world of foreign terrain. Everything is different: the relationships and communication between instructors and students; how much material is taught—how it is taught; and what constitutes demonstration of knowledge (Cadman, 2000; Eland, 2001; Hofstede, 2001; Roach, Cornett-Devito, & DeVito, 2005). Whether international students manage to adjust their stride to this new terrain determines how successful they will be in their studies. Teaching in a foreign university takes these difficulties and compounds them exponentially, and how international teaching assistants (ITAs) adjust to the new terrain affects overall learning outcomes of undergraduates (Crabtree & Sapp, 2004; Jenkins, 2000; Tyler, 1995; McCroskey, 2003). This article summarizes the findings of a quantitative and qualitative study I conducted from May, 2008 to May, 2009 which measured the outcomes of “Communication in the Canadian Classroom”—a non-credit course designed to familiarize ITAs with the norms and expectations of Canadian students and Canadian academia.

Introduction

The ability to explain complex concepts effectively is considered to be one of the top five competencies of instructional communication (Smith & Simpson, 1995). Conversely, indicators of *incompetence* include making content confusing and not being able to provide examples to illustrate principles (Raths & Lyman, 2003). What complicates perceptions of competence for ITAs is that culture influences communication and how individuals understand and respond to messages (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). Differences in *how* concepts are explained coupled with the fact that the language of instruction is the ITA's second language sometimes result in perceptions of incompetence. The goal of this study was to illustrate how intercultural training can help ITAs transcend these challenges and develop teaching communication competence.

The intercultural dimension that most influences how ITAs explain

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Instructional Skills Workshop (ISW)

Tuesday, May 10 - Thursday, May 12, 2011

8:30 am - 5:00 pm

Teaching Support Centre, Room 122, Weldon Library

- Intensive three-day teaching workshop May 10, 11, 12, 2011
- Open to all Western faculty
- Designed for both new and experienced faculty
- Required to attend the full three days (8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. each day)
- Limited enrollment

The ISW is offered within a small group setting and is designed to enhance the teaching effectiveness of both new and experienced instructors. These sessions provide new instructors with an introduction to designing and facilitating effective learning activities. The ISW also serves as a laboratory for experienced instructors who wish to refine and expand their teaching practice, to explore new ideas or to revisit the fundamentals.

During the three-day workshop participants design and deliver three “mini-lessons” and receive verbal, written and video feedback from their peers. Using an experiential approach, participants are provided with information on the theory and practice of teaching adult learners, the selection and writing of useful learning objectives with accompanying lesson plans, techniques for eliciting learner participation, and suggestions for evaluating learning. Participation in ISW creates an opportunity for new faculty to learn about Western's unique learning culture and can also be a renewing and revitalizing activity for more seasoned members. Added benefits are a sense of collegiality, team building, and self-discovery.

To register, go to: <http://www.uwo.ca/tsc>

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concepts is the low context/high context spectrum. Communication in North American academia is low context (Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 2001). This means that communication is very direct, its logic is very linear and step-by-step, and the speaker is expected to make the point succinctly and explicitly. Low context communication in a classroom manifests itself in the expectation that it is the *instructor's* responsibility to ensure that students understand. Furthermore, ITAs report they have a limited range of strategies to deliver ideas (Luo, Grady & Bellows, 2001). Janet M. Bennett, a leading intercultural communication scholar, estimates that only approximately 5% of the world engages in low context communication (personal communication, July, 2006), which means that it is safe to assume that almost all international students in North America will tend to operate with higher context communication patterns than North Americans.

High context communication is indirect, its logic tends to be more circular, and it makes use of repetition and implication to make a point. The speaker might lead the listener near the point, but the listener is expected to deduce the point and connect the dots. In high context communication, it is primarily the *student's* responsibility to understand the instructor, and assumptions are made about how much knowledge is shared. What exacerbates this assumption is that ITAs *already* overestimate student knowledge due to differences in academic systems (Eland, 2001).

One mechanism that has been used at Western to help ITAs understand how to teach in the low context communication environment of the Canadian classroom is a non-credit 40-hour course offered through the Teaching Support Centre called "Communication in the Canadian Classroom" (CCC). In the course, students engage in multiple microteaching components, which involves teaching their classmates about a topic from their

How to Hyperlink in PowerPoint

By Mike Atkinson

Faculty Associate, Teaching Support Centre

Okay ... you're giving a talk and have just received the two-minutes-remaining signal ... but you have 10 PowerPoint slides to go! How do you get to the last slide – the one you really want to end on – without blasting through the next nine OR escaping and just moving to the final slide? Fortunately there is a way to do this seamlessly in PowerPoint. It's called hyperlinking, and I explain how to hyperlink in this "How do you" video: <http://uwotsc.wordpress.com/2011/03/29/how-to-hyperlink-in-powerpoint/>

disciplines for 10 minutes and then fielding questions from the audience. The participants receive feedback on their teaching from their peers and their instructor. As a result of these interactions it was hoped that ITAs would improve in their use of effective teaching behaviours and that they would become more aware of the norms and expectations of Canadian students and Canadian academia.

Methodology

The participants in the study consisted of 13 Masters students and 14 PhD students (10F, 17M). The countries of origins of the participants were: Iran (9); China (3); Colombia (3); Egypt (3); the Ukraine (2); Pakistan (1); Romania (1); India (1); Iraq (1); Taiwan (1); Ghana (1); and Saudi Arabia (1). The participants had been in Canada between one month and seven years. Data for this study consisted of videotaped students' microteachings from the beginning of the course and from the end of the course. The microteach sessions were coded using the Teacher Behavior Inventory (TBI; Murray, 1983).

The TBI is a checklist of teaching behaviors used to assess instructors' teaching effectiveness. This checklist captures low-inference teaching behaviors, defined as "specific classroom behaviors of the instructor which can be recorded by direct observation" (p. 138). An abridged 18-item version of the original TBI was utilized consisting of five subscales: clarity; enthusiasm; interaction; organization; and speech (hereafter referred to as the Sum of the TBI Items) as well as a single item assessing the Overall Ratings of general effectiveness of the instructor. The TBI items are on a Likert scale from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always). The Overall Rating is a response to the statement, "I am generally effective as an instructor" with ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Results and Discussion

Based on the observations by two trained observers, the ITAs' mean score for the Sum of TBI Items increased from 61.19 (SD=10.461) at the beginning of the course to 70.91 (out of 90 based on the 18 items) (SD=8.549) at the end of the course, representing an increase of 11%. The ITAs' mean score for Overall Effectiveness increased from 2.96 (SD=1.091) to 4.20 (out of 5) (SD=0.587), which represents an increase of 24.8% between T1 and T2. In addition to the item measuring overall effectiveness, the items with the greatest improvement were:

- ✓ "I give positive feedback when responding to student questions or comments," increased from 2.81 (out of 5) (SD=1.102) to 3.69 (SD=0.972, an increase of .87).
- ✓ "I use concrete, everyday examples to explain or clarify concepts and principles," increased from 3.46 (out of 5) (SD=0.940) to 4.30 (SD=0.697), an increase of .83.

While the quantitative aspect of the study captured the observable behaviours of the ITAs, the qualitative component captured the ITAs' voices and reflections on their previous assumptions. As a result of having taken CCC, the ITAs became much more aware of what the expectations of the ITA role were. The following quote illustrates an ITA's awareness of his role and the need to guide students to answers:

before I took [CCC], ... when students asked me about something, I usually answered ... 'look up your lab manual.' I didn't say the words, 'you should have known that before' because they are not appropriate and they do not help, but I meant that implicitly. .. In my *own* country? I would say, 'you should have known that before.' ... in the end ... say they asked me, 'why this salt is less soluble in

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water than the other salt?' I didn't answer, 'well it's soluble less because of blah blah blah.' I answered something like, 'well just think about like ionic structure of the salt, um ... this might help you, and they tried thinking about that, and then I gave another hint ...

- Master's student in Chemistry
from the Ukraine

Another ITA spoke about taking more initiative with students:

... I usually understand by their gesture [and] go and speak with him and make him comfortable so that he asks the questions [which] is different ... [before taking CCC] I would just ignore him....because he was not asking questions.

- PhD student in Civil and
Environmental Engineering from India

In summary, this study explored how a course on intercultural communication affected the teaching behaviors and teacher communication of ITAs. Taking CCC resulted in an increase in the overall effectiveness of ITAs and in their ability to explain concepts in a way that Canadian observers deemed to be effective. Since the ability to explain complex concepts is a critical competency in instructional communication (Smith and Simpson, 1995), and undergraduate perceptions of incompetence are based on differences in how concepts are explained (Hoekje & Williams, 1992), the results of this study suggest that taking CCC will positively affect undergraduate perceptions of ITAs. In addition, the ITAs' adjustment to the expectations of the Canadian classroom will affect the overall learning outcomes of their students (Crabtree & Sapp, 2004; Jenkins, 2000; Tyler, 1995; McCroskey, 2003.)

Since taking CCC, one of the participants was nominated for and won a Teaching Assistant award in his department. Another participant won an award for the best research presentation in his department, which carried with it a \$400 prize. So, returning to the question posed at the

beginning of this article: How *do* international teaching assistants learn the norms surrounding teaching communication in Canada? Their professors and their supervisors suggest they take "Communication in the Canadian Classroom"¹ ... and they make room in their schedules for them to do so. Doing so benefits the ITAs, their undergraduates, and everybody who works with them.

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¹ Based on results of this study, CCC has now been divided into two programs – CCC, which is 12 hours long, and Teaching in the Canadian Classroom, which is 20 hours long

OCUFA

Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations
Union des Associations des Professeurs des Universités de l'Ontario

OCUFA Teaching and Academic Librarianship Awards

Call for Submissions

Each year the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) recognizes outstanding teachers and academic librarians in Ontario universities through its Teaching and Academic Librarianship Awards. Approximately seven awards are presented.

Nominations can be submitted by any group or individual within the university community. The deadline for nominations for the 2010-11 OCUFA Awards is May 20, 2011.

For nomination guidelines and information, please visit:

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GREAT IDEAS FOR TEACHING (GIFT) CONTEST

BY SILKE DENNHARDT, PHD STUDENT, HEALTH AND REHABILITATION SCIENCES

Each year, the Teaching Support Centre holds a Great Ideas for Teaching (GIFT) Contest for Graduate Student Teaching Assistants (TAs). All TAs are invited to submit a brief description of an effective activity or strategy that they use while teaching. This year's winning submissions were highly diverse, coming from a wide range of disciplines and describing ideas that ranged from short in-class activities to term-long strategies. All were creative and effective teaching techniques that promoted student learning and could easily be used by other TAs. This year's winners did a fantastic job of presenting their Great Ideas at the annual Winter Conference on Teaching. Below, Silke Denhardt, a PhD student in Health and Rehabilitation Sciences and one of this year's winners, describes her Great Idea, entitled *Traffic Light Feedback Cards*. To read other winning submissions, see the GIFT web link: http://www.uwo.ca/tsc/great_ideas_teaching.html.

Traffic Light Feedback Cards

The Problem

One challenge I faced when I began teaching was how to initiate really good and valuable group discussions. I envisioned lively, engaging discussions that went beyond a superficial level, stimulated learning and critical thinking, and in which the whole class participated. In reality, my students were often very reluctant to share their thoughts and questions in the large group format. One difficulty might have been that such discussions required students to take risks by sharing ideas that they had not yet fully developed. Moreover, from a teacher's perspective, I often felt the students' implicit expectation of me to 'judge' the content of class contributions as 'right' or 'wrong,' when what I really hoped for was that students would think critically and effectively express and argue a stance.

To develop critical thinking abilities, students need to be able to address dilemmas and to question themselves without worrying that their class-mates will think that they are unintelligent or 'wrong' (especially as contributions that take a chance often pose a great value for class learning).

Reflecting on these challenges, I searched for an activity that would help me to stimulate in-class discussion. I can no longer remember the origins of this idea, but when I first used the *Traffic Light Feedback Cards* in class, they exceeded my expectations: I finally got the lively, fruitful, engaged class discussions that I had aimed for and that achieved my learning objectives. I have used this activity many times since then and adapted it for my own purposes.

Materials

To use the *Traffic Light Feedback Cards* in your classroom, you will need three paper cards (red, yellow and green) for each student. The cards can be used more than once.

Getting started

Each student receives three paper cards: a red, yellow, and a green one. Each card stands for a particular stance (e.g., red card "I disagree, I wouldn't say or do that...", green card "I agree, I second that, I like the idea...", yellow card "I don't know, I am not sure about that, I can't decide..."). After introducing the activity to the students, begin the class discussion by making a statement related to the day's topic. Each student then selects the card that best expresses his/her stance and displays it. Students and teachers get a sense of the frequency and strength of various stances in their class regarding a particular issue. This

timely, visual 'snapshot' provides a valuable entrance point into further discussion. For example, referring to particular card colours, teacher and students can ask why a particular stance was taken. This activity further generates participation without putting individual students on the spot, as the teacher can ask for a particular colour (e.g. "I'd like to hear a 'green' opinion," "What do people who raised a red card think?"). The strength of this activity is that it allows students to see and become aware of each other's positions. They can find 'allies' in arguing a particular stance and get a sense about the class as a whole. Below are some variations that I have used.

Other Uses

1. Let students who made a contribution to the discussion decide if they want to hear an opinion that supports their stance (i.e. choose to hear a statement with the same colour), or one that opposes their stance and brings in a new perspective. Such choice provides students with a sense of control that can make participating in a class discussion less stressful. You can also let students pose a new statement to the group for card feedback, bringing a new issue into the discussion.
2. Encourage students to reflect on diverse perspectives by asking them to brainstorm arguments for card colours other than their own.
3. Pair students for small group work based on the colour of a previously shown card. For example, pair students who have the same colour cards to allow them to strengthen their stance and prepare for further discussion. Or pair students with different colour cards to give them an opportunity to compare and deepen their arguments and to understand other perspectives.
4. Use feedback-cards to check on student comprehension of the day's learning objectives: (e.g. "Can I get feedback about your familiarity with this concept after today's lesson? green: "Go ahead!", yellow: "I need more practice", red: "I am still struggling").
5. Feedback-cards can quickly resolve organizational matters: (e.g. "Do we need a break now?", "Will small groups be ready to present in five minutes?")

Overall

What I personally like the most about the *Traffic Light Feedback Card* activity is that it is a very flexible, easy activity with low preparation that can be adapted in many ways. Once students are familiar with the cards, the activity can spontaneously be used in many situations. So far, the cards have supported my students and me in overcoming some of the barriers to student participation and have stimulated many engaging group discussions.

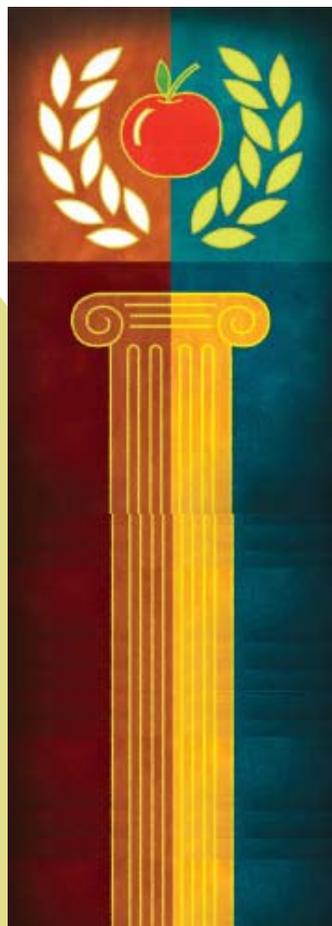


Faculty of Science Learning Development Update

BY TOM HAFFIE, FACULTY ASSOCIATE, TEACHING SUPPORT CENTRE AND LEARNING DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR, FACULTY OF SCIENCE

I am happy to update the Western community on the progress of ongoing initiatives as well as new programming for 2011.

- 1) Science Discovery Café:** In ongoing collaboration with the Student Success Centre, the Faculty of Science is enhancing the experience of academic community for first-year science students by arranging ongoing meetings with small groups, each co-facilitated by a faculty member and an undergraduate peer mentor. This term we added some "Extra Strength" Café sessions to bring the members of various Café groups together to talk science. Extra Strength sessions were led by Dr. Cam Tsujita ("*Freaks of Nature*"), Dr. André Lachance ("*Intelligent Design is Neither*") and Dr. Gordon Osinski ("*Space Rocks!: Meteorites*").
- 2) Faculty of Science Learning Development Speaker Series:** Our second visiting expert was Dr. Carolyn Eyles, 3M National Teaching Fellow and Director of the Integrated Science (iSci) program at McMaster University. Carolyn was a featured speaker during the *Science Talks* programming on the April 8th Study Day.
- 3) The Western Conference on Science Education (WCSE):** This novel conference, July 6 – 8, 2011, invites educators from across Canada and across disciplines to share their experiences, innovations, work in progress, and research in post-secondary science education. Conference organizers are putting together a panel to discuss the larger forces that influence our ability to educate scientifically literate citizens and competent researchers in Canada. So far, we have representation from NSERC, SSHRC, and provincial quality councils. Find details at <http://thewesternconference.ca>
- 4) Review of Canadian SoTL in Science:** In preparation for the WCSE, a collaborative team of librarians, faculty, post-docs, and graduate students is collecting and reviewing work on post-secondary science education published by educators at Canadian institutions from 2000 to 2010. Our review will document and benchmark this scholarship in Canada for the first time.



3M National Teaching Fellowships



Celebrating 26 years

3M National Teaching Fellowships Nomination Deadlines

Internal: **August 17, 2011**

External: **August 31, 2011**

Details regarding nomination process, award eligibility, etc. can be found at:
<http://www.uwo.ca/tsc/awards.html>

If you are interested in discussing how to put together a dossier for the Fellowship, please contact Dr. Debra Dawson at dldawson@uwo.ca. Dr. Dawson served on the 3M Selection Committee for several years and would be pleased to assist you in this process.

RSA Vision Video Webcasts

BY KIM HOLLAND, INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGNER, TEACHING SUPPORT CENTRE

Similar to the TED talks (<http://www.Ted.com>) discussed in past issues of *Reflections*, we encourage you to check out an additional website, the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce <http://www.thersa.org>.

The RSA has posted a series of video lectures from the world's most inspiring and influential thinkers from a variety of disciplines, which they call Vision Videos. Each of these video lectures is between 10-12 minutes in length and explores a wide array of educational topics.

Here are a few examples of Vision Videos that I found most interesting:

The Stuff of Thought: Language as a Window into Human Nature

<http://www.thersa.org/events/vision/archive/steven-pinker>

Steven Pinker, a Harvard College Professor in the Department of Psychology, gives a lecture on language and cognition and how the mind turns the finite building blocks of language into infinite meaning.

Changing Paradigms

<http://www.thersa.org/events/vision/archive/sir-ken-robinson>

Sir Ken Robinson, an internationally recognized leader in the development of creativity, innovation, and human resources lectures on how change happens in education and how we can make it last.

21st Century Enlightenment

<http://www.thersa.org/events/vision/vision-videos/matthew-taylor-21st-century-enlightenment>

Matthew Taylor, Chief Executive of the RSA and former Chief Advisor to the British Prime Minister, explores what we mean by 21st century enlightenment and how this idea may help us meet the challenges that we face today.



First as Tragedy, Then as Farce: The Economic Crisis and the End of Global Capitalism

<http://www.thersa.org/events/vision/archive/slavo-j-zizek-first-as-tragedy,-then-as-farce>

Slavoj Zizek, one of the world's most influential philosophers and professor at the Institute for Sociology, speaks on capitalism's flawed priorities.

RSAnimate Video Series

<http://comment.rsablogs.org.uk/videos/>

In the RSAnimate videos, a visual artist creates a visual representation of some of the most interesting original lectures from the Vision Video series. The visual artist is recorded while creating a visual representation of the content of the lecture which is then accelerated to keep in time with the speaker.

I highly recommend that you visit the RSA web site and take the time to browse through these highly entertaining, educational, and truly enlightening video lectures on key contemporary issues from a wide variety of disciplines. There is sure to be a Vision Video that interests you!

References

RSA The Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce. (2011). *Vision Videos*. Retrieved from <http://www.thersa.org/events/vision>

Opportunities and New Directions Conference

April 27 & 28, 2011 ▶ University of Waterloo

The Teaching-Based Research Group (TBRG), in association with the Centre for Teaching Excellence and the Teaching Excellence Council at the University of Waterloo and supported by Geoff McBoyle, AVPA, invites you to participate in a two-day conference of research on teaching and learning. We welcome anyone interested in this scholarship to join us for an exciting opportunity to network with like-minded colleagues from multiple disciplines and to engage in conversations about new research, work in progress, and emerging ideas.

Our opening keynote speaker is Dr. Maryellen Weimer, whose presentation is entitled, "Can Scholarly Work on Teaching and Learning Actually Improve my Teaching?" Dr. Julia Christensen Hughes will provide a closing plenary on "The SoTL Imperative: Towards Greater Dissemination and Evidence-Based Practice." In addition, Nicola

Simmons will give a morning plenary on day two on "Telling SoTL Tales: Sharing Research Results in all the Right Places."

Further details and the registration form can be found at: http://cte.uwaterloo.ca/research_on_teaching_and_learning/index.html?tab=5.

Contact Information:

Nicola Simmons
Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE)
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E-mail: nsimmons@uwaterloo.ca
URL: <http://cte.uwaterloo.ca>



What does it mean to be engaging our students?

BY KEN N. MEADOWS, EDUCATIONAL RESEARCHER, TEACHING AND LEARNING SERVICES

Considerable attention is being paid to student engagement in learning at universities and colleges across both Canada and the United States. In fact, all Ontario universities regularly administer the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) as a component of the accountability agreements they have with the Government of Ontario (Conway, 2010). This has led to widespread discussion about the nature of student engagement (Conway, Zhao, & Montgomery, 2011). My involvement in a research project using the NSSE and another measure of student engagement, the Classroom Survey of Student Engagement (CLASSE; Ouimet & Smallwood, 2005), has led me to reconsider what it means to be engaging our students in learning.

I was involved in a research study at Western with Tom Haffie, Linda Dunn and Roger Graves (2009) that was part of a coordinated research program involving 10 Ontario universities (Conway, 2010), which examined the extent to which the NSSE is an effective measure of the impact of institution-specific engagement-related interventions. Our project investigated the First-Year Biology Literacy Initiative (BLI) whose purpose was to improve the overall “connectedness” of Introductory Biology by introducing various lessons and exercises that integrated Writing Across the Curriculum (McLeod, 1992) and information literacy (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2000). Specifically, the course tutorials were redesigned to increase students’ a) understanding of the inter-connections in course material, b) skills in summarizing biological information in writing, c) understanding academic integrity, plagiarism and proper citation, and d) skills in locating and evaluating biological information beyond the text book. Ultimately, the redesign was intended to support students’ active engagement in their own learning.

We designed a quasi-experimental research project to compare the Introductory Biology classes before the curricular redesign with the first cohort to experience the redesign on the NSSE and the CLASSE. For the

NSSE and CLASSE, student engagement is defined as “the extent to which students are engaged in empirically derived good educational practices” such as the number of written papers or reports students write, how often they contribute to class discussions, the number of class presentations they do, and how often they have attended a review or help session. The NSSE assesses students’ experience in the current year at the institution and is targeted to first-year students and those in their graduating year. The CLASSE is focused on students’ experience in a specific course.

Our research results indicated that the relationship between student engagement and the BLI was modest at best (Conway, 2010). Students in the pre-BLI and BLI groups generally did not differ on engagement as measured by the NSSE, whereas results with the CLASSE were mixed. The BLI group made more connections between the lecture and lab material and reported higher levels of idea integration. However, they also engaged in significantly lower levels of peer and faculty interaction as well as expending less academic effort than their pre-BLI counterparts (Conway, 2010).

These results led me to consider that although the behaviours reflected in the NSSE and CLASSE are important for engaging our students, they are not sufficient to adequately assess the concept of engagement in its entirety. I would argue, as Schreiner and colleagues (Schreiner, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c; Schreiner & Louis, 2006) have done, that engagement includes a substantial psychological component and is not a strictly behavioural construct. Writing papers, discussing grades and assignments, and collaborating on assignments definitely provide the opportunities for students to engage actively in their own learning, however they are not the totality of engagement. Schreiner and Louis (2006) define engaged learning as a “positive energy invested in one’s own learning, evidenced by meaningful processing, attention to what is happening in the moment, and involvement in learning activities” (p. 9). Schreiner

(2010b) labels the three components of psychologically engaged learning as meaningful processing, focused attention, and active participation. Meaningful processing involves going beyond surface processes of learning, rote memorization, and studying for the test. It involves deeper processing where students make connections between the course content and their lives and knowledge they already possess. Focused attention is being “fully in the moment... psychologically present in class, noticing what is new and different, able to see different perspectives on an issue,” being mindful (Schreiner, 2010b, p. 4). Active participation is the component most associated with engagement and reflected in measures such as the NSSE and CLASSE--being actively involved in learning, making presentations, discussing course content with the professors, and writing papers or reports.

Schreiner (2010b) focuses less on active participation than on these other facets of engagement as she maintains that “much of student engagement is happening internally as students are psychologically processing and responding to the course content” (p. 4). She encourages faculty members to integrate active participation into their courses but also suggests strategies to help students to be psychologically engaged in their learning. She recommends that faculty members a) allow students to see their passion for the topics being taught, b) express interest in their students’ success, c) try to get to know their students, d) connect the content being addressed to their students’ personal lives, interests, and previous knowledge, and support ways for their students to do the same for themselves, and e) teach their students to attend to the course material more fully (e.g., suggests that they actively process information such as trying to identify what is new or different in what they are learning or generating questions as they process the information).

Hindsight being 20/20, it would have been interesting to include a measure of engaged learning (e.g., the Engaged Learning Index;

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What does it mean...

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Schreiner & Louis, 2006) to examine possible differences between the pre-BLI group and the BLI group on psychological engagement. The BLI tutorials were explicitly designed to increase the meaningfulness of processing and, to a lesser extent, students' focused attention. I imagine that the engagement differences would be more consistent and stronger than those found with the NSSE and CLASSE and would definitely be more in line with how I now think about student engagement.

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Coming Events in TSC

May 10, 11, 12, 2011

Instructional Skills Workshop for Faculty

Intensive three-day teaching workshop designed for both new and experienced faculty.

May 16, 2011

Spring Perspectives on Teaching Conference

A day of workshops and seminars dealing with topics relating to teaching and learning.

May 25 – 27, 2011

Summer Teaching with Technology Institute

Provides instructors with information, tools, and support options for learning about and using educational technology.

August 8 – 11, 2011

Course on Teaching at the University Level

Intensive mini-course for faculty who are new to teaching (less than five years teaching experience) to develop their teaching talents and gain experience with a variety of teaching methods.

August 16, 2011

New Faculty Orientation – Teaching at Western

A day of information seminars and teaching tips to aid new faculty at Western.

August 22, 2011

Teaching with Technology for New Faculty

A one-day session on using technology in your instruction.

August 2011 (last week)

Fall Perspectives on Teaching Conference

A day of workshops and seminars on international education.

September 7, 2011

Graduate Student Conference on Teaching

Introduction to teaching at Western for graduate student teaching assistants.

For more information, visit the TSC website:
<http://www.uwo.ca/tsc>

Introducing a New Research Centre

We are delighted to announce *The Centre for Research on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, which is a new research centre created to promote an evidence-based approach to teaching and learning in post-secondary education. Under the leadership of Debra Dawson, (the current director of the Teaching Support Centre), the Centre consists of staff and faculty members from a variety of disciplinary perspectives who engage in research designed to advance the understanding and, ultimately, the practice of teaching and learning in higher education.

The research focus on teaching and learning is broadly defined including both curricular and co-curricular endeavours. This expansive lens allows a comprehensive understanding of teaching and learning within the post-secondary context. Current research includes several Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) funded research projects on the impact of a variety of teaching programs involving faculty and graduate students on enhancing teaching and learning. The centre is a collaborative partnership with the Faculty of Education. Look to our fall issue of *Reflections* to hear more news about this exciting new centre.

Reflecting on Reflection in Costa Rica

(Alternative Spring Break 2011)

BY ELAN PAULSON, PHD ENGLISH, WESTERN

This February, I was one of over 200 participants in Western's international community service learning program, Alternative Spring Break (ASB). The National Service Learning Clearing House (2008) describes service learning as a teaching approach that "integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities" (para. 1). ASB co-organizers Leah Getchell (Student Success Centre) and Pam Core (Residence Life) prepared team leaders to facilitate reflective journaling, personal goal-setting, guided discussion, and other group reflection activities. Then, for seven days (and without giving a *single* PowerPoint presentation) I co-led a series of reflection activities with 15 students following the medical clinics participants held in communities across Costa Rica.

The ASB program views reflection as the keystone to service learning. Christopher Johns (2010) describes reflection as "a window through which [one] can view and focus self within the context of her own lived experiences in ways that enable her to confront, understand and work towards resolving the contradictions within her practice" (p. 35). Using the "What? So What? Now What?" reflection model (Reflection in Service 2010, para. 4), participants were to observe their experiences, recognize the significance of those experiences in the context of their own lives and education, and commit to ongoing personal and social change through local and global civic engagement. In its most worthwhile moments, service learning reflection not only bridges participants' experience and understanding but also reveals the intrinsic value of reflection itself.



Half the ASB team with Dr. Rodrigo Cuesta, translator Andres Naranjo, and ISL Leader Marta Cabezas in Alajuela, Costa Rica.

Reflection may sometimes be taken as a given in formal learning settings because it is not directly observable and is unique for each learner (Boud, Keogh, and Walker, 1985, p. 8). Educators may even neglect to make time and space for reflection when they assume it is always already taking place in the familiar space of the classroom (p. 8). With limited out-of-classroom teaching experience, I had initially thought that, if the classroom was too predictable, then a non-classroom environment might not be predictable enough. Because our group would be bombarded with new sights and sounds, first-time experiences, and vast cultural differences, it was possible that our group wouldn't be able to reflect critically on all the new information that we would receive during our home visits and medical clinic services for low-income families.

But I couldn't have been more wrong.

During the week, I heard students say that reflection was one of their favourite activities (and not only because we could reflect outside in the warm Central American weather). On our trip, participants reflected mindfully on speaking with Costa Ricans (when they knew little Spanish), giving medical examinations (when they had limited training), and recognizing how their experiences were changing their attitudes and even their career choices. To borrow from Johns, our evening reflections consistently deepened and enriched our "version" of the world, particularly our group confronted our expectations and prior knowledge together.

In the "Privilege Walk" (Noon, 2006), which was our most intense and productive group reflection that week, participants initially wrestled with the meaning of privilege. I had a clear idea of what I thought "privilege" was supposed to mean for this activity, and

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Reflecting on Reflection in Costa Rica

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in my privileged position as co-leader it was difficult not to jump in and provide correction. However, as the conversation continued among those who sat in different “spaces of privilege” at the conclusion of the Privilege Walk, I realized that I was contributing more to the conversation by staying silent than by speaking; with time, and on their own, students steered their discussion to viewing “privilege” not only as a reward for effort and good behavior but also as systematic restrictions on opportunities and choices for people based on their lived differences. Together, they intuitively guided conversation through the “What? So What? Now What?” reflection model, and finally agreeing that understanding one’s privilege (relative to others) is an important foundation for making the choice to work towards the social good in the future.

Johns (2008) explains that reflection is “often perceived as looking back at events rather than looking forward and anticipating future

situations” (p. 41). Initially, my vision of practice was to “look back” to my classroom teaching to inform my out-of-class teaching. However, I now realize that this teaching experience in Costa Rica has given me a better way to understand the role of reflection in my future classes at home. Watching this intimate yet open conversation on privilege and power unfold, and reflecting on my own class habits, I was reminded of how unpredictability can be precisely what is valuable for learning—for both students and for teachers. In reflecting on reflecting, I am also reminded that reflection not only enables learning but also builds a sense of community that makes learning better. Reflection after service learning aims to move students towards a greater awareness of their ties to their larger community (Jeavons, 1995, p. 135). Before those larger community ties were established through reflection, however, it was the reflection activity itself that enabled our team to form close ties with each other.

See the **ASB 2011 blogs** for more on this year’s service learning trips in London, Winnipeg, New Orleans, Peru, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua and Costa Rica.

Thanks to Leah Getchell, Pam Core, Shannon Aitchison, Saumya Krishna, and the ASB Costa Rica 2011 Service Learning group. Thanks also to Dr. Ken Meadows.

For more information on ASB, visit:
<http://www.asb.uwo.ca/>

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SPRING PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHING CONFERENCE

Monday, May 16, 2011 • Social Science Centre, Room 2050 • 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.



KEYNOTE SESSION:

**Why don't we just do it?
Self-regulation, academic
procrastination and lighting
the fire for learning**

• Timothy A. Pychyl, Carleton University

She had a year to do it in: Research, Writing and Procrastination in Graduate Education

• Tim Pychyl, Carleton University

**An Ounce of Prevention:
Promoting Academic Integrity**

- Paul Schmidt (Writing Support Centre)
- Carol Beynon (Education)
- Meaghan Coker (University Students' Council and Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance)

CONCURRENT SESSIONS:

**Student Engagement:
How Award Winning Teachers Do It**

- Christopher Keep (English)
- Graham Smith (Geography)
- Tom Stavrakys (Physiology and Pharmacology)
- Marla Wolf (Psychology)

Tech Tools for Teaching

- Five presenters will demonstrate different technologies (Top Hat, Screener, Screenflow, Assignment and Dissertation Planners, I-Phone Application) and how they use these tools in their teaching.

CLOSING PLENARY SESSION:

The Copyright Conundrum: What Can and Can't I Do in the Classroom?

- Margaret Ann Wilkinson (Law)
- Brenda MacEachern (Visual Arts)
- Kim Luton (Sociology)

To view program and register, visit the TSC website at:

<http://www.uwo.ca/tsc>

SUMMER TEACHING WITH TECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE 2011

May 25 & 26 (9am-4pm)
May 27 (9am-noon)
optional OWL training)

SSB 4320

The complex interactions of the classroom bring instructors, students, and technology together to create a learning environment where creating knowledge and meaning is more relevant and difficult than ever before. The goal of the Summer Teaching with Technology Institute is to provide instructors with **information, tools, and support** options for learning about and using educational technology.

TOPICS

- **Collaboration in Learning and Teaching**
including discussions, Wimba tools, and wikis
- **Using Technology for Student Evaluation**
including Turnitin, quizzes, and graded discussions
- **Using Multimedia to Address Different Learning Styles**
including interactive multimedia, lecture capture and archiving, and mobile apps
- **New Media Technologies**
including Second Life, mind mapping tools, and social media

Jointly hosted by the TSC and the ITRC
Registration site: <http://www.uwo.ca/tsc/>