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### President’s Message

As the new academic year begins I always find myself full of excitement and hope. Excitement for the new students I will meet and the roll I will play in their educational journey. Hope for their dreams and aspirations, and my ability to help them reach their goals. At this point in the year I am still very “bright eyed and bushy tailed.” I have settled into a routine, gotten comfortable with my students, and go to work with a spring in my step.

It is also as this time of the new academic year rolls around that I find I start forming habits, good and bad, and sometimes become likely to just pull my tried and true methodologies out rather than seeking new or different ones. It is easy to get in a rut when we teach the same material, again and again.

Professional Development is so important for us as teachers. Exposure to new research and ideas can often help us understand our students better, or even throw out ideologies we had previously held true for many years. Reading about new methodologies can inform our practice. However, best practices articles and presentations that we can use immediately and easily in our classrooms have always been my favorite. I believe most teachers enjoy Professional Development activities, though they often feel they don’t have time for them.

Finding the time for Professional Development can be difficult. Conferences are generally on weekends when we would rather be with our families. Searching out relevant articles in journals, or even knowing what to look for can be difficult. For these reasons I am glad TESOL and VATESOL send me e-newsletters, and though I don’t always read everything, I try to stay abreast of trends and find useful practices articles. I find that these are the things that help to keep my teaching fresh, and my students interested.

Our fall Conference is just a few short weeks away, and I would love to see strong attendance from our members. We have a lovely lineup of presentations this year, and a wonderful keynote speaker, Gerald Ndikintum. The conference is at Christopher Newport University in Newport News, VA this year. I hope you will come and find some ways to keep your teaching fresh, and enjoy learning and networking with colleagues from around the state.

Before I close I would like to say a special thanks to Michelle Grau, who has been the woman on the ground at CNU helping us to plan this conference, securing our venue, hotel, and one hundred other details. Thank you so much Michelle for being there for our organization and our conference.

Happy Fall!

Ada Chrisman  
 VATESOL President  
 ablount@vt.edu

## Message from the 2015 Fall Conference Co-Chair

Greetings VATESOL Members!



I hope that everyone is registered and excited for this year's fall conference! If not registered, please visit [www.vatesol.com](http://www.vatesol.com) to do so. You won't want to miss this opportunity for collegiality, collaboration and enjoyment! We apologize for earlier technical difficulties with the registration link; the problems have been

corrected.

This year we will meet on the beautiful Christopher Newport University campus in Newport News, Virginia, October 10th, 2015. The conference theme: *Inclusion and Integration: Contextualizing Culture, Communication and Community* will offer attendees valuable information that will enhance the classroom experience for both teachers and students. We are pleased to include a variety of wonderful presentations that appeal to educators at all levels – elementary and secondary education, post-secondary education and adult education in the community. You will have the opportunity to gather information, network and socialize during five breakout

sessions, a plenary session with keynote speaker Gerald Ndikintum, and Special Interest Group workshops.

On Friday evening attendees are invited to a meet and greet event at The Cove Tavern, City Center, Newport News. This delightful venue will give us the opportunity to relax, mix and mingle, catch up with old friends, and make new ones. Appetizers will be served, compliments of VATESOL! Friday evening check-in will be available at The Cove for your convenience. Special thanks to Laura Ray for all of her guidance in planning this conference! Her experience and direction have been invaluable!

Registration closes soon so go to the VATESOL website (<http://www.vatesol.com>) to register or if you would like more information. Reserve your spot for this exciting event! Feel free to contact me with any questions: [michgrau@cnu.edu](mailto:michgrau@cnu.edu). I look forward to seeing you soon at Christopher Newport University!

Michelle Horner Grau, Conference Co-Chair

VATESOL Annual Conference 2015  
Christopher Newport University  
Newport News, Virginia

## Introduction of the Keynote Speaker



Gerald Ndikintum, Adjunct Instructor in the College of Education, University of Mary Washington

To find more about Professor Ndikintum, here is a link <http://magazine.umw.edu/summer2014/departments/alumni-profiles/the-dangers-and-powers-of-speech/>



*2015 Annual Conference*

**Inclusion and Integration:  
Contextualizing Culture,  
Communication, and  
Community**

*Christopher Newport  
University*

*Newport News, VA*

**OCTOBER 10, 2015**

**Hotel Information:**

Hampton Inn & Suites Newport News  
12251 Jefferson Avenue, Newport News, VA 23602

**Collegial  
Atmosphere**

**Professional  
Development  
Opportunities**

**Networking**

**Peer Reviewed  
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**Lunch Included**

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## Special Interest Group (SIG) News

### Teacher Ed/Program Admin SIG Chair, Jo Tyler

[jtyler@umw.edu](mailto:jtyler@umw.edu)



#### Teacher Education/Program Administration

I encourage all teacher educators to attend the 2015 VATESOL Conference in Newport News on October 10th. At last year's conference, our SIG held an informative discussion over lunch about the challenges facing ESOL teacher education programs in Virginia, and I expect the discussion to continue at the SIG meeting this year.

We all face similar challenges, and can learn from each other's successes. Last year we shared effective methods for addressing several issues including enrollment and online programming challenges (as reported in the December 2014 VATESOL Newsletter). These issues and many others still confront ESOL

teacher education programs this year. Some of the topics for discussion this year may include:

- enrollment strategies to meet demands for new ESOL teachers
- teacher education standards
- alignment of program assessment to standards
- add-on endorsement programs
- training of ESOL "coaches" or "specialists"
- online course design
- engaging pre-service teachers in VATESOL

Please plan to attend the 2015 conference and teacher education SIG discussion.

*Jo Tyler is chair of the Teacher Education/Program Administration SIG of VATESOL and professor of linguistics and education at the University of Mary Washington.*

### Higher Ed. SIG Chair, Kama Offenberger

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In May of this year, the U.S. Justice Department announced that it was indicting fifteen Chinese students on charges of conspiracy, counterfeiting foreign passports, mail fraud, and wire fraud. As an educator who works with Chinese students every day, I was struck by the severity of these charges and the potential ramifications on the lives of these young people.

It is the responsibility of language teachers to understand and guide our students as much as we can.

We may not be able to prevent all instances of cheating, the competitive nature and financial pressures of their lives are constantly encouraging them to do so, but we may be able to help them to better adjust to this new and very foreign educational environment.

I have admittedly been guilty of succumbing to frustration at some of my Chinese students and their seeming lack of classroom participation. The description of Chinese students as quiet and reserved is common and supported by many studies, which find them less likely to be vocal in class or work effectively in groups. However, there are also many indications that this silence is not the result of disinterest, but a consequence of other factors affecting their classroom experiences. For example, while students may not be

vocalizing their questions or opinions during class time, they may be participating in other ways, such as taking notes, looking back at the reading, or responding to the professor's questions internally (Zheng, 2010). Although their participation may not conform to the typical interpretation, they are in fact actively engaged in the class, deeply considering the material and formulating their responses.

This behavior relates to a combination of factors involved in their previous educational and cultural experiences. Lindgren, Stevens, and Fan (2013) explain that Chinese culture is typically collectivist, with a focus on the group rather than the individual. To speak out frequently in front of the class might suggest immodesty, which is uncomfortable and might result in "displeasing" the group. Furthermore, Chinese culture is generally more hierarchical than that of America. Students have "Confucian respect" for their instructors and silence is seen as a form of demonstrating that respect.

The theme of this year's VATESOL conference is *Inclusion and Integration: Contextualizing Culture,*

*Communication, and Community.* As the number of Chinese students enrolled at American universities increases each year, it is critical that we understand their culture, encourage their skills of communication, and help them to become a part of our academic communities. If you have any advice or experience in specific teaching methods that are beneficial to this student population, please share them! Email them to me at [kw9703@vt.edu](mailto:kw9703@vt.edu).

### References

- Lindgren, J., Stevens, S., & Fan, W. (2013, April 4). *Today's Chinese Student: Understanding the U.S. Classroom.*
- Zheng, X. (2010). Re-interpreting silence: Chinese international students' verbal participation in U.S. universities. *International Journal of Learning*, 17(5), 451–463. Retrieved from <http://ijl.cgpublisher.com/>

*Kama Offenberger is an instructor at the Virginia Tech Language & Culture Institute in Blacksburg, VA*

## Adult Ed SIG Chair, Jenna Kelly

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I hope you all have had a great summer and are flawlessly slipping back into your routines! I recently did a presentation for VAILL about applying employability skills and the CCRS into the beginner level ESOL classrooms. As we were preparing for the presentation, a colleague here at LFL

introduced me to the Employability Skills Framework developed by College and Career Readiness and Success Center, the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders, and RTI International. I find the framework very helpful and think you will as well.

According to the framework, employability skills are defined as "general skills that are necessary for

success in the labor market at all employment levels and in all sectors." I think for our ESOL classrooms the important part of this is ALL employment levels and in ALL sectors. This means we can teach employability in our lowest level classrooms all the way through to the highest.

Next, the framework organizes employability into three categories and gives skills needed for each. These categories and skills are important for us to look at because we need to see which ones we are already incorporating into our classrooms and which we need to include. The first category is effective relationships. These are the cultural cues, conflict resolution and interpersonal communication needed on the job. The second category is workplace skills which are the nuts and bolts including scheduling, paystubs, and the use of technology. The skill in this category that stumped me

at first was “systems thinking”. This is talking about the systems that are set up at work including payroll, taking time off, etc. The final category is applied knowledge. These are the critical thinking skills needed at the workplace such as problem solving, planning and organizing, making sound decisions, etc. This final category is where the CCRS also lines up and helps us to focus on really preparing our learner for the workplace. I only skimmed the surface of the framework. I hope you will get on [www.ccrscenter.org](http://www.ccrscenter.org) and dive in further!

Until next time,

Jenna

*Jenna Kelly is the IEL/Civics Program Manager for Literacy for Life, School of Education College of William and Mary. She has fifteen years of teaching experience, both collegiate and in Adult Education programs.*

## Elementary Education SIG Chair, Stephanie Sebolt

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Welcome back to the 2015-16 school year! I hope you had a restful summer and are ready to start a new school year. I read a very interesting article related to unaccompanied children in schools on [ColorinColorado.org](http://ColorinColorado.org).

The article offered ideas, from the American Federation of Teachers, to facilitate meeting the needs of this group of students. I will share some of them below.

- Develop a personal relationship with the student. Try to learn about how they got to the United States. *(Do a bit of background research on what these children go through on their journey, why they make the journey, and information about their native country.)*
- Provide the student with a "buddy" or "partner" who can assist him/her with school tasks, navigating the school, understanding school rules, and providing support and friendship.
- Reach out to the student's family or guardian. Let them know that you are available to help and support them. If possible, connect them with community resources that are available.
- Invite the student to share his/her native culture and integrate the native language and culture into lessons.
- Provide a welcoming and caring environment for the students. It may be difficult for us, as teachers, to understand exactly what the students experienced as they made their journey to the United States. By creating a

trusting and caring environment, the student will have a safe place to grow and learn.

- Once you have determined the student's English proficiency level and know what prior schooling he/she has, you are ready to begin creating exciting learning activities. Work with content teachers and inform them of the student's educational background and needs. I know from my own experience that collaborating with and supporting content teachers is essential for meeting the needs of English Language Learners.

Have a wonderful beginning to the 2015-16 school year. I hope to see you at the VATESOL Annual Conference on October 10 at Christopher Newport University. Our conference theme is *Inclusion and Integration: Contextualizing Culture, Communication, and Community*.

Peace,

Stephanie

Source retrieved from:

<http://www.colorincolorado.org/pdfs/tips/Unaccompanied%20Minors%20Tip%20Sheet%20for%20Colorin%20olorado-FINAL-D.pdf>

*Stephanie Sebolt is ESL teacher of K-5 ELLs in Roanoke County. She is also an adjunct for the University of Mary Washington and Virginia Tech.*

**Secondary Education SIG Chair, Naadira Mubarak**[nmubarak@nps.k12.va.us](mailto:nmubarak@nps.k12.va.us)**States Struggle with Graduation of English Language Learners**

It's September and another school year has started. Teachers, students, and parents are all excited and hopeful for the prospects of a year of success. It's a perfect time to start thinking about the end of the school

year. Specifically for our class of '2016 students who started high school in the fall of 2012. Virginia has a lot to celebrate because the graduation rate for all of its high school students has steadily increased over the past 10 years. The graduation rate of each state is an indication of the success and health of our school system in educating our students from kindergarten with the goal of preparing them to be career and college ready citizens.

Virginia's graduation rate has remained above the national average over the last decade. In 2012 Virginia was 20th in the nation in its on-time graduation rate. Every group of students who enter high school as a 9th grader is considered part of that cohort of students and tracked for the next 4 years. The Virginia average graduation rate in the 2013-2014 school year was 89.9%. The graduation rates by region for 2013-2014 are as follows:

Northern – 92%	Eastern – 88.8%
Valley – 91%	Central – 89.9%

Southwest – 89.4%	West Central – 88.2%
Hampton Roads – 88.1%	Southside – 87.1%

Despite the good news that overall graduation rates are increasing nationwide, all states are struggling with graduating their English Language Learners. These students are one of the critical subgroups that are tracked under the No Child Left Behind act. The U.S. Department of Education reported that the average graduation rate for English Language Learners in 2012 was 60% or lower. Virginia's graduation rate of ELLs in 2012 was 55%. The Virginia Department of Education publishes report cards of each school district that report all subgroups yearly.

All districts across the nation are tasked with the challenge of creating programs and strategies to help these students reach “the American Dream”. Earning a diploma is just one step towards providing them with a tool to earn a decent living by working, starting a business, continuing on to college or a vocational trade. If we want these new Americans to be productive citizens and not a burden on society, it is crucial that educators and administrators double our efforts to help them succeed this school year.

*Naadira Mubarak is the ESL Specialist for Norfolk Public Schools. She has had a varied career in general education and ESL. In addition, she has taught and provided teacher training in Kuwait and Qatar.*

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**Treasurers Report**

Treasurer's report:

BB&T balance as of Aug. 7: \$39,399.65

PayPal balance as of Sept. 2: \$14,753.48

## Member Articles

### Teaching Vocabulary Using a Blended Learning Approach Randa Fouad Abdelmagid



The most distinguishable characteristic of blending learning is its ability to combine two different forms/settings of learning and instruction (Singh & Reed, 2001). Instruction takes place offline (traditional/f2f

classroom) and is then supplemented with online web-based materials that adhere to the pedagogical goals of the classroom (Wingard, 2004). The percentage of time and activity spent by students either in the online or offline classroom is usually dependent on the nature of the course and the preference of the instructor. There are various types of blended learning environments (Bhaskar, 2013) as shown in the table (see the table on the next page).

For my vocabulary classroom, the f2f driver method was used for instruction. In-class activities were in the form of lessons generated on PowerPoint presentations to explain the content. This included visual representation like the use of images to identify words, audio links if needed and short precise content using attractive scripts to define words and apply them in context. In-class activities also included games like jeopardy, crosswords and retelling stories using the vocabulary learned.

To supplement class instruction, two web-based tools, Quia and Quizlet were used to provide drill and practice online activities and quizzes. Some of the featured highlights of these two web-based tools are:

- Online activities like flashcards, space race, speller, definitions, scatter, jumbled words,

matching, concentration, word search activities and hangman.

- Quiz generators (written, matching, multiple choice, true/false, fill-in-blanks, pop-up, multiple correct, initial answer, short answer, essay, ordering).
- Inclusion of images and personal recordings to vocabulary words.
- Auto-grading system.

After utilizing these classroom tools in my vocabulary classroom, it is possible to conclude the following:

#### Benefits

1. Provide a self-paced learning environment for students.
2. Combine and organize class material in one place.
3. Generate online content that can be revised and re-used.
4. Assign individual or collaborative work.
5. Keep track of students' progress and how much they have worked on content.
6. Promote students' autonomy and technology use.

#### Hindrances

1. Time-consuming, but only at the beginning when adding vocabulary content.
2. Annual subscriptions required for upgraded features.

Check out QUIA at [www.quia.com](http://www.quia.com) and Quizlet at [www.quizlet.com](http://www.quizlet.com)



	In-class	Online
F2F Driver	Instructors deliver most of the curriculum	Instructors provide online resources to supplement or revise course material which students can study at home, in the classroom or in a technology lab.
Rotation	Instructors develop content in such a way that students rotate on a fixed schedule between F2F learning and learning online in a one-to-one, self-paced environment.	
Flex	Instructors provide on-site support and as a required basis through in-person tutoring and small group sessions.	Instructors deliver most of the curriculum through an online platform.
Online Lab		The entire course and teaching are done online. Instructors interact with students through pre-recorded videos, audio and video conferences or discussion forums and email.
Self-Blend	F2f attendance is required.	Students individually take one or more online coursework to supplement their school work.
Online Driver	Optional or mandatory f2f attendance.	Students work remotely on an online platform and communicate with their instructors online.

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*My name is Randa Fouad Abdelmagid. My doctoral degree is in Curriculum and Instruction (Instructional Design and Technology) from Virginia Tech. I have been in the ESL field for 3 years. My email is [rfouad@vt.edu](mailto:rfouad@vt.edu)*

## Teaching Tip: Paper Plate Awards for Teaching Superlatives

### Lily Jaffie-Shupe



Grammar class can often become monotonous for both students and teachers. In my experience, it can be difficult to create a grammar production activity for students that is both relevant and engaging. It's also challenging to create a meaningful activity that can be accomplished within the time constraints of a fast-paced course. That's why I was so pleased by the results of an activity for teaching superlatives that I used in my high beginner class this term. This activity took a total of 30 minutes of class time: 25 minutes on the first day and 5 minutes for the follow-up.

#### Step 1: Create class superlatives (15 minutes)

After spending two days on comparatives and superlatives, we had a little bit of extra time. My class has 13 students, so I split the room in half. I gave each group index cards with the names of the people on the other side of the room. Each group was instructed to write superlatives about the students on their cards. I gave them some examples, like "the nicest student" or "the most helpful student." After about 10 minutes, each group had finished. I checked the superlatives for grammar and to make sure they were appropriate. Most were very complimentary and cute, like "the most handsome man in the class," "the most beautiful personality," and "the biggest heart."

#### Step 2: Design paper plate awards (10 minutes)

Next, I gave each group some paper plates and markers. I told them about the American tradition of giving "paper plate awards" at summer camp and showed them some examples online. Then each group got to work. They were told to write the person's name

and the superlative award on each plate. Decorating the awards was up to them, and they really had fun with it. There was a lot of giggling and excitement at this stage—definitely not the usual state of affairs in grammar class! After about 10 minutes, I collected the awards and told the students they would be given out on our last day of class the following week.

#### Step 3: Have an awards ceremony (5 minutes)

When I brought the awards to class the following week, the students were quite excited to find out the results. I announced each award and the name of winner one by one. The winning student came to the front of the room to receive the award while the other students clapped. Many of the awards looked pretty ridiculous, so the students had a good laugh.

Of all the activities we did in class throughout the term, this was definitely the class favorite. We took some pictures together, which were then posted to our school's Instagram account. The students, of their own accord, commented on the photo sharing the name of their awards, and the pictures got a lot of "likes."

This activity allowed the students to put the grammar they had learned into practice, and it had the added benefit of building class camaraderie. It is not always easy to find time for "fun" in a grammar class, but doing so can really pay dividends for teachers and students. I encourage you to try it and send me your pictures!

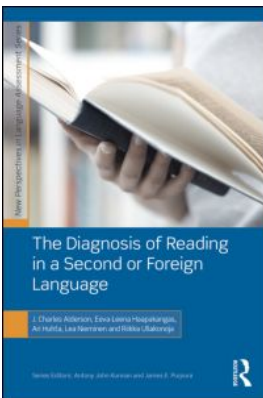
*Lily Jaffie-Shupe is a Full-Time Instructor at the Virginia Tech Language and Culture Institute in Fairfax, VA. She can be reached at [lkjaffie@vt.edu](mailto:lkjaffie@vt.edu).*



## Book Review

### Differences Between L1 and L2 Reading for Instruction and Assessment

By Jo Tyler



*The Diagnosis of Reading in a Second or Foreign Language* (Alderson, Haapakangas, Huta, Nieminen & Ullakonoja, 2015) is an excellent resource for background information about reading theory, research and assessment, with special attention to reading in a second language (L2). The overall goal of the book is to examine the

factors that should be accounted for in assessing (or “diagnosing”) the reading skills of second language learners, whether in a second language learning context or in a foreign language classroom. In so doing, it examines the linguistic, cognitive, psychological, and environmental factors that impact L2 reading, painting a complex picture of the reading challenge that L2 learners face.

One of the key conclusions of the book is that we should not base teaching and assessment of L2 reading on the same criteria we use for L1 reading—because

the assumption that children already know the language they are learning to read is false for L2 readers. Alderson et al. (2015) note that nearly all research on reading is about L1 reading and most theories and methods for teaching and assessment of L2 reading are based on the L1 reading research. This point is highly significant because in the U.S., methods for the teaching of reading are, and always have been, based on the assumption that the students already know and speak the language they are learning to read (Smith, 2004). On a daily basis, teachers are expected to teach reading to ELLs using methods based on this false assumption. And we are failing: According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2014), in 2013 the reading achievement gap between non-ELL and ELL students was 38 points at the 4th-grade level and 45 points at the 8th-grade level, and these gaps have remained consistent over nearly two decades.

One of the book’s rare advantages is the focus it gives to the linguistic aspects of reading—phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, in addition to vocabulary. An assumption in our standards-based learning context is that vocabulary is the most crucial aspect of reading, which results in teaching of ESOL reading that focuses on word recognition. While Alderson et al. (2015) present evidence in support of

the importance of vocabulary, they distinguish between word recognition and vocabulary comprehension, pointing out that word recognition is a decontextualized practice, while a more important goal—vocabulary comprehension—requires context-based use of grammatical and pragmatic knowledge of the language.

An interesting question addressed in *Diagnosis of Reading* is whether knowledge of vocabulary or knowledge of grammar is more significant in learning to read in L2. Alderson et al. (2015) concluded that for beginning or weak L2 readers, grammatical understanding of the language provides more support in reading comprehension than word recognition. However, as these readers improve by using grammatical cues to infer word meanings, they acquire new vocabulary which eventually becomes used more and more as contextual support for inferring meaning of unknown words. This finding clearly suggests that for students at the beginning levels of L2 learning, a strong foundation in the oral language—both pronunciation and grammar—is needed before word recognition reading strategies can be of much use to students, as has also been found in prior extensive research (Geva, 2006). This is especially true for languages such as English with opaque orthographies, which require a heavy cognitive load to decode and associate printed forms with pronunciation.

It is already well-known in the field of ESOL, and supported by extensive research, that ELLs who know how to read in their native language (L1) are better readers of English and fare better academically than ELLs who do not read in their L1 (Dressler, 2006). However, the question remains:

*What does research say about reading instruction for ELLs who have not learned to read in L1 and are first learning to read in a language they do not know?*

Alderson et al. (2015) point out that although students who are already skilled readers in L1 typically can transfer skills to L2, this does not mean that those who struggle in L2 reading are necessarily poor readers in L1.

Rather, they explain that there is a threshold of basic proficiency in L2 that learners need before they can successfully transfer reading skills from L1 to L2.

*We can no longer afford to base reading instruction on what works for students who already speak the language they are learning to read or on what works for students who already know how to read before acquiring a second language.*

Throughout the book, the authors tend to define the “second or foreign language learner” as one who already knows how to read in L1. However, a large proportion of ELLs in the U.S. have limited or no reading skills in L1 that they could transfer even if they have reached the “threshold” of L2 proficiency needed to do so. In addition to the population of K-2 ELLs who, because of their age, are learning to read in L2 with no prior L1 reading instruction, there is also a large population of older ELLs who have limited or no literacy instruction in L1 (Freeman & Freeman, 2002). Furthermore, as the number of bilingual or dual language programs in the U.S. declines, the number of ELLs without L1 reading experience increases.

Although most of the analysis in *Diagnosis of Reading* does not generally make a distinction between L2 readers based on their L1 reading skills, one of the studies mentioned did focus on this point. The conclusion of the study was that for young learners with little or no L1 reading skills, the cognitive load was 5.5% higher in L2 reading than for young learners with well-developed L1 reading skills. This study, however, looked at students who already had three to four years of reading instruction in the L2. What we can infer, however, is that for students who have had no prior reading experience and are first learning to read in a language they do not know, the cognitive demands would be significantly greater than reported in this study.

There is still a need for more research on this issue to inform the reading instruction for ELLs. To begin with, we do not even have up-to-date reliable statistics on the literacy backgrounds of ELLs in this country (NCELA, 2011). We can only surmise that as the total number of ELLs continues to increase, the number of those who do not have sufficient literacy skills in L1 will increase as well. We can no longer afford to base reading instruction on what works for students who already speak the language they are learning to read or on what works for students who already know how to read before acquiring a second language.

*Jo Tyler is chair of the Teacher Education/Program Administration SIG of VATESOL and professor of linguistics and education at the University of Mary Washington.*

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