

Bridges on the I-Way: Multicultural Resources—Online ESL Resources for Prospective Teachers Abroad

By Frank Alan Bruno

Having moved from the United States to Saudi Arabia on a one-year teaching contract, I have become more aware of English language proficiency. Even though Saudi Arabia is a bilingual country where many citizens speak Arabic and English, a speaker's ability differs considerably from person to person. My children are attending a multinational private school where instruction is in English but is taught mostly by Egyptian teachers, many of whom speak English marginally. My children are the only American students. They are required to learn French, English, and Arabic, the last mostly for Islamic studies.

Even in the local public system English is taught to Arab children, who master it minimally. In order to attend and complete courses at higher education institutions, Saudi students must be able to comprehend academic English, since that is the stated language of instruction. The country even pegs its dollar to the U.S. dollar because the ties are so close.

At the private non-profit university where I work, students complete a developmental year in which they are taught more advanced English speaking and writing skills. The professors for the developmental year are from the United States, Canada, Australia, and Great Britain, so students are expected to follow the professors' preferred spelling from their respective English-speaking countries. It is amazing how well the students decode the professors' different English terms. The majority of the students operate at a second grade language comprehension level, and a large number are required to repeat the courses. Students are willing to pay \$10,000 to \$20,000 per year to be taught in English. Many have good jobs after graduation because of their English skills.

In the United States, Canada, and Australia, the term *ESL* stands for "English as a second language." In other countries such as Great Britain, Ireland, and New Zealand, the term "English for speakers of other languages" (ESOL) is used. When a person teaches the subject, it is referred to as "Teaching English to speakers of other languages" (TESOL). In some places the term, "English as an International Language" (EIL) indicates the goal of helping non-native speakers of English increase their academic English proficiency. A more in-depth overview of English second language terms can be found at Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ESL>). Before entering an American university's academic program, most foreign students have to pass the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) exam. (See *Wikipedia* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TOEFL>).

I thought it would be of interest to share second language English sites to help us understand how linguistic diversity among students, faculty members, and my own library staff can be improved. My staff consists of Saudi, Sudanese, and Filipino librarians. Most can speak fairly well conversationally, but there is one

man who speaks at a very basic level and confuses gender, always referring even to his wife as *he*.

About.com (<http://esl.about.com/>) has an array of English as Second Language tools including information about ESL Teaching blogs (http://esl.about.com/od/blogs/ESL_EFL_Teacher_Blogs.htm). A few resources included are *Free English Email Courses for Learners and Teachers*, *Top Vocabulary Resources*, *Top Lessons for Your Class*, *Start Learning English*, and *Quizzes*. The site also contains links to other recommended sites for ESL, English vocabulary, English grammar, and other topics.

Many Western instructors with master's degrees work in the Middle East, making tax-free salaries of \$35,000 to \$45,000. Their positions include free housing, free medical care for themselves and their families, two months paid vacation, and free airfare for vacation and return to their place of origin. Many of the instructors rotate from university to university, saving hundreds of thousands of dollars. Those seeking jobs teaching English to students at the university level can consult the following sites:

Teaching English (<http://www.TeachingEnglishGuide.com>);
Teaching Jobs (<http://MonsterGulf.com>);
Free for Language Teacher (<http://www.wordchamp.com>);
New School TESOL program (<http://www.newschool.edu/mateso>);
Medical/Technical Writing (www.cfpie.com);
TEYL Course (<http://www.ontesol.com>);
ESL Taiwan (<http://www.esltaiwan.com>);
Study English on a Ship (<http://www.TheScholarShip.com>);
Teaching Professor Newsletter (<http://www.MagnaPubs.com>).

A drawback to a job in Saudi Arabia is that many employers hold your passport in a safe and only let you leave the country when the contract is over or on a long holiday between semesters if they think you will come back. They are afraid of employees running away, so they restrict their freedom, imposing fines of two months' pay if you don't give two months' notice. You can only leave at the end of a semester at your own expense or at the end of the contract at their expense. If you travel to Israel and the Saudis see the passport stamp, you will be fined and possibly deported.

Once you have the job, you will need to find materials to get you started in the classroom, especially if this is your first ESL teaching assignment. A good place to explore ESL and bilingual education resources is Paul Gorski's *Multicultural Pavilion* ESL page (<http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/sites/esl.html>). He considers the following sites to be the best:

* Adult Education ESL Teachers Guide (<http://humanities.byu>).

edu/elc/Teacher/TeacherGuideMain)
 * *Advances in Hispanic Ed*, Fall 1996, no.2 (<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/miscpubs/hdp/advances/f96no2.htm>)
 * *Bilingual Education* magazine
 * Bilingual Education from *Education Week* (<http://www.edweek.org/context/topics/issuepage.cfm?id=8>)
 * Bilingual Education Network (<http://goldmine.cde.ca.gov/cilbranch/bien/bien.htm>)
 * *BRJ* Online (<http://brj.asu.edu/>)
 * Dave's ESL Café (<http://www.eslcafe.com/>)
 * Dr. Mora's CLAD Website (<http://coe.sdsu.edu/people/jmora/Default.htm>)
 * "The Effectiveness of Bilingual Education" (article) (<http://www.cal.org/crede/pubs/tl-5.pdf>)
 * ELTWEB (<http://www.eltweb.com/>)
 * ESL and Bilingual Program Models (<http://www.cal.org/resources/digest/rennie01.html>)
 * ESL Lessons, Games, Ideas, and Links (<http://members.aol.com/Jakajk/ESLLessons.html>)
 * ESL Teacher's Assistant (<http://Etanewsletter.com>)
 * ESL Flow's Guide to ESL Teaching (<http://www.eslflow.com/>)
 * everythingESL.net (<http://www.everythingesl.net/>)
 * Exploring the World of Meaning of ESL Students (<http://www.eslmag.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=26>)
 * Fostering Second Language Development in Young Children (<http://www.cal.org/resources/digest/nrcrds04.html>)
 * "A Global Perspective on Bilingualism and Bilingual Education" (<http://www.cal.org/resources/digest/digestglobal.html>)
 * The Internet TESL Journal (<http://iteslj.org/>)
 * Karin's ESL PartyLand (<http://www.eslpartyland.com/>)
 * Language Policy Web Site (<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/JWCRAWFORD/home.htm>)
 * Learning English—BBC World Service (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/index.shtml>)
 * Lesson Plans and Resources for ESL, Bilingual, and Foreign Language Teachers (<http://www.csun.edu/~hcedu013/eslindex.html>)
 * Model Strategies in Bilingual Education (<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/ModStrat/index.html>)
 * National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) (<http://www.nabe.org/>)
 * National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity (<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/pubs/nrcrdsll/index.htm>)
 * National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education (NCBE) (<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/>)
 * National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education (http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/digests.html)

* NCLE Digests (http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/digests.html)
 * PIZZAZ (<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~leslieob/pizzaz.html>)
 * Ten Common Fallacies about Bilingual Education (<http://www.cal.org/resources/digest/crawford01.html>)
 * Tower of English (<http://towerofenglish.com/>)

Another comprehensive location is *Open Directory Listing of ELL-T Related Websites* (http://www.dmoz.org/Arts/Education/Language_Arts/English/English_as_a_Second_Language/). The top 25 sites with site-generated descriptions are:

- 1-language.com (<http://www.1-language.com/>): Includes student and teacher forums, chat room, job center, multilingual help lines, links directory, resource library, and study materials. Also a bank of teacher contributed teaching ideas, multilingual translation help, and interactive lessons.
- Aardvark's English Forum (<http://www.englishforum.com/00/>): Portal with resources for students and teachers. Interactive exercises, message boards, bookshop, school guide, web directory, and world news.
- Absolutenglish (<http://perso.orange.fr/absolutenglish-972/>): Lesson plans and activities for grade 9-12 students learning English as a foreign language and their teachers.
- Accent Modification Training (<http://www.accentmodification.com/>): Provides pronunciation improvement programs for international speakers of English as well as information about the English language.
- The British Council (<http://www.britishcouncil.org/>): Aims to connect people worldwide with learning opportunities and creative ideas from the UK. Includes resources for teachers and students.
- Cutting Edge CALL Resources (<http://www-writing.berkeley.edu/chorus/call/cuttingedge.html>): Features interactive and video demonstrations of language learning tools for teachers and students, such as a TOEFL preparation quiz, listening, alphabet, and integrated skills practice modules. Computer requirements listed.
- Dave's ESL Café (<http://www.eslcafe.com/>): Offers discussion forums, chat room, interactive exercises, online tutorials, and extensive web guide. Also provides teaching ideas and job postings.
- English Exercises Online (<http://www.smic.be/smic5022/>): Offering interactive materials for students and ready-to-use handouts for teachers
- English Language Learning and UK Study Materials (<http://www.poundhill.net/>): Quizzes, songs, and projects for learners

and teachers emphasizing Sussex local history and discussion topics.

- English Language Learning Online (<http://www.usingenglish.com/>): Question bank for students, language forum, tests, language news for teachers, and an irregular verb list program.

- English Language Self-Access Centre (<http://www.lets-learnenglish.co.uk/>): Fee-based learning modules for self-assessment, vocabulary, and grammar which includes a free demonstration. For beginner to advanced students as well as teachers.

- English4theworld (<http://www.brasyl.co.uk/e-mesh/>): Resources for learners and teachers. Classroom activities, games, lesson plans, and articles. Requires login.

- ESL PartyLand (<http://www.eslpartyland.com/>): Provides many interactive quizzes, discussion forums, and topic-based learning pages for students. On the teachers' side, lessons and printable materials to use in class.

- ESLgold.com (<http://www.eslgold.com/>): Resources for teachers and students with a variety of free learning and teaching materials, all categorized for access by skill and level.

- A Guide to Learning English as a Second Language (<http://esl.fis.edu/>): Grammar and vocabulary quizzes and tips for teachers, parents, and students.

- Iowa Literacy Resource Center (<http://www.readiowa.org/>): Offers resources in literacy, ESL, adult basic education, and GED preparation.

- Its-Online Network (<http://www.its-online.com/>): Offers areas which include pen pals, web site creation, messaging, interactive grammar and vocabulary exercises, activities, and resources for teachers and students.

- Learning Post (<http://www.bangkokpost.com/education/index.htm>): Offers vocabulary lessons, news stories, plus reading and teaching tips. Primarily for Thai learners and teachers.

- The Linguistic Funland TESL Page (<http://www.tesol.net/>): Information for teachers and students on finding pen pals, teaching materials, activities, and jobs.

- Longman English Language Teaching (<http://www.pearson-longman.com/>): Educational publisher of resources for all ages and abilities (nursery-post 16) across the curriculum.

- Mailing List for English Learners (<http://www.english-learner.com/maillist.html>): Members are offered free lessons every week.

- Oxford Seminars (<http://www.oxfordseminars.com/>): ESL teacher training certificate courses across North America.

- Pumpkin and Company (<http://www.pumpkinandcompany.com/>): Free learning and teaching resources for students, teachers, and parents. Free publication of teachers' own interactive activities.

- Study Business and Academic English (<http://www.ngberger.com/>): Courses, materials, and resources for students and teachers of academic and business English. The site requires RealAudio and RealVideo.

- TEFL.net (<http://www.tefl.net/>): Offers a jobs wanted and a teachers wanted section; sends job updates via e-mail; teacher training, handouts and resources, lesson plans, and a teacher's forum are included.

An important site for teaching English as a second language is *TESOL International* (http://www.tesol.org/s_tesol/index.asp). The site is sponsored by the Association and is arranged by Communities, News, Publications, Education, Issues, Career, and Convention. The organization posts the latest U.S. legislation dealing with issues affecting the teaching of English as a second language. Another organization that is interested in the topic is *International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language* (<http://www.iatefl.org/>). Its site is arranged by IATEFL, About, Membership, Events, and Other.

Comprehensive ESL lesson plan sites are California State University at Northridge *ESL Lesson Plans and Resources* (<http://www.csun.edu/~hcedu013/eslplans.html>); Rong Chang's *ESL Lesson Plans* (<http://www.rong-chang.com/lsnplan.htm>); About.com's *English Lesson Plans for ESL EFL Classes* (http://esl.about.com/od/englishlessonplans/English_Lesson_Plans_for_ESL_EFL_Classes.htm); and Ohio *ESL Lesson Plans* (<http://www.ohiou.edu/esl/teacher/plans.html>).

Individual ESL lesson plan sites include: TEFL *ESL Lesson Plans* (<http://www.tefl.net/esl-lesson-plans/>); TESL Journal *EFL/ESL Lessons and Lesson Plans* (<http://iteslj.org/Lessons/>); and Using English.com's *ESL Teacher Lesson Plans & Worksheets* (<http://www.usingenglish.com/lesson-plans.html>).

To help students brush up on their TOEFL skills, consult the following sites: Educational Testing Services *The TOEFL® Test—Test of English as a Foreign Language™* (www.ets.org/toefl/); ETS Europe (<http://www.toefl.eu/>); English Test (<http://www.english-test.net/toefl/>); 4 Tests (<http://www.4tests.com/exams/examdetail.asp?eid=57>); Test Wise *Free TOEFL Stuff* (<http://www.testwise.com/review.html>); and About.com's TOEFL Practice Study (http://esl.about.com/cs/toefl/a/a_toefl.htm).

These resources should serve as a starting point for educators to find jobs abroad teaching English and to be more effective in those positions. With the way the U.S. dollar is falling, now is a good time for teachers to earn more money abroad and for foreign students to come to the United States to practice their skills onsite. Remember that practice makes perfect, and patience is important to learning any new language, including English.

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