

# Inkshed Online Newsletter, January 2014

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## Introduction

This issue of the newsletter will confirm once again that Inkshed is a live organization—one that holds meetings and exchanges ideas about studying and teaching language and literacy in Canada.

The Call for Proposals for Inkshed's 30th annual conference, to be held in Waterloo, Ontario from May 27 to 29, 2014 has just been posted in the [Conferences](#) page of the Inkshed site. In preparation for the 2014 Annual General Meeting at that conference, this newsletter sets out the minutes of the 2013 AGM in Vancouver.

Theresa Hyland's article on [Multilingual Learners](#) is a worthy addition to the teaching-focused discussions that Inkshed has been sponsoring for 30 years. She grounds her discussion in a readable overview of theory and research about help-seeking behaviour, self-efficacy, and cultural capital, and then offers six practical teaching strategies for writing centres that would also work well in classrooms. Do you agree with her analysis? Have you used approaches that could be called "negotiated practice"? The Reply box at the end of the article invites you to send your comments for a little pre-conference inkshedding.

To round out the issue, Carl Leggo gives us **two** poems about the miracle of pre-linguistic communication between a child called Mirabelle and her grandfather. Carl has contributed witty and touching poems about language and literacy to Inkshed for many years, including **three** in the September 2013 newsletter.

**\*\* By the way, did you know there was a September 2013 newsletter?** It was created in the right month, but hoped-for contributions didn't arrive, so it was never declared finished. Besides Carl's three poems, the only other piece there is my report to the Inkshed AGM of June 2013, in which I complained that nobody ever sent anything to the newsletter.... Not quite true, obviously, but more evidence to the contrary would be welcome!

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## Minutes of CASLL AGM, 2013

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, INKSHED 29: VANCOUVER 2013

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE AND LEARNING

Present: Kathryn Alexander, Heather Graves, Roger Graves, Amanda Goldrick-Jones, Dana Landry, Brock MacDonald, Shurli Makmillen, Anne Parker, Katharine Patterson (chair), Michelle Reidlinger, Barbara Rose, Graham Shaw, Dena Taylor, Tatiana Teslenko, Diana Wegner (minutes)

1. Agenda approved (Amanda, Heather).
2. Minutes of 2012 meeting: Approved with no corrections (Dena, Barbara).
3. New board members: two new members were acclaimed for 3 year terms, Barbara Rose and Dena Taylor.
4. Treasurer's report: Brock provided a financial statement, noting that none of this year's expenses have gone through the budget yet. He estimated costs of this year's conference to be about \$3,000. A motion was passed to balance out the CASDW/CASLL arrangement for paying fees for online memberships, so that CASLL will pay a more proportionate cost (Brock, Roger). Katharine P. noted it would be useful to have a membership secretary separate from the treasurer who receives the conference fees. The sense of the meeting was that this should be put to the Board for a decision. A motion was passed that the Board create an ad hoc conference membership secretary position and recruit a local member on next year's conference planning committee (Dena, Anne).
5. Inkshed publications: Roger referred to the handout and invited submissions, noting the new category of "Studies" for manuscripts that are longer than an article, but shorter than a monograph. He noted that there are two streams of publication: pedagogy and research/theory. There was a discussion about alternatives to the current arrangement with Trafford, given the very limited balance in the publications budget (\$2267.99). Roger indicated that publishing costs included payment for a professional proofreader, formatting work, and possible small numbers of print copies. A motion was passed that Inkshed/CASLL transfer \$2500 to the Inkshed bank account (Roger, Brock) to cover these costs. Discussion also touched on the possibility of open access and the functions of the Inkshed newsletter (which could include short papers like the aboriginal bibliography that has been planned).
6. The 2013 Inkshed blog: There was a consensus that favoured the use of the blog during the conference, that it should be continued for now to keep the conversation going, but that at some point it should be shut down and archived. There was a suggestion that one option would be to then move it onto the newsletter blog site, which anyone can join.
7. Next Inkshed Conference: Brock University. Judy Jewinski and Heather Graves volunteered to do the local planning. They will coordinate the conference with CWCA and Congress. It was agreed to schedule it before CASDW. There was much discussion on

managing the timing of Inkshed around CASDW and CWCA. The consensus was that Inkshed should be timed so that members should have to pay for only one airfare.

8. Adjournment (Michelle). This was followed by an informal vote of thanks to the 2013 organizing committee

## **Multilingual Learners in the Writing Centre: Some Musings on Negotiated Practice**

**by Theresa Hyland, Huron University College**

Rhonda Friesen (2013) states that in order for educators to do their best for international students, they must negotiate the common ground between the “core mission of the institution and the values of enhancing the quality of education, research and academic service” as these values apply to international students. Administrators are beginning to realize that Writing Centres provide one of the most important areas “in the middle” to address differences and negotiate change within the institutional setting. The goals that multilingual learners have when they come to the Writing Centre, and the problems that their writing presents to writing tutors, may be different from the problems and goals of mainstream students. How those goals and problems are handled poses administrative as well as pedagogical challenges. Inoue (2013) asserts that “Most universities encourage and actively ‘celebrate diversity’ but do not know how—or are unwilling—to address difference” (p. 559).

In the Writing Centre, two specific differences that many of us have wrestled with regarding multilingual students are:

1. Many multilingual students refuse to come into the Writing Centre at all, but would prefer to adopt help-seeking strategies (such as plagiarism, asking a friend to help, or handing in inappropriate work) that will almost certainly cause them to obtain grades that don’t match their ability or effort.
2. When multilingual students come into the Writing Centre, they often want the tutors to edit their essays.

Second-language research has much to say on the subject of best practices for language learning, but this research is rarely explored in the Writing Centre milieu. This short piece will look at ways in which an understanding of the motivations and values that second language learners espouse can help us create an environment in the Writing Centre where negotiated learning can take place.

First, I will look at Williams and Takaku’s (2011) examination of the notion of adaptive/non-adaptive help-seeking behaviours, and ways students adapt their help-seeking behaviours either appropriately or inappropriately according to their sense of high self-efficacy or low self-efficacy. Students with high self-efficacy tend to adopt adaptive help-seeking strategies which are mastery-orientated, and linked to goal-orientation. Williams and Takaku assert that multilingual students tend to be high in self-efficacy, and base that notion on hard work. However, overestimation of self-efficacy may create non-adaptive help-seeking

tendencies in these students. Because multilingual students are goal-oriented, they are more likely to seek help and to do well on their assignments as a result of their adaptive help-seeking behaviours when they come to the Writing Centre, but are likely to want to control what they get out of that encounter.

Illieva's (2012) notions of cultural capital and cultural tool normalization explain the movement by multilingual students towards acculturation in terms of cultural tool normalization. Multilingual students adopt cultural tools to gain symbolic capital. Those cultural tools may be language based, or action based. The closer the perceived relationship between the cultural tool and the goal that the student has, the more motivated the student will be to master that cultural tool. Therefore, if we can get multilingual students to accept that the adoption of the cultural tools involved in writing successful academic essays can lead to enhanced future possibilities (e.g., getting the BA, getting a job in North America, or going on to do an MA), they will work hard at mastering that type of writing. However, mastery involves the normalization both of the process to master as well as the perception that this is the way all students behave in the academic environment.

Ibrahim's (1999) article asserts that students will only adopt language behaviours if these behaviours fulfil immediate personal needs. Ibrahim recounts the case study of North-African French-speaking immigrant high school students studying in a Detroit high school. Instead of identifying with the middle-class but white students who had both a life-style and academic aspirations that were close to their own and their families' values, they identified with the hip-hop African American students who were generally low-income, with little hope of succeeding at high school. Ibrahim concluded that the personal needs of the African students were to find a visual identity that they could relate to, rather than a values-based identity that was less obviously their own.

These three concepts have formed the basis for six ideas for best practices in the Writing Centre. When multilingual students with high self-efficacy come to the Writing Centre, they may try to control the consultation. They may overestimate their understanding of an assignment and underestimate their ability to state their ideas in academically correct grammar and sentence structure. Because they are mastery-oriented, they may wish to master individual assignments, and not look at the longer-term "teaching" done at the Writing Centre.

**Idea #1: Practice *negotiated resistance*.** I am sure most Writing Tutors try to focus the writing appointment not on those micrological errors that are the product of what Tony Silva calls "writing with an accent" but on those macrological skills that help students become good writers. However, this is often a hard sell, and may miss the mark in helping students understand mastery. A better approach might be to have the students work through the expectations of the professor for the paper (explicit, implicit and disciplinary). Thus, the tutor can help the students understand each paper as a problem of interpretation, to be analysed and then solved. Such an approach will respect their analytic skills and engage them in a process that local students are also engaged in. It has been my experience that students respect this approach as an acceptable key to understanding local practice. Of course, we can't ignore the individual weaknesses in grammar and sentence structure that these students' papers may

contain, but we can negotiate the amount of time we spend in the tutorial focusing on these competing issues.

Students see the cultural capital of getting a good mark, but not the cultural capital of writing well. So, how do we help students recognize that writing well is a tool with which to get cultural capital (i.e. cultural tool normalization)?

**Idea # 2: Employ senior multilingual students in the Writing Centre.** These students can help convince others that writing is a valuable cultural tool worth acquiring. How? (a) **Through demonstration:** Multilingual writing tutors are in themselves a demonstration of the value of good writing. The position of Writing Tutor has high cultural capital. (b) **Through word-of-mouth:** These tutors have already been convinced that “faking” good writing (through plagiarism, or through heavy paraphrasing of texts, or over-reliance on that accommodating Canadian friend) isn’t going to help them do well at the senior levels. Their work in the Writing Centre is mainly to help with the normalization of that cultural tool through the medium of the students’ own writing.

**Idea # 3: Work closely with professors.** I do this in two ways. (a) I hold “**Writing in the Disciplines Workshops.**” These workshops are hosted by different members of faculty in the Writing Centre where they talk about their own expectations of writing within their disciplines. The workshops demonstrate to students the value that professors place on good writing. Professors coming into the Writing Centre to give these workshops normalize the work that writing tutors do there. (b) I participate in “**customized workshops**” where I go into professors’ classes to discuss the writing associated with particular assignments. Two normalization processes take place. Multilingual students see that L1 students also need coaching on academic writing, so seeking help from the Writing Centre is “normalized.” If the professor remains in the classroom during the workshop, and the tutor maintains a dialogue with the professor during the workshop, all students will see that the ideas about writing that we express in the Writing Centre are sanctioned by their professors. Surveys that we have done with domestic students have shown that they tend to believe that professors help them with content writing, and we help them with grammar and sentence structure, but these are two very different modes of addressing their writing. We need to show them that these skills transfer from one environment to the other.

Multilingual students, particularly those who have recently come to Canada, need to re-examine and re-evaluate who they are and how they relate to society. The Writing Centre can help them validate themselves within the academic community and beyond it.

**Ideas # 4: Help them adjust to real-world tasks.** Encourage multilingual students to write for the local blog site, or on Twitter or Facebook sites that are directed at the university community. Studies have shown that multilingual students who participate in these non-academic writing practices will actually become more fluent in their academic writing. As a liminal space located outside of the classroom setting, the Writing Centre can take the lead in encouraging these types of writing. Also, address genres like the personal statement in the Writing Centre, as this type of writing will help multilingual students succeed in the world beyond the university.

**Idea # 5: Address their immediate needs.** Often multilingual students who are not familiar with the ethos of the Writing Centre drop in expecting “just-in-time” services. This may be due to students’ reluctance to use these services (so they put off coming until the last minute), or a simple unfamiliarity with the rigours of appointment-making. Whatever the reason, the rewards to the Writing tutors are manifold if they make every effort to accommodate these requests. The multilingual students will make a regular habit of booking appointments once they learn that this is necessary, and the progress that such students make is usually phenomenal.

**Idea # 6: Validate their personal identity.** Address weaknesses as differences. Plagiarism, inappropriate paraphrasing, and lack of citations are all very common elements of multilingual students’ writing. They are often due to a lack of appropriate rhetorical strategies, and/or cultural assumptions that make these practices seem reasonable. By addressing these weaknesses as differences, you expand their repertoire of appropriate practices and validate them as writers who have multiple modes of expression for multiple contexts.

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## Two Poems by Carl Leggo

### Many Ways to Write a Poem

I was going to spend  
 Monday writing a poem  
 but Mirabelle is ill  
 and her Papa alone  
 has a flexible schedule  
 so poetry will wait  
 while I wait on  
 my granddaughter  
 who needs her Papa  
 like a sturdy sonnet  
  
 and one day when  
 she reads this poem  
 I trust she will know  
 any poem I might write  
 could never satisfy  
 like this poem written  
 quickly in the gaps  
 of a few moments  
 while she slept fitfully  
 curled in my arms

### Mirabelle

you run to your Papa  
     leap into my arms  
         full of joy  
         for stories  
         because  
 you do not have  
 words   we read  
         the texts  
         scribbled between  
 letters   words   lines  
         songs of love  
 always   yearning

to learn  
one day  
you will call out  
Papa  
I hope  
I remember these days  
when you invited  
careful attention  
interpretation  
writing the unknown  
line collaboratively  
finding our way  
you breathe into me  
a sentence with  
no punctuation  
no capitalization  
we speak  
in cipher  
the body's language  
a wild imagining  
beyond  
deciphering