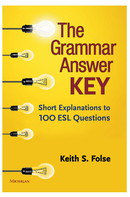
English Language Learning and Literacy Newsletter

October/November 2022

Upcoming Tutor Event



I am looking forward to our next tutor workshop, which will be a talk by Keith Folse. He is the author of several books for ELL teachers and students, including two of my favorite books about teaching grammar: *The Grammar Answer Key* and *Keys to Teaching Grammar to English Language Learners*. Here is the description of the event:

Our ESL learners cannot speak or write well without knowledge of a mastery of certain grammatical structures, such as sentence word order, verb tenses, articles, and prepositions. Sometimes native speakers think that being a native speaker automatically makes them ready to teach English grammar because they know English, but ESL grammar is not the same grammar that native speakers learn in school.

Adult learners ask a lot of questions, and 99.9% of native speakers have no idea. Not knowing is natural for any native speaker, but a teacher has to know. You cannot teach what you don't know. In this talk, we will look at five patterns of ESL grammar that cause problems for adult learners:

- **Negating a verb in English: HE IS changes to HE IS NOT; HE WORKS changes to HE DOES NOT WORK. Why do we need DOES in the second but not the first?**
- **The article THE with country names: We say THE U.K but not THE MEXICO or THE SOUTH AFRICA. Why is the first correct but the other two wrong?**
- **Prepositions of time: Students confuse AT, ON, and IN. Which is correct: IN MONDAY or ON MONDAY? IN JUNE or ON JUNE? IN JUNE 8th or ON JUNE 8th? Why?**
- **3 ways of pronouncing -ED for past tense: Why is the –ED in ADDED, WISHED, and PLAYED pronounced in 3 different ways? How do I know when –ED will sound like /t/, as in WISHED and KISSED?**
- **Verb tenses: There are 12 verb tenses, 2 modal forms, and 1 imperative form, for a total of 15 ways to decorate a main verb in English. How do you teach all of these? Do you teach all of these? Which are more common and maybe more useful?**

The event will take place on Tuesday, November 15, at 6:30 PM on Zoom. You can sign up here.

Support the ELL Program!

The library's annual Spring Fling – this year rescheduled to September – raised important funds to support the ELL program. The money will help pay for future guest speakers, new curriculum materials, access to digital resources, and more. However, more support is always welcome, and it is still possible to donate. You can do so here. A big thank you to those who have already donated!

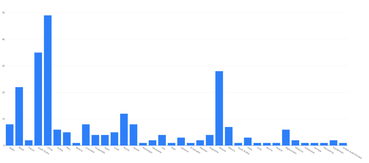
(Above left: Janet and her student, Yuan Yuan. Above right: Dalit and her tutor, Beth.)

Picture Dictionaries

Those of you who have attended my training workshops know that I am a fan of picture dictionaries. In a picture dictionary, each word is explained not with a definition, but with a picture. These dictionaries typically cover many basic topics, such as food, clothing, transportation, health, and jobs. They also contain mini dialogues and conversation questions about each topic and have accompanying workbooks. They are especially useful for beginners, but intermediate students can benefit from them as well, and even advanced learners can discover new words in them.

Three of the most popular picture dictionaries are the *Oxford Picture Dictionary, Word by Word*, and the *Heinle Picture Dictionary*, all of which are in the ELL collection. Some are English-only; there are also bilingual editions, giving a translation of each word, in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Russian, Vietnamese, Arabic, Haitian Creole, and Urdu. I hope you and your learner take a look!

Demand for Tutors



Due to the increasing pace of applications to our tutoring program – 244 in the first nine months of this year – the library administration and I decided to put a pause on new student applications at the end of September. This will give me time to reduce the size of the waiting list. Interested students can fill out this form to be contacted when we are accepting applications again, and they are welcome to participate in our classes and conversation groups in the meantime. Over 50 students have filled out the contact form in the past month. Clearly the demand for English tutors is still very high!

The students who applied this year represent 36 countries. Over half come from the top four countries: China, South Korea, Ukraine, and Brazil. Those are followed by Russia, Taiwan, Colombia, and Japan.

Program News

- If you are interested in watching the recording of the recent tutor workshop about language learning or the June workshop about teaching vocabulary, please contact me for the link.
- The next information session for prospective tutors will take place on Tuesday, November 15, at 2:00 PM on Zoom. Training workshops will take place on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons in November and December. Please spread the word!
- I am still collecting photos of tutors and learners, like the ones above! Please let me know if you are interested in participating in this project.

Until next time,
Andrew

Andrew Shapira
ELL and Literacy Coordinator
Newton Free Library
330 Homer Street
Newton, MA 02459
617-796-1364
newtonfreelibrary.net/ell