

## A New Country – A New Language

When I accepted the challenge of writing “Tips” in our newsletter, I wasn’t quite sure how to approach the article. I have read many thoughtful articles in the TCLL Bulletin, telling a number of different ways tutors and students experience their teaching and learning together. I thought, “What story have we to relate that would be a “light” (hopefully) for others?”

As I thought about this, I realized each of us has a different story to tell, as each student brings a different story in their experience, knowledge, and requirements for learning.

We have been co-tutors for our students, my wife tutoring math, and I reading, for those students needing help in both subjects.

This year, we have our first couple who speak little English, having come to our country less than a year ago. Teaching them has been more joy than challenge, as they are intent on learning the language and knowledge about their new home. We, in turn, are excited to help them with a smooth transition to our language and culture. It has been fun!

We sit at the table together, and as we go through the lesson, my wife teaches the wife and I the husband. In this way, each student receives individual attention with pronunciation, meaning and context. Since my wife and I take turns teaching each student, the students hear the lesson and the word pronunciation twice.

The lessons are illustrated with pictures, so that the students can readily see the meaning as they read each sentence. We practice printing upper and lower case letters, the words we have been working with, and ask the student to say the word for more practice in speaking.

We introduce two new words each week, and at each lesson we review all the words they have been introduced to since the beginning of their classes. These words are recorded on 3x5 flashcards, which we prepare before the lesson.

In addition, we introduce a new Word Family with words ending in –ab, -ack, etc. each week for the students to study while at home, along with their workbook homework for the next class meeting. They are enthusiastic about their lessons, and work very hard!

There are times we are unable to explain instructions, primarily having to do with scheduling or other non-study related subjects. We are very fortunate to have a person from their country who volunteers to be an interpreter for our students. Our students will often call her when the question arises in class, and relate their dilemma, and one of us also speaks with the interpreter to relay what we are trying to explain to our student. She is a wonderful helper to all of us.

We have learned that much of the difficulty in pronouncing some or many words of another language derives from the fact that the pronunciation of words in our native language requires different use of the muscles we use in speech. The muscles are accustomed to pronouncing vowels and consonants differently than we pronounce the word in English. At least, this appears to be much of the problem. Only by hearing the “correct” English

pronunciation and repetition of the word over time may the student master the pronunciation we are accustomed to hearing.

Arriving at the correct pronunciation is also affected by how fast the student reads their lesson out loud. The faster they read, the further they will stray from pronunciation as it should sound, so we emphasize that reading be done slowly to concentrate on pronouncing the words correctly.

The hour flies by much too quickly, for they both work, and must keep to a firm schedule. We cover a lot of ground in that hour, and look forward to seeing our students moving ahead in their understanding and use of English.

Wayne and Kathleen Knipping