

# ELRC Notes

Volume 21, Number 1

Bergen Community College

November 2017

*"In a second language, . . . a workshop can liberate the students' use of the vocabulary they're acquiring. Marilyn Hacker, American Poet, from: Brainy Quote*

## Building Vocabulary

How much vocabulary do students need to succeed in college classes? As we know, it is a lot. Students who are studying English have the tremendous task of tackling an enormous quantity of words. Fortunately, tutoring can help. In every one-to-one or group session in the ELRC, building vocabulary is integrated into every interaction between tutors and students. Whether in writing, as they work with tutees to elicit different words or phrases to explain what students are trying to write, explaining alternate terms to express their meaning, or finding alternatives using an online thesaurus, vocabulary is a major part of the discussion. In reading, for example, a tutor will have a student read a short article and then

ask about the vocabulary getting the tutee to try to explain the terms while the tutor adds information as needed. In conversation, also, tutors and volunteers introduce students to new words. Even in grammar, as students practice answering questions, understanding the vocabulary is essential.

Building vocabulary is natural in tutoring, and while there are no real shortcuts, several strategies can help. Some tutors use pictures or draw on the whiteboards. They give a definition and then use the context of an example or a story to clarify the meaning of a word. Collocations, or words that are used together, can also help with comprehension. Tutors may ask stu-

dents to use the words in their own sentences. Some tutors like to use prefixes, suffixes, and the roots of words to put meanings together. Finally, dictionaries and online sources can supply meanings, examples, and related words. Strategies vary depending on the tutee and the situation, but generally, a combination of approaches works best.



## Tutors' Strategies

Zohreh Koupaie, Professional Tutor - In the tutoring session, we can relate the word to one that the students already knows, explain it in English, translate it if necessary, and explain it again.

Maryam Almuttaleb, Peer Tutor - Sometimes a definition is not enough, so giving examples also helps.

Samia Habashee, Professional Tutor - I use the online dictionary so students can hear the words and see the sentences using those words. I keep repeating the words and memorizing them with my tutees.

Claudine Belford, Peer Tutor - A student brought a cloze exercise, so I showed her how to use context clues to figure out the correct words.



Erin Kim, Peer Tutor - Music is good because of the repetition. Beyonce in particular uses the present perfect, conditional, and a lot of good vocabulary, ex: "If I were a boy."

## Independent Learners

While working with tutors is very helpful, the goal of tutoring is helping students become independent learners. To do that, tutors also try to guide students to develop study strategies for themselves, helping them discover the best methods that they can use to build their vocabulary so that ultimately students can practice on their own.

Teesh (Badjo Agre), Peer Tutor - For more practice, I like to tell students to watch movies for listening, vocabulary, and pronunciation. They should watch the same movie several times with and without subtitles if they are not bored with it. I also encourage my tutees to practice on the Internet and borrow the easy reading books.

## Meet Our New Peer Tutors

### Erin Kim

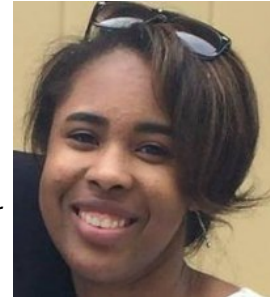
Hello! My Name is Erin Kim, and I am a nursing program student and English tutor in the ELRC. I am from Korea, and my previous job in Korea was an English teacher. Nursing is a new major that I am going for, yet it is very different from what I studied before, which were history and education. What I am looking forward to achieving through nursing is being a nursing educator. I want to be a professor in the nursing field, and also hope that I can participate in a medical outreach program for people who are in need of help. If I can be an experienced professor and share my experience with future students at Bergen, that would be awesome!



I love meeting and talking to new people. It is my biggest pleasure to be able to give some help to other students and fellows. If your students have any problem with learning English or questions about getting into nursing program, I think I can be a person to talk to about it. I have met many people from various cultures and backgrounds and anticipate even more as I work in ELRC.

### London Dixon

Hello, my name is London. I'm from New Jersey. This is my third semester at BCC. I am majoring in General Studies, but I love studying languages and would like to go on to major in Linguistics at a four year college. I am also a member of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society.



I have always enjoyed learning about different cultures and being a tutor in the ELRC allows me to interact with people from different countries. Initially, I had planned on joining the ELRC Intercultural Conversation Partners but decided to become a tutor instead. I particularly like being able to help others with their work. I would eventually like to go into linguistic research or teach English abroad. If possible, I will do both, but I believe that my experience as an ELRC tutor will help me no matter what I do.

*It is my biggest pleasure that I am able to help other students.*

## Using a Dictionary for New Vocabulary

By Jessica Delarosa  
Professional Tutor

It is important for all ESL students to build their vocabulary. This will improve their writing, reading, and speaking skills. When the ALP students come to the English Language Resource Center (ELRC) for tutoring, they often need help understanding new vocabulary words. It is important for tutors in the ELRC to teach the students how to independently use a dictionary (preferably a Longman or other ESL dictionary) to learn all of the important aspects of each new vocabulary word.

Many of the lower level ALP students do not know exactly how to use

a dictionary quickly and how to get all the necessary information from each vocabulary entry. They might need help finding all of this information. As an ELRC tutor, when teaching new vocabulary words to students, I use the Longman dictionary to show students all of the following about each new vocabulary word:

1. The part of speech of the new word  
If a student does not know the part of speech of a new word, he or she might not use the word correctly in a sentence.
2. The definition of the new word.  
There may be more than one definition of the word. The student might also

need help understanding the definitions. The Longman dictionary is specifically for ESL students, so the definitions are usually simpler and easier for them to understand.

3. How the word is pronounced. I show the students the pronunciation symbols used to pronounce the word. The Longman dictionary uses International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols.

4. How to use the new word in a sentence. I give the student one or two example sentences with the new word. A Longman dictionary will usually show a good simple example sentence after the definition.

## Doğuhan Karahan

Hello! My name is Doğuhan. I was born in New Jersey, and I am 18 years old. At the moment, I'm enrolled in my first semester at Bergen Community College and majoring in psychology. I decided to become a tutor in the ELRC because I have always been interested in being in a multicultural environment, and my interest is teaching English.



Visiting all my relatives back in Turkey brought me to the realization that English was daunting and seemingly impossible for many, which led me to dedicate my time to help students overcome the language barrier. Furthermore, being a tutor also allows me to learn more about cultures and traditions that are much different from my own! Tutoring isn't the only thing I like to do. My hobbies include studying languages, creating art and music, and hanging out with my friends.

## Maryam Almuttaleb

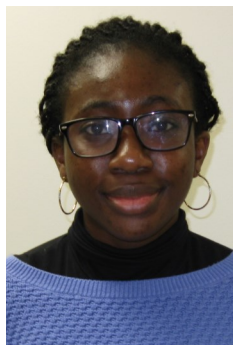
My name is Maryam. I came to the United States four years ago. Coming to the U.S. is an opportunity that I can never be thankful enough for. Even though difficulties and obstacles are always present, safety, freedom, and education are irreplaceable. From the bottom of my heart, I appreciate this country and the great opportunities that were offered to me throughout my journey here.



One of those opportunities is working at the ELRC. This has changed my life in so many great ways. Yes, I am a tutor, but I have learned something new from every student of mine. I have learned how to respect people's backgrounds and circumstances, and to appreciate their perseverance. I have learned that we are all similar; we all look for improvement, change, and most importantly, happiness. I have also learned that teaching is my passion. I constantly try to find new ways to make the process of learning a new language easier. It's nice to wake up in the morning knowing that you have a purpose to fulfill. Knowing that I have taught someone something new gives me the satisfaction, the confidence, and the urge to continue tutoring at the ELRC and hopefully teaching in the future.

## Teesh Agre

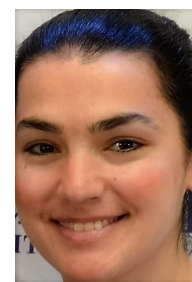
My name is Teesh, and I am an International student from Ivory Coast in West Africa. I have been tutoring at the ELRC for almost a year now. Being a tutor here is one of the most wonderful experiences, particularly when you have learned English as a second language yourself. It makes it even easier to understand the frustration and difficulties of those who come here for help.



I am majoring in accounting so I can become a CPA. I am also deeply interested in finance and auditing. I hope to have a double major in order to achieve my future goals. I am planning to go back to my country in order to participate in its development and create my own successful business. I have been in the USA for almost two years now, and I love Bergen Community College because it has provided me with so many great opportunities. Working at the ELRC is a great experience for me because I have learned a lot from each of the students coming here.

## Gulcan Polat

Hello, my name is Gulcan. I am from Turkey, and I have been in the United States for four years. I am majoring in education. After earning my associate's degree here, I plan to transfer to a four-year college to get my bachelor's degree.



English is my second language, and I took two semester of ALP classes when I started at BCC. I feel very honored to be a member of the PTK Honor Society. Also, working as a tutor in the ELRC has been an amazing experience for me because I have met many people from different cultures and backgrounds. I am interested in learning foreign languages and different cultures. I love helping people, and I enjoy learning new things from my tutees.

## Making Vocabulary Memorable

By Dale L. Egan, ELRC Assistant Supervisor

There are so many words in the English language. Dictionaries will give definitions for words, but those definitions can be easy to forget. There are several methods that I use to help students remember vocabulary better.

One method is acting it out. For instance, for the most common meaning of the word **cut**, I make a scissors motion with my fingers.

Second, pictures are very useful for simple or more complex ideas such as **cozy** and **spacious**, or even for some idioms. This is a good one to explain the idiom **haste makes waste**:



Another method is to use objects. For instance, I use an item that I have with me. One of my favorites for the word **bargain** is my leather jacket which I bought at a garage sale for \$5. If it's raining heavily, I can use that as an example of **raining cats and dogs**. The students just have to look out a window to see the idiom in action. They can also hear it even if there is no window.

Fourth, I like to tell stories. For **distracted driving**, I tell the story about a college classmate with whom I was carpooling. He got us into a car accident because the pen in his pocket was poking him, but he wouldn't stop and pull over to take it out. As a result, he hit a telephone pole. Fortunately, we weren't injured, but he totaled his car and we both ended up missing class.

In conclusion, I find that all of these methods are great ways to make vocabulary come alive.

## Quizlet - Academic Word List Exercises

Quizlet is an app that can work anywhere on any device. Its primary function is vocabulary practice. Anyone can post quizzes for free as long as their use is not restricted.

The quizzes are searchable by topic. A great find for vocabulary is quizzes from the academic word list. Word and definition practice can be useful, and the app makes it fun with seven types of exercises: learn, flashcards, write, spell, test, match, and a game: gravity.

Students may also listen to the words and definitions. The computer sound is generally accurate.

Some options do not work with every list, but learn, flashcards, and matching always do, so it is good practice.

<https://quizlet.com/subject/academic-word-list/>

reinforce

to make a situation, process, or type of behaviour stronger and more likely to continue



## ELRC Schedule Fall 2017

Monday through Thursday

9:30 - 6:30

Friday 9:30 - 3:00

## Workshops

with

**Professor Carmona**

**Reading & Vocabulary**

Tuesdays at 12:30 PM

**Grammar Q & A**

Wednesdays at 12:30 PM

with

**Professor Jack Styles**

**Conversation & More**

Wednesdays & Fridays at 11:00 AM

## Group Tutoring Sessions

For Grammar and for Conversation

Monday through Friday

Between 11:00 AM & 3:00 PM

Full schedule is in C212

Students in grammar, speech, or reading  
can also sign up together for  
small group appointments

## Intercultural Conversation Partners (ICP)

30 minute sessions with native speakers  
from the

Intercultural Communication course

Tuesday through Thursday

Between 10:00 AM & 3:00 PM

Students can sign-up in C212

Bergen Community College  
**English Language Resource Center C-212**

Telephone: 201-612-5292

Supervisor: Marilyn Pongracz

Assistant Supervisor: Dale Egan

Faculty Liaison: Prof. Leah Carmona

Managing Director of Learning Assistance  
Services : Khairia Fazal