

April E-News from Elizabeth Claire:

Hello Friends, and welcome to New Readers!

(I hope you have been enjoying these emails, but in case you are too busy for us, you can unsubscribe at any time. Click here: <http://elizabethclaire.us1.list-manage.com/unsubscribe?u=c65c6ca9b67d5cf8db2ae20a4&id=4264841f87&e=&c=22333c7c37>

Customers ask us: "Will there be a price increase for the next school year?"

Yes, there will be a modest price increase for the 2010-2011 school year.

But the Good News is: *You can avoid the price increase!* Just order for next year by June 30, 2010. Prices now at our website for all newspaper and book orders are valid until then. Next year, there will be additional online support for **Easy English NEWS** such as more quizzes, activities, and word searches that you can download and print for your classes. We'll eventually have audio support on our website, and students will be able to hear some of the content *read to them* at a language-learner friendly pace.

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Language learning insights, resources, and scams

Last month I wrote about my own delving into learning Arabic with *Rosetta Stone*, partly to see what difficulties the language presents, especially to an "older" brain.

I write about this adventure again, because there are parallels and insights for ESL teachers. Extract what is useful for you from the stories below.

I wanted to explore the resources that ESL teachers can recommend to newcomers who for one reason or another (and there are many) that they can't come to classes. There are many resources on the Internet.

But let me not go further without telling you of one of many online deceptive selling scams that language learners may find themselves victims of...I fell for it!

I was losing my motivation to return to lessons on *Rosetta Stone*. I didn't know when I'd ever use sentences such as "Two boys are standing on the table. One girl is sitting on the ground."

followed by "One girl is sitting on the ground and three boys are standing on the table." I knew I was learning useful vocabulary such as *sit*, *stand*, and *on*, and something about dual and plural verb endings and gender switches, but something inside me was saying, "So what?"

I googled, "Arabic lessons" and up came a paid ad for "Learn to Speak Arabic in 10 Days" at Pimsleur.com. I clicked on the ad and read the description of the program: "\$9.95 special offer: Natural, conversational Arabic, taught the way a person learned their first language, with conversation, meaningful dialog, no boredom, and guaranteed; learn while you drive." so boasted the ad.

Sounded good, so I ordered it. Then, having a nagging feeling (that I should have had before clicking the *send* button) I googled "Pimsleur complaints."

Ah, *there* was the catch! Pages and pages of disgruntled customers who said that, by purchasing a CD for \$9.95 from Pimsleur.com they had been "upgraded" to the Comprehensive Program" and started receiving monthly credit card charges of \$59. The complainers said there was no way to get Pimsleur.com to stop charging their cards, and no success from telephone requests.

I looked at the receipt I had printed out, and no where on the receipt did it say I had signed up for further lessons...Of course I know that a person can't learn to speak Arabic in 10 days, so further lessons would be a natural...if I liked their method then I would be glad to order extended lessons.

I called the customer service number available at the website, and was pleased to connect easily and quickly to a salesperson. I asked whether additional CDs for the Arabic course were going to be sent to me and if my credit card would continue to be billed each month. The salesperson said yes, that would happen if I had checked a box on the order form indicating that I wanted to enroll in their comprehensive program.

But I had done no such thing, and had not seen any such box. I asked the salesman to cancel that part of my order, as I just wanted the \$9.95 lesson in their "special offer."

I returned to their site and looked at the order form again. And there it was..., which I located only by scrolling down, and printed in gray on gray, *with a box already checked*, that by buying the \$9.95 CD, one agreed to enroll in their Free membership plan, and to receive "a new course once every 60 days. For each course you keep we'll bill you in four monthly payments of \$59." \$59 per month x 4 months x the number of "courses" can add up to a surprising amount of money.

So, there are four things your students can do after falling for this form of aggressive selling. They should listen to the first CD that comes and decide if the method is useful for them. *If not*, send the package back, ask for a refund and ask them to stop sending further lessons. 2. Call the number at the website, speak to a representative, and give information required to cancel further shipments. 3. Do not open further deliveries. Mark the packages "REFUSED" and mail them back. Once opened you can't get the Post Office to take them back without putting new postage on it.) 4. If they are billed on their credit card, they can call their credit card company to let them know they have refused delivery, do not want the item, and please remove the charges off their bill. This will put the items "in dispute" and the credit card company will confirm that with the seller.

If students have a desire to try the Pimsleur method, they can hear a sample, with instructions in their own language (50 languages available) at Simon and Schuster's website: www.simonandschuster.com. The comprehensive program for English for Spanish speakers or any other speakers is \$345 per level. There are three levels. This method *may* appeal to many students, but they are better off ordering it from the publisher or at a discount from Amazon.com or buy used copies of it on E-Bay if their language version is available.

In spite of having overlooked the small print, I did look forward to receiving the CD that had promised so much.

I found the Pimsleur method reminiscent of the outmoded translation methods of the pre 1960s, with a few redeeming features...but for my older brain, many disadvantages. The content was useful and in a conversational format, with spaced repetition of vocabulary presented. It was content I knew I needed: greetings, getting acquainted, asking for things, ordering in a restaurant, etc. It presented the language at a natural speed. At first, I liked the explanations in English so I didn't have to cross reference a text book, especially while doing household chores as I listened.

The drawback for me was the impossibility of producing the sounds based on listening to the model utter a phrase just twice on the CD...I don't distinguish all the sounds in a foreign language through my ears; I have to see someone's mouth, as well as maybe read a text to verify the sounds I am hearing. A student misses a lot in a pure auditory presentation. A second negative for me was that I need to hear a phrase many times before I can distinguish the sounds and have the confidence to repeat it. I also wanted to hear the conversation delivered much more slowly, several times by the instructor before he spoke it at normal speed.

The third drawback of the Pimsleur CD was that the responses requested of the learner (repeat a long sentence, remember vocabulary, answer questions in Arabic, and translate from English to Arabic) were not doable with only one listening. There was no book, so when starting a lesson over, you have to listen to the overload of instructions in English, which wastes time. The fourth drawback was that it really wasn't doable while driving, as it had advertised. Coming up with translations was as distracting to me as talking on a cell phone might be.

If interested in the Pimsleur method, students can buy the program through the publisher Simon and Schuster or other vendors without signing up for monthly shipments. After two lessons, I felt an aversion to Pimsleur and missed Rosetta Stone with its greater patience, and never-ending capability to repeat, repeat, repeat.

I am definitely a fan of "whole language" learning (and teaching, as in my now classic teacher resource, *ESL Teacher's Activities Kit* and ESL novel, *The New Boy is Lost* and finally, the Arabic movies I had ordered online arrived. I have watched the first one six times so far...it's a charming romantic comedy/farce with English subtitles, and now I leave it on in the background to listen to while I cook, wash dishes, nap, etc.

Repeated listenings serve to "slow down" the apparent speed of the conversations, so the words are more distinguishable. A farce typically has conversations with great vocal variety, shouting, and emotional outbursts. This heightened emphasis is great for retention, and contain practical content. For example, the English subtitles tell me the screaming woman running toward the camera in one scene means *this*:

"Help, somebody help me! My husband is going to kill me!"

"You cheated on me with the janitor while I was sleeping, you slut!"

"No, I never did that. I love you. Don't shoot! Don't shoot!"

If inclined, I can replay this scene enough times until I can repeat the Arabic conversation. The important thing is that I find this a lot of FUN! I do not expect to grow weary of it. I will get many weeks of lessons from my investment of \$19.95.

I have often recommended this strategy to teachers and students of English. Purchase one or more good classic movies, and the screenplays that go with them. Choose one short scene at a time, and work with it until it is familiar and understandable.

My favorite in this regard is *The Wizard of Oz* for many reasons: Students have probably seen this before in their own language. The story is a world-wide classic. The words are emotionally charged, and useful. The songs are memorable and enhance the learning. Many phrases from this movie have entered our language; references to *The Wizard of Oz* are common. ("We're not in Kansas anymore, Toto.") The story theme is uplifting; few people tire of the movie...there is no foul language, frontal nudity, or objectionable behavior...and the screenplay was written to conform to the movie...Subtitles or closed captions are great, but they don't allow you to carry the language around with you to find words in the dictionary to supplement understanding. About \$15 at Amazon; cheaper if bought used.

Website Special: Birthday bargains!

No, April is not any big Presidents' birthday, or Martin Luther King, Jr's birthday...it's *my* own birthday. I can't get it onto official calendars, or the New York Times, but I can celebrate like an April Fool! What better way for me to celebrate the beginning of a new year than by giving gifts to my dear readers and faithful teachers? Ready?

Get \$20 off *any* purchase of \$100 or more, from March 18 to April 18.

Wasn't that easy?

To get my birthday gift to you, click here: <http://www.elizabethclaire.com>

Preview: *Easy English NEWS* for April 2010

- April's timely feature article is "**Is it getting hotter?**" Our Earth Month issue focuses on the controversies raging over global warming and the accusations of fraud by skeptics. I spent months on the research for this. How complex it is!
- Life in the U.S.A. **Food Safety**-- Safe handling of perishable foods, and tips to prevent food poisoning.
- **Events in April covered in *Easy English NEWS* are:**
 - April Fools' Day
 - Easter
 - Tax deadline
 - Patriots' Day
 - Earth Day
 - Administrative Professionals' Day
 - Arbor Day

Ask Elizabeth explains who *should* and who *must* file income tax returns; and how to apply for a filing extension for more time.

Your Health: Dr. Majid Ali "Let's move those muscles!" Which muscle movements burn sugar and which burn fat?

Heroes and History: Ellis Island, National Monument and Immigration Museum

Ask a Speech Coach, Gene Zerna, is back with tips on distinguishing /l/ and /r/ sounds, so important to many Asian speakers.

Plus our regular features: ***This Is Your Page*** (readers' stories), ***Funny Stuff, Idioms, the Crossword Puzzle, Let's Talk about It,*** and ***Word Help.***

The larger your class, the less ***Easy English NEWS*** costs per student! Yes, you can still start your subscription with April.

Reminder: prices increase starting July 1, 2010. Take advantage of this year's prices by ordering now, or at least before June 30, 2010.

Click here to learn more about Easy English NEWS: <http://www.elizabethclaire.com/een/eenmain.html>

Did you miss our previous E-News? They are archived for your convenience at our website. Click here: <http://www.elizabethclaire.com/e-news.html>.

Subscribers to our 12-page monthly newspaper, ***Easy English NEWS*** receive a monthly teacher's guide with background information on the stories and three reproducible quizzes.

Click here for this month's Teacher's Guide:
<http://www.elizabethclaire.com/een/teacherspages.html>

Also available free at the website is a printable

24-page HOW TO Use Easy English NEWS in your ESL Classroom.

This is a comprehensive guide, showing techniques to use with beginning students, intermediate, and advanced, and with 10 reproducible, generic student activity sheets including self evaluations that you can use each month. Click here for the HOW TO:

<http://www.elizabethclaire.com/een/eenmain.html>

Your comments are most welcome. Send a message to ESL@elizabethclaire.com.

Hoping your April showers don't flood you out! May flowers will soon show up.

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