BC TEAL

Fall 2015

THE ASSOCIATION OF B.C. TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

Professional Development

BC TEAL Board of Directors

BC TEAL Newsletter Committee

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Contributors: We welcome articles of general interest to associated members. All material is submitted to the editorial board before being approved for publication.

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Letter from the President

Dear BC TEAL members,

At the 2015 Annual BC TEAL Conference, held earlier this year at the lovely UBC Vancouver campus, I had the pleasure of sitting on a panel presentation entitled "Leaping into Leadership." My part of the presentation was to share how you can take on a leadership role within your professional association, specifically BC TEAL. To answer this question, I was led to contemplate BC TEAL's mission statement, as it's a reasonable assumption that if you're going to become involved with an organization you understand it's mission and can support it. While I do wholly support BC TEAL's mission statement, I actually find it to be a series of statements that aren't easily digestible. So, I decided to make a word cloud and found that visually represented, it is so much clearer that really, BC TEAL's mission is all about professional development.

BC TEAL's mission statement can be found online at http://www.bcteal.org/about/mission-statement

Here's the word cloud:

I framed my talk with my desire to work with teachers who sometimes embrace a self-deprecating "I'm just an ESL teacher" to move toward a sense of "I'm a professional" and hopefully to "I belong to a professional community" and then finally to "I contribute to my professional community." I honestly feel that such participation and contributions are done via professional development, and that through professional development, not only do individuals become more engaged in their chosen field, but that the profession can grow as a result of the collaborative creation of professionalism.

Indeed, I was very proud of BC TEAL when the membership passed a special resolution on "The importance and need for professional development" at the 2014 AGM. I encourage everyone to read the resolution in full, but below is the final paragraph:

> BC TEAL's position is that all schools, regardless of the size or sector (for-profit, pubic, and not-for-profit) should provide regular professional development support for their instructors. It is also BC TEAL's position that all TEAL professionals need to regularly participate in professional development opportunities.

The special resolution can be found on the website at https://www.bcteal.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/AGM-PAAC-PD-resolution-2014-passed.pdf

In that vein, I do encourage you to participate in the many upcoming PD events that the BC TEAL PD committee is planning over the next year. And while I hope you have institutional PD funds to help you out, I encourage you to take advantage of the many cost free avenues to PD that are available to EAL instructors…, such as reading the many great articles contained here in this issue of the BC TEAL Newsletter.

Congratulations to our new editor Scott Douglas on compiling this edition of the BC TEAL Newsletter centred on the theme of Professional Development. Each article in this issue tells a story of professional development, and hopefully will inspire you to enhance your own professional practice.

Sincerely,

Shawna Williams

Shawna Williams
President, BC TEAL

Letter from the Editor

Dear BC TEAL Members,

When I think of professional development, I think of the events and the many friends and colleagues that I have met over the years. Not only have these experiences and encounters enriched my teaching practice, but they have been a boon to who I have become as a person. I've been to Friday afternoon staff meetings with greasy pizza and Cuisenaire rods, fumbled nervously through presentations on blogging, shouted out tongue twisters through a kazoo, challenged my understanding of Canadian culture, problematized white privilege, attended Saturday night lesson plan swaps, experienced moments of sheer revelation, puzzled over different versions of BICS and CALP, hurt my thumb live tweeting, and cried over shared stories of triumph and disaster. All these professional development activities and more were ostensibly for my teaching practice, but I got so much more out of them. As I connected with other teachers, a little bit of their life experiences became part of me, and perhaps a little bit of me rubbed off on them.

It is this theme of professional development that we take up in the fall issue of the BC TEAL Newsletter. In our feature article, Li-Shih Huang discusses the energizing power of professional growth and how we can plan for professional development, understand our hopes for this endeavour, and sustain the momentum. Next, Edward Pye has a new twist on a classic classroom activity ideal for students and teachers getting to know each other. Picking up on the theme of learning about each other, Gregory Moskos reflects on what has drawn him and sustained him in the teaching profession. Turning overseas, Matthew Michaud tells us of his experiences of teaching in Japan with valuable information for our members considering the move abroad.

Part of BC TEAL's commitment to professional development is the numerous awards scholarships and bursaries that the TEAL Charitable Foundation (TCF) supports. Jennifer Pearson Terell gives us an update on the Tears to Smiles fundraiser, followed by reports from Mary Ashworth Scholarship, BC TEAL/TESOL Bursary, Pat Wakefield Scholarship, and AIDS & Health Education Fund winners.

Finally, we have a pair of articles from a TESOL Certificate Instructor and a TESOL Certificate Graduate. Nathan Hall leads with our Wired Teacher Column, and Hiba El-Najjar fittingly closes our issue with a reflection on her time as a TESOL Certificate student and her readiness for the challenges of the classroom.

Sincerely,

Scott Roy Douglas

Editor, BC TEAL Newsletter

Professional Self-Development for Teachers:
Have a Plan, a Clear Intent, and a Way to Sustain

by Li-Shih Huang, PhD

"The best professional development is participatory and connectivist." -- Lee Bessette

The invitation to contribute a piece about professional development in this issue could not have been more opportune. Since taking the position of an elected director of professional development for TESL Canada this July, I have noticed I am looking at the professional development of teachers with renewed interest and a different perspective. In my own work as an ELT professional on the one hand, and as a trainer of future ELT professionals on the other, my approach to professional development has been mainly through connecting at professional gatherings with like-minded researchers and practitioners who also have a strong interest in linking research to practice; engaging in practitioner research; attending webinars and conducting workshops; and devoting a portion of my writing to practitioners' interests. But what about the majority of ELT professionals, who work in various institutions, schools, and cultural contexts where resources and opportunities might pose greater challenges for development?

For any ELT professional interested in professional development, a quick Google search of terms like "teacher training," "teacher education," "teacher development," "(continued) professional development," and "professional self-development," to list just a few, will turn up an overwhelming number of articles and resources and amount of information on professional development, both within the context of ELT and in the broader field of education. Recent articles, such as "Do-It-Yourself ELT Professional Development" (from TESOL Connections' special issue dedicated to professional development), "3 Ways for Teachers to Use Social Networks for PD," and "3 More Ideas for PD on Social Networks," have appeared just in July of this year alone. The 2012 handbook put together by the British Council, although situated in the U.K. context, contains applicable ideas about a wide range of continuing professional development activities, including conferences, groups, magazines, materials, membership, mentoring, observations, reflection, training, workshops, and so on. Also, not a day goes by without mention on Twitter or Facebook of free or at-cost webinars, face-to-face workshops, or courses offered locally or across the globe. These sharings of highly practical tips about ways for practitioners to engage in professional self-development further highlight the need and importance of this aspect of our professional careers, no matter our career stage. Using social media such as Twitter, Google Hangouts, Facebook, webblogs, and the like to build PLNs (personal/professional/personalized learning networks), hold regular chats (common hashtags include #AusELT, #KELTChat, #ELTChat, #ELLChat) moderated and participated in by practitioners, and create teacher inquiry groups has also become a great means for practitioners to connect professionally in ways that transcend time and geographical boundaries.

Take one of the most commonly chosen PD activities—attending a free webinar. If you have attended one of these webinars in the last six months, let's sit back a moment and take stock of what you have been doing PD-wise. Ask: To what extent did the content have an impact on your own day-to-day teaching practices? How transferable, with or without the facilitator's help, have been those insights, whether from research or real-world teaching, to your own teaching contexts? As synthesized by Avalos (2011), at the core of PD "is the understanding that professional development is about teachers learning, learning how to learn, and *transforming their knowledge into practice* for the benefit of their students' growth" (p. 10; emphasis mine). The thing is, professional development, like anything worth pursuing in life, is personal and situated, complex and difficult to do well.

Rather than developing this piece as another article collecting a list of resources or ever-changing tools for PD (refer to the suggested open-access readings section for some recent coverage), I want instead to focus on a few personal reflections that have been percolating in my mind since they delve into the heart of issues about teachers' professional self-development. In approaching my own professional development, I have asked myself: Do I have a PD plan that carefully considers what I get out of any PD activity in which I choose to participate? When I do decide to participate in a PD webinar or workshop, do I have a clear intent as to how the session will match my needs and, in turn, the follow-up action(s) I will need to take? Have I been able to sustain my PD endeavours *consistently*? If, like me, you have answered "no" to any one or all of these questions, then I invite you to read on.

1. What are the key modes of learning/PD in your plan? Help make your individualized plan more concrete with ingredients that meet your personal needs, career stage, and goals. Clearly, the multi-faceted, inter-related individual and contextual factors involved in PD mean that no single approach, method, or tool can determine what constitutes effective PD. Evaluate how each mode of learning helps you develop professionally, and be mindfully selective of tools that duplicate or serve the same or similar functions. Whether formal or informal, institution or teacher initiated, whether oriented to learning collaboratively or independently, each learning activity possesses affordances and constraints, and each takes place through different configurations of time, space, and people. What area of PD does the workshop attend to? Subject-matter knowledge related to English and language teaching? Pedagogical expertise? Self-awareness as a teacher? Understanding learners or curriculum and materials? Career advancement? (See Richards & Farrell, 2005, pp. 9-10; Farrell, 2014, pp. 18-19 for more.) The key is to figure out a combination of modes of learning or PD that will overcome relative constraints and create possibilities.

The following chart lists some examples:

Mode	Function
Journal articles (e.g., ELT Journal, Language Teaching, and trade publications from professional associations)	Discuss with colleagues or blog about how you can connect the readings with your own practice.
Social media	Stay informed about free PD events, connect with other practitioners, and participate in ELT chats.
Attending/running PD events (online or in person) or professional gatherings	Keep abreast of current issues and evidence-based best practices, connect with peers, and explore collaborative opportunities.
Engaging in practitioner research	Empirically examine your own practices, share findings formally and/or informally.
--> Your turn	

2. What do I hope to get out of a workshop I decide to attend? It's important to attend workshops with a clear intent. Perhaps the most commonly chosen PD action is attending a one-time workshop, webinar, or conference to learn a new tool (or list of tools) or a new teaching method, but, as we all know well, impact beyond the session is often limited. Unless the tool or session is solving a specific problem that you can personally relate to in your teaching to make a difference to learner outcomes (Timperley, 2011), ownership of learning and subsumption and integration of what one has learned into one's practical knowledge or teaching repertoire rarely occur. Upon reflection, is there one insight gained from attending the workshop that you could transfer to your own teaching and experiment with? If you are selecting from self-directed online workshops or courses, think about what you want to improve in your own classroom, and make a conscious effort to link what you are learning with practice through real-life experimenting that will help transform knowledge into practice. As Timperley (2011) put forward, for teachers to develop professionally requires a transformative, rather than an additive, change to teaching practice. Unlike teachers-in-training, for practicing professionals, Freeman's questioning of how well a one-off workshop transfers still rings true more than two decades later: "Teaching is a social practice ... where one cannot learn about it; one must learn *through* it" (Freeman, 1992, p. 16; emphasis mine). Individually and collectively working to examine our own practices, reflecting on outcomes, and articulating our experiences and learning to others can further provide the catalyst for transformative professional growth (Mezirow, 2000).

3. How do I sustain PD endeavours? Sustaining PD efforts is one of the greatest challenges in teachers' professional self-development, especially while operating or competing against individual-, resource-, and context-related constraints. Look for inspiration within your unit and beyond by joining or forming professional learning networks tailored to your own needs or to shared needs and interests. PLNs are plentiful; the key is to find one where you feel a true sense of a *community of learners* (Rogoff, 1994), or a self-initiated, professional learning community with non-judgmental, shared support of each other's professional development (Falk & Drayton, 2009; Kelly & Cherkowski, 2015) and where development is conceived "as *transformation of participation* rather than ... either a product of *transmission of knowledge*

from others or of *acquisition or discovery of knowledge by oneself*" (Rogoff, 1994, p. 209). Typically we board a bus because of where it is headed, but the path can often be unpredictable, and a change of direction can easily end a sense of belonging. If we get on a bus by first paying attention to who is on the bus, then the problem of fueling the bus to keep moving forward becomes less of an issue. Once you have carefully selected a network, take turns assuming a leadership role in your chosen network at the group, school, or association level, and find a framework for how and what the group wishes to develop in helping teachers come together to talk about and reflect on their work.

Taking the initiative to assume a leadership role in promoting a culture of professional inquiry will transform your own participation and empower you through empowering others. Many board members in our professional teaching associations are fine examples of practitioners who have taken on leadership roles to become agents of change. Within a professional learning community, one may draw on Reilly, Vartabedian, Felt, and Jenkins's (2012) work about key principles that sustain a participatory culture: providing opportunities for (a) the exercise of creativity using a variety of tools, (b) co-learning where those involved pool their skills and knowledge, (c) heightened motivation and engagement through meaningful pedagogical experimentation, (d) learning that is deemed relevant to the interests of those involved, and (e) creation of a so-called "learning ecosystem"—that is, an "integrated learning system" that builds connections between home, school, community, and beyond (p. 5).

However one chooses to define "professional development" and what that entails (see Farrell, 2014), a teacher's professional self-development becomes increasingly important at all stages of his or her teaching career. It's a continuous and complex process, requiring the intellectual and emotional involvement of teachers both individually and collectively. Whichever mode(s) of learning teachers choose, depending on their needs and objectives, they must be willing to examine openly where they stand and actively pursue appropriate alternatives for change that are bound within a particular institutional culture that may or may not be conducive to learning. I echo Bessette's statements that "the best professional development is participatory and connectivist," and that it must be "driven by the needs and interests of those [participating] and allow for collaboration [among interactants] and beyond" (¶ 3).

Key Concepts

Whether you are at the receiving or giving end of a PD activity, an approach that is goal-oriented, purpose-driven, and people-centred will guide you through navigating the terrain of PD activities, resources, and tools available to you so that you can chart a course that suits your needs in any area or combination of PD areas, as first put forward by Richards and Farrell (2005).

What do you need to do, and to whom do you need to reach out to renew your PD endeavours? Do it now, and share your PD needs, discoveries, triumphs, and challenges here so that as members of our professional community, we can continue to energize one another and grow professionally.

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Key Concepts

Getting to Know Each Other:
A Lesson Plan for "Liar Liar"

by Edward Pye

This is an exciting and fun class activity that engages students in multiple skills as well as allows them to find out more information about their classmates. I often use it as an introductory game for intermediate to advanced level classes.

Objectives:

- Practice written skills by producing several brief written explanations of events in students' lives.
- Practice speaking skills by creating questions and answers for these events.
- Engage quick thinking and creative skills by making up explanations under pressure.

Preparation:

- Before the class, cut up enough strips of paper so that every student gets three pieces each.

Steps:

1. First, hand out three strips of paper to each student and explain that students are going to write brief explanations about three different things about themselves: one on each strip of paper.
2. Model the activity by writing three headings on the board:
   a. A Secret
   b. An Experience
   c. An Interesting Fact about me.
   Then fill in the headings with a corresponding sentence about yourself. This can be a good chance to teach grammatical phrases such as "When I was…"
3. Give the students 10-15 minutes and have them write their own sentences: one on each strip of paper. It is important to tell the students that if they have a secret and they don't want other students to know it, then they should not write it down. They should also not show their sentences to other students.
4. As they finish, go around the class and check their sentences for errors.
5. Once you have corrected their sentences, have them write their names on the strips of paper and collect them.
6. Put students in teams of three. Teams of two and four also work, but three is the optimal number.
7. One student from each team comes to the front and stands facing the class in a line.
8. Find those students' sentences from the collection and choose one sentence from one of them and read it out to the class. This sentence is the truth for one of the students at the front, but all the other students must pretend like this is their sentence.
9. The sitting students now have to find out who is telling the truth by asking questions. The theory is that the students who are lying will have much slower and less in-depth and inconsistent answers than the student telling the truth.
10. Each team can ask two or three questions which all the students at the front answer, and then the teams can deliberate for a minute to discuss who they think is telling the truth. Once they have their choice, the truth-teller is revealed and the teams that got it right get a point.
11. You then play again with new students. The team with the most points at the end is the winner.

Edward Pye is a New Zealander who has been working in the international education field for the last 13 years. After completing an English literature degree at Otago University in 2001, he moved to South Korea where he taught for eight years in both the private school and university systems. Upon meeting his Canadian wife, he shifted to BC where he continued teaching as well as moving into the curriculum development field. He has worked as an Educational Programmer on UBC's Okanagan campus and is currently teaching EAL classes at Okanagan College.

A Different Approach to Success

by Gregory Moskos

During the last BC TEAL conference at UBC, I attended a seminar titled Reflecting on the Precarity of Postsecondary EAL Teaching Careers. A question was posed along the lines of, "Why do people choose to teach in EAL?" I came out with an answer before thinking about it: "We dreamed of something, but it didn't quite work out. So, EAL teaching became our Plan B." People in the room gasped in response and a few others disapproved of my remark. I then realized it wasn't a fair answer. Many of us have chosen to become teachers of English because we are drawn to the profession and the interest and inspiration it brings.

I've been teaching English as an additional language for about 10 years. As I approach the 10th anniversary of my first ever teaching position, I feel I am becoming better suited and more passionate as a language instructor. I can't, however, discard my doubts about my future in this industry. Let's be honest, language teaching is not a glamourous job. Unless you have one of the few continuing positions at a college or university, it doesn't pay sufficiently well to live in any urban centre in Canada, where the majority of the jobs are. Nor does it provide the security and sustainability that we witnessed in our parent's generation as we were growing up. (I'm a gen Y speaking about the baby boomers.) So what keeps us going in this industry? What is it that motivates us and instills in us the dedication to provide memorable and significant experiences for our students?

Let's look at how we regard success in this industry. If you asked the average person to define a successful EAL teacher, he or she would likely say that such a teacher would be a teacher whose students improve their language in the shortest amount of time. We all concern ourselves with our student's improvement in English language abilities. However, I believe there is more to success as an EAL teacher than how quickly our students approach fluency. I sense there is a hidden ambition for both teachers and students alike to connect with people in another language. Connection is vital for the health and success of any human being and being able to connect in a second or third language is a gift for anyone trying to adapt to a new society. The great thing about these connections is that they can be experienced for language learners both beginner or advanced. So my focus in this reflection is less on language competency and more on the potential for students to connect with others.

I want to look at this through a philosopher from India named Jiddu Krishnamurti, and how his recommendations tie into to a few experiences I have had as a language teacher over the last 10 years. Essentially, I want to point out the experiences, opportunities, and leadership we experience in this field and how they matter for our determination to persist and grow as EAL instructors.

Krishnamurti is a teacher and writer of enlightenment, meditation, and inner revolution. His words that I want to share are from his book, The Awakening of Intelligence (1973), which contain transcripts of various speeches he gave around the world in the 1960s and early 70s. The following quote reveals the difference between pleasure and passion and how the latter is more enduring than the former. He says:

We divide pleasure in ourselves; we say it would be nice to have a lovely car or listen to beautiful music. There is great delight in listening to music; it may quieten and pacify your nerves by its rhythm and quality of sound; it may carry you away to distant places, far away, and in that there is great pleasure. But that pleasure does not detract you from your vital interest; on the contrary. When you have a tremendous interest in something,

then that very interest becomes the major pleasure in your life; in that there is no contradiction. But when we are not sure of your major interest in life, then we are pulled in different directions by various pleasures and objects; and then there is a contradiction.

So I'm inviting us to consider whether the connections we make in EAL teaching, with both students and co-workers, can offer us this "vital interest." It could be something that begins in teaching and branches into other areas of life, or vice versa. What I see now is that there is potential in our work to give us satisfaction and that this is what ultimately grounds us in our career as language instructors.

My first ever teaching position was in Victoriaville, Quebec in 2005. I worked as a language assistant at a purely francophone high school and I held sessions with groups of students from every English class in the school. My task was to help them practice their speaking skills in English. As this was my first teaching experience in a high school, I was apprehensive about maintaining a sense of confidence and firmness among teenagers. Surprisingly, I came to enjoy the task very quickly. I was amused by the energy I got from the students and the hilarious outcomes of their experimenting with the English language in a friendly, casual environment. At the Christmas party that year, the Vice Principal approached me and told me he had gotten much positive feedback from the students about my activities. I remember he said, "The students really enjoy getting away from their regular English teacher, and they find your activities fun and refreshing." As I ponder my interaction with the students, I realize I have no proof that any of my students actually improved their English. What I do know is that they enjoyed the experience with me. They had interactions that influenced them in a positive way and that will give them a happier association with English down the road. Now I realize they are less likely to be swayed by the negative attitudes towards English speakers from a society that has a troubled past with English as the dominant language.

The second experience I want to reflect on was at a private language school in Vancouver. This school was particular in that it was a Japanese company that offered a program for Japanese youth who had a range of social or learning difficulties. During the time I taught in this program, I sensed that many of these students felt relief being away from their society's pressures to conform to their peers' and their teachers' expectations. Some of them remained reticent throughout the entire program; however, there were a few who opened up and pushed themselves through the tension to speak English in front of students from different countries. In some cases, I could see that these students were improving in English; in other cases, it wasn't so obvious. What satisfied me though is that I offered them a friendly environment where they could at least try to express themselves. As the year went on, I could see them becoming more at ease interacting with their peers, both Japanese and from other countries. The experience I got from this was rewarding just by seeing these students interact in a new environment and in an unfamiliar language. My account of how well they improved their grammar and pronunciation was obviously secondary.

The final experience that I want to relate is teaching as a LINC instructor in Vancouver. This is the most challenging experience I've had as a teacher because I'm teaching immigrants, some of whom barely have the educational background necessary for learning a new language. The students come from a wide range of national, educational, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The levels I've taught have ranged from pre-literate to upper intermediate. What sets LINC students apart from high school students in Quebec, or a group of international students studying English temporarily, is that they have a desperate need to fit into Canadian society, whether they admit it or not. Unfortunately, many of them will continue to interact exclusively with people who speak their native language. However, I can say that there is one thing that lights a student up no matter what their goals are. And that is the moment when we can share an interest, experience, or sense of

humour. It's almost like meeting someone at a party and you find yourself having that random conversation that brings two complete strangers together into a bond of appreciation, love, and understanding. It doesn't happen every day but when it does happen, it makes every frustrating aspect of teaching seem trivial.

What I can say now, looking back over this decade of my career, is that these experiences are what made it worth being a language instructor. I am sure there are opportunities in every classroom that give a warm sense of connection to our students and set up the stage to have it spread to their classmates. This is the closest thing I can relate to Krishnamurti's claim on finding a passion that satisfies me beyond my worldly pleasures and cravings. I know our classes seem limited at times about what we can offer our students, so the question I leave with you is: what ways can we foster connection among our students in the craziest, most creative, most spontaneous way possible?

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Gregory Moskos *has taught English in Quebec, Ontario and South Korea. He is now an instructor for the LINC program in Vancouver, BC. He also writes music for piano and hopes to perform it in the near future.*

Reflections on Teaching Abroad in Japan

by Matthew Michaud

Asia. The continent evokes images and stories some of us know well. Be they from movies, TV, magazines, commercials, poetry, or novels, Asia conjures up certain adjectives: exotic, distant, and colourful. For most involved in the English language teaching realm in BC, chances are extremely good that we have at some point had contact with Asian students. Out of all the Asian countries one could choose to teach in, Japan is frequently considered by the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher who has no international teaching experience. Well-paid EFL jobs at various levels abound. Japan offers teachers chances to experience truly ancient culture, festivals, diverse and exquisite food, all the while being centrally located for ease of travel to the rest of Asia and abroad. Tempura, sushi, ramen, businesspersons, uniformed students, and manga are ubiquitous, just as Gucci toting schoolgirls and Prada wearing housewives are. The country is prosperous, advanced, and modern, while its population is on the decline, university enrollment is down, and Japan cannot seem to grab enough international student interest. Nevertheless, quality education is at the forefront of the Japanese psyche, especially regarding post-secondary learning.

I came to Japan seven years ago as a sister-city Assistant English Teacher (AET). I found myself working for a local board of education, most days bouncing from elementary to middle school, riding furiously on my bicycle to get to each one on time. I worked like this for just one year, grossing around $3,000 CND per month. I moved to Osaka, which is a city of around 5 million to make sure that I could consistently find work. After moving to Osaka, I realized the importance of starting a graduate program. I saw many teachers employed as AETs, some for a very long time, and this helped me

realize the importance of starting a master's program. I ended up working as an AET for two years in total, as well as working for various English schools (known as eikaiwa in Japanese) part time to support myself. Most of the work paid well under $20 CND an hour and AET work would bring in around $2,500 CND a month if I was employed on a full time contractual basis through an outsourcing company. Contracts were short, money low, and I felt like just another cog in the wheel. However, as I sprang from school to school, although the hours were long, classes were few so I continued studying. Additionally, besides completing a TESL certificate and continuing on with my MA, it was during these years that I traveled extensively, and Japan allowed me to do this easily.

Eventually I moved to Kyoto city and gained part time university hours to the point where I was working comfortably at three different universities. I was not finished my MA when I started getting university hours, but that did not seem to matter to the schools I applied to. I enjoyed being a part time teacher, as do many ex-patriates who live in Japan long term. Working as a part time teacher means that there are little to no departmental meetings, and it seems that once you are hired by a Japanese university that you are primarily left alone to do your own thing, or you are in a department that is regimented and coordinated to the point where you do not have to plan any classes yourself. I have always had jobs where I had complete control over what I was teaching, and this led me to build excellent multitasking and time management skills, not to mention a vast assortment of course materials. I primarily enjoyed the three years I was a part time university teacher and can comfortably say that many people who teach over 15-90 minute university classes a week can gross $4,000 CND and higher per month.

Since April 2014, I have been employed full time at a university in the Kansai region (Hyogo, Kyoto, Nara, and Osaka). To get this job, I sent in a short video of myself teaching, a CV, a philosophy of teaching, and a cover letter. Moreover, for full time work, most universities (especially those in urban areas) ask to see at least five publications on your CV as well as copies of them. Although I have references on my CV, in Japan, employers do not necessarily check them. Additionally, the school I work at paid for the move from Kyoto to Kobe, and it was not cheap. I believe this is not the norm, yet some universities in Japan do pay for teachers to move from abroad. Many schools pay for flights at the beginning and end of a contract too.

I have stable work in a department that is small with only three other English teachers from native English speaking backgrounds. I am content to be in this situation after the work I put in over the initial four years living in Japan. I am able to publish and present thanks to ample research funds that are available here, as is the not the case at all universities in Japan. Likewise, from what I have heard, many teachers in similar teaching positions get no research funding. In the position I currently hold, people typically gross around $52,000 CND per year and have around five months of paid vacation. Receiving money during the off-season allows many teachers time off to research, travel and/or visit family abroad. Furthermore, I receive a family and housing allowance, which helps my wife stay at home with our two children while being able to do work online. Lastly, I take trains and buses to go to and from work which is all paid for by the university.

Regarding the teaching environment at my university, I have complete control over what I do in my classes, with no class observations and questions asked by the department. This situation could present problems; yet, all four of us teachers coordinate and create an academic environment that is professional and fruitful. We work closely with each other, collaborate and share ideas, all the while making our own coordinated curriculum without any help or influence from the department office. Therefore, in our department, we have to be very motivated and self-reliant. Other departments in our university have meetings, work in the off-season, have meetings during the summer and/or winter vacations, and other tasks, but we do not. Rather, we make our own meetings to talk about curriculum and classes amongst other things. Furthermore, I share a large office with one other instructor. Most departments have cubicles where many teachers are arranged in one room. I find my situation to be very beneficial as there are no distractions, and I can get a lot of research done.

Life in Japan, although relatively safe compared to many developed countries, has challenges as well. There can be instances of xenophobia, and the word gaijin (foreigner) is used universally to refer to anyone who is not Japanese, and this can be annoying to many. Furthermore, although many learn English in Japan, many do not use it or speak it in public. This is the case in large cities too. This can lead to problems when working for university departments, and many jobs these days ask teachers to be at least conversant in Japanese. It might be useful to learn some Japanese before applying for jobs in Japan. I think instances of ignorance or discrimination do exist in Japan, and this can lead many people to spend only a year or two working before moving on to other countries.

Still, Japan is and continues to be a country that offers chances to gain foreign teaching experience for Canadians. Lifestyle in the cities can be great, restaurants abound, public transit is excellent, childcare is good, taxes are similar to those in Canada, and cell phones are cheaper to operate, Do not expect life to be easy in Japan but do not expect life to be hard either. Take what you can out of your experiences and squeeze all the great opportunities Japan has to offer a Canadian. From personal experiences, working and living in Japan is all about taking advantage of what specifically university employment can offer. Compared to many countries around the world, Japan is a great country for living abroad.

Matt Michaud *has been teaching EFL in Japan since 2008. He has a B.A. in English from Thompson Rivers University and a Master's of Applied Linguistics from the University of Newcastle, Australia. His main interests are communicative competence, intercultural communication, drama in education, and self-efficacy. He is TESL Canada certified, standard three (permanent) and currently works at Kwansei Gakuin University in Nishinomiya, Japan. He was recently a visiting instructor in August at Okanagan College in Kelowna.*

Tears to Smiles: TCF Fundraiser for Refugee Students is a Huge Success

by Jennifer Pearson Terell

Kim Phuc, special guest and Kue Bway, winner of the TCF Refugee Award

The TEAL Charitable Foundation held its first-ever wine and cheese fundraiser, "Tears to Smiles" in support of refugee students at Olympic Village in late May. It was a huge success raising over $10,000 for the new Taiga Galli Refugee Award. This new annual and sustainable award will be for a young refugee student wishing to study at the post-secondary level in British Columbia.

The success of "Tears to Smiles" was due to the many people who attended and bought tickets in support of awards for refugee students, the wonderful volunteers and our MC, Scott Douglas. The event was also supported by special guest Kim Phuc, well-known "Girl in the Picture", Viet Nam refugee to Canada, and distinguished UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, as well as featured guest speaker the Hon. Ujjal Dosangh, former Premier of British Columbia and social justice advocate.

The TEAL Charitable Foundation thanks everyone who supported this year's "Tears to Smiles" fundrasier. Our hope is to hold a second "Tears to Smiles" fundraiser next spring on Thursday evening, April 28th at Olympic Village. Everyone is invited so mark it on your calendar and see you there!

Michael Galli, TCF Board, Shawna Williams, BC TEAL President, and Jennifer Pearson Terell, TCF Chair

TCF Board and Special Guests, Kim Phuc, and Ujjal Dosangh

Experiences at the TESOL 2015 International Convention and English Language Expo

by Beth Maschmann

The 2015 TESOL International Convention theme "Crossing Borders, Building Bridges" was taken up by over 6,500 presenters and attendees at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. The diversity of experience and insight on offer made choosing sessions overwhelming. However, recent challenges to our field in British Columbia, including government funding cuts alongside increased commodification of education, inspired my search for a further understanding of how our sociopolitical context shapes us, our students, and our experience. Further, I was hoping to reflect on my responsibility as an EAL professional in this rapidly evolving and highly contextualized field.

In an invited speaker session, *The Complicities of English Language Teaching*, Alastair Pennycook began by stating:

"No-one is just an English teacher. English is never just English. And teaching is never just teaching. So with what are we complicit?"

This question has increasingly occupied me, and I have tried to mediate the oftentimes uncomfortable answers with work in advocacy and critical praxis. The sessions I attended though, served as both a reminder and an inspiration to do better in our field, in our schools, and in our classrooms.

In our field:

Thanks to the BC TEAL Mary Ashworth Scholarship, I had the good fortune to present at TESOL on work I've done. I feel strongly that this work and research has helped me maintain integrity in a field which is increasingly higher stakes for students and presents noted challenges for instructors.

Both our professional association, BC TEAL, and our unions, including, FPSE, ETEA, TSSU, CUPE, BCGEU, and the BCTF, have been vocal advocates for teachers and students in British Columbia. In one presentation (Shaw & Maschmann, 2015), I, a union shop steward, with, Fiona Shaw, 2nd Vice–President, BC TEAL Board of Directors, focused on the continued importance of reflecting on our multiple identities and positionalities within these organizations and our field. Identity politics has often been used to divide; instead, our session opened a space to reflect on our understandings of the terms "worker," "professional," and "activist," and how these understandings may limit us in collaborative advocacy work. Emphasized as well was the notion of understanding where we sit in privilege, that part of reflection is examining how we may both experience marginalization in our field, and how we may contribute to what others experience as marginalizing. In building broader alliances we need to ask, to echo Pennycook, how may reflection of complicity inform the work we do, and should do as activists in EAL?

In a second presentation (Lee, Maschmann, & Condruk, 2015), I discussed aspects of peer professional development in EAL teacher education. This presentation was based on teacher inquiry research that I have been part of with Ena Lee, a Lecturer in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University, and my colleagues Carol Condruk and Irene Ouimet, instructors in the English Language and Culture program at Simon Fraser University. For our group, a focus on developing our understanding and application of critical pedagogy in the EAL classroom became an application of critical pedagogy in our

daily lives. Through regular meetings, nourished by good food and shared stories, our research helped us both make sense of, and address common threads. Our own histories and interests enlarged our pool of readings and discussion, and, speaking for myself, have ultimately enriched my life, my classroom, and my relationships with students.

In our schools:

While a number of sessions identified common themes in TESOL internationally, local research in EAL across the disciplines reaffirms that as TESOL professionals, we must be more proactive in having our voices heard. Roumiana Ilieva, an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University, for example, spoke about content area faculty in higher education and language issues in a time of internationalization. In work that may be applicable to many of us both in and outside of higher education, she notes that student English language proficiency is often understood as a student problem. Although some content instructors are searching for ways to accommodate the increasing influx of EAL students, many faculty are either unsure of how to support their students or simply don't see it as part of their job.

As I attended sessions addressing everything from new pathways to student support within them, I wondered what we, as instructors and administrators in EAL, can do outside of our classrooms and programs to inform colleagues in our institutions about working with EAL learners. Can the professional development and research we do inform sound practice and legitimize our standing within our institutions?

In our classrooms:

I'll close with some very practical tips from keynote speakers Sonia Nieto and Jim Cummins (the four keynotes are accessible from the TESOL website: http://www.tesol.org/events-landing-page/2015/03/18/tesol-2015-keynote-livestreams). Both emphasized the importance of evidence-based practice which affirms students' identities. Sonia Nieto, in exploring the metaphor of "bridge" as a convention theme, noted "bridges" allow us to move to new shores, but equally allow a returning home—that the bridge doesn't have to be burned once used.

Examples of affirming classroom practice from Jim Cummins and Sonia Nieto, in separate keynotes, included:

- Learning to say students' names correctly
- Reflecting on English-only policies
- Having students bring in a word from their language and explain why they chose it
- Allowing dual language project work
- All students learning simple greetings in each other's languages

An initial response to the question "So with what are we complicit?" raised by Pennycook in the introduction to this piece may be to begin with an exploration of our individual contexts. How does the sociopolitical, institutional and personal affect our work and how we do it? The research and critical praxis, as exemplified in the sessions mentioned here, and many others at TESOL 2015 inspire a variety of ways to enter the process of answering the question for ourselves.

References:

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Beth Maschmann *teaches in the English Language and Culture Program at Simon Fraser University, where she also serves as a shop steward. She is working towards completion of her M.A. at the University of British Columbia in the Department of Educational Studies.*

Crossing Borders and Building Bridges: Reflections on TESOL 2015

by Liz T. Chiang

After more than forty times of being hosted in the USA since its 1966 launch, the 2015 TESOL Convention once again (after 15 years) welcomed worldwide participants to Canada, nicely echoing this year's theme "Crossing Borders, Building Bridges."

This was my first trip to a TESOL conference, which I have long dreamed of attending. Having moved to Vancouver in pursuit of my doctoral degree at UBC a few years ago and with the support of the BC TEAL Charitable Foundation bursary, I was finally able to travel "within" my new home country to Toronto, and take part in the greatest world annual event for teachers of English as an additional language.

Delivering my presentation titled "The Underbelly of TESOL: Revealing an Employer's Hiring Criteria," I was excited to share an important part of my doctoral research about how discrimination based on race, nationality, accent, culture, and a business-driven ideology that caters to consumers' preferences, has dominated the hiring decisions of oral English teachers in Asian TESOL markets. The Q & A was indeed the most rewarding portion of my session thanks to the feedback from my audience. Some of them have witnessed, experienced, or were involuntarily involved in biased hiring practices themselves. Some pointed out the difficult challenges faced in battling such unfair employment practices, while others asked what else could be done. This was one of the many moments throughout the conference in which TESOLers from different backgrounds crossed borders to learn about what teaching was like in other parts of the world, and made new bridges by sharing similar experiences.

The conference struck a well-planned balance between different types of sessions, including Practice-/Research-Oriented Presentations, Roundtables, Discussion Groups, InterSections, and Workshops, just to name a few. In addition to the keynote and invited speakers, more than 800 sessions provided the conference goers with a great variety of selection. The only pity was that one often had to choose which session to attend from several concurrent ones that looked equally interesting.

I went to Jim Cummins' Saturday keynote speech on "Evidence-Based TESOL: Teaching through a Multilingual Lens," which was truly educational and inspirational. He critiqued some core policies of language education in the US and Canada, especially those concerning students that face potential disadvantages during their schooling (e.g., English as an additional language, low socioeconomic status, and other marginalized students in both the US and Canada). Many of the current policies, he argues, have been evidence-free and thus detrimental to teachers and students alike. Some examples of "bad policies" were: the No Child Left Behind Act, the prioritization of teaching phonics for reading comprehension after Grade 1, and Ontario's prohibition on bilingual programs involving languages other than English and French. Drawing on substantial evidence, Cummins advocated that we should "teach through a multilingual lens" by promoting print access and literacy engagement in both English and students' first languages. Such identity-affirming reading engagement has been proven to significantly reduce the impact of students' socioeconomic backgrounds on academic achievement.

I also attended other intriguing sessions. For example, "Crossing Networks, Building Connections to Inspire Always-On Learners and Teachers" which discussed students' engagement through online learning; "Crossing Borders: Teaching and Researching English in the Middle East" that outlined the experience and myths about teaching in the Levant and Gulf regions; and the ticketed event "NNESTs and the Job Market" allowed groups of participants to interact in a more intimate way with each other and an experienced mentor in the field.

One of the thoughtful surprises prepared by the conference organization team was the "ribbons." They are adhesive ribbon strips printed with either an identity title or a TESOL Interest Section. It was delightful to watch conference goers standing in front of the ribbon booth happily collecting ribbons that best described themselves and their TESOL experience. I also picked mine and attached them on my name badge (see the attached picture), revealing my "multi-layered" identity.

By participating in this convention, I was fortunate to broaden my professional knowledge in areas that interest me and those I am less familiar with. It was also a valuable opportunity to make connections with teachers and researchers that are working toward the common good for our students. If you have not attended TESOL, I strongly encourage you to do so. It can be a career-changing event.
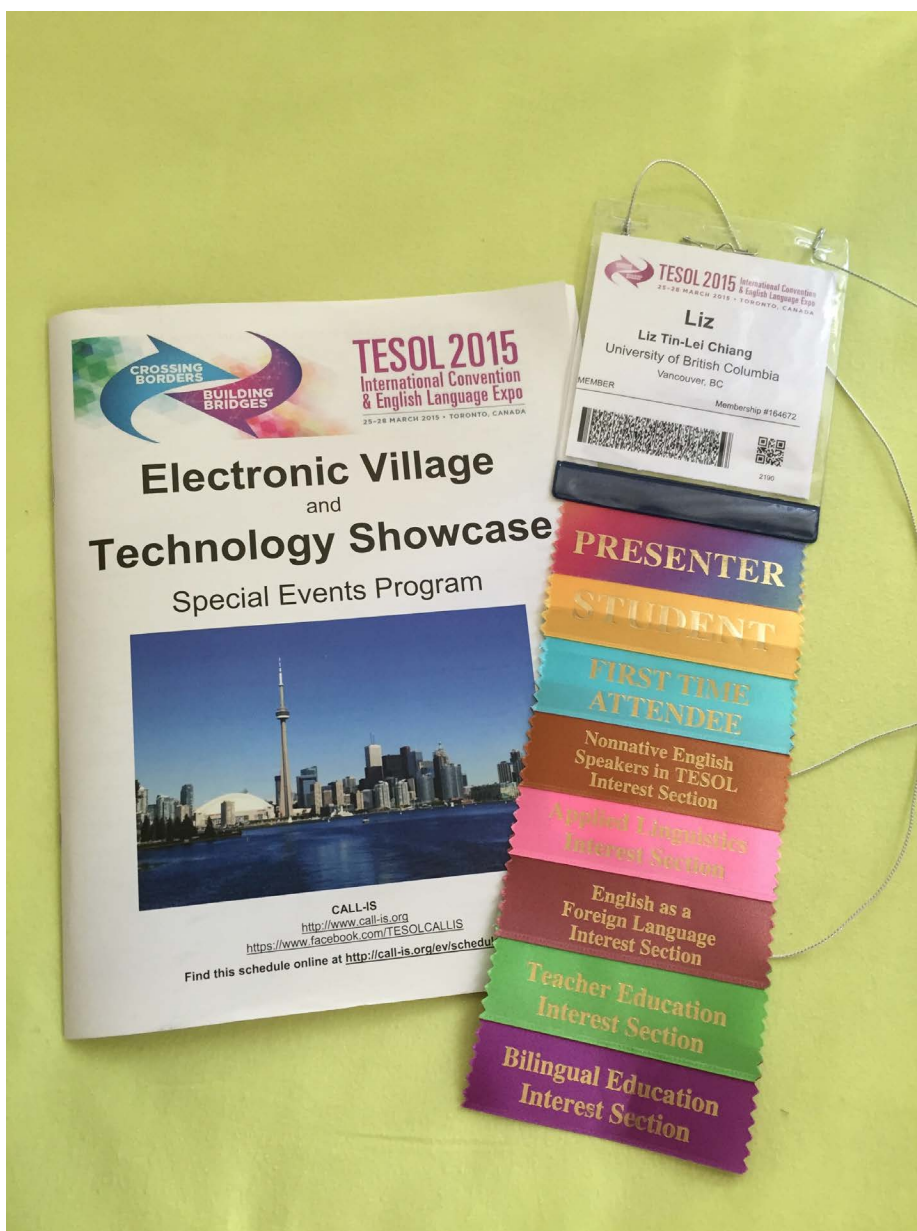
Liz T. Chiang *is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Language and Literacy Education at the University of British Columbia's Vancouver campus. Her research focuses on critical applied linguistics, second language education, TEAL teacher recruitment, English learning ideologies, and issues of race and non-/native speakerness.*

It Were Grand:
Reflections of the 2015 IATEFL Conference

by Eilidh Singh

You might think that there's no connection between BC TEAL, the IATEFL conference, and Coronation Street (the world's longest–running soap opera in production), but like many things that happen on the iconic cobbled street, there's always more going on than meets the eye!

I was incredibly lucky this year to have been awarded the Pat Wakefield Scholarship, which allowed me to travel in April to the IATEFL (International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language) Conference in Manchester, England, and participate in the incredibly diverse and vibrant program of events over the four days of the conference, as well as the pre-conference full-day event on Learning Technologies held on the University of Manchester campus. Presenting at IATEFL the previous year was invaluable, as it allowed me to draw on that experience and really plan how to make the most of this opportunity. Basic reminders like previewing the programme in advance, consulting maps (although I still got lost the first day!), and remembering to eat, all helped me to avoid a repetition of last year's diet of gum, white wine, and workshops.

IATEFL has 4000 members from over 100 countries, and their annual conference attracts over 2000 delegates each year. The conference includes around 500 sessions, including workshops, symposia, 70 ELT-related exhibitors, poster sessions, a Jobs Market, and of course, plenary speakers. There are also pre-conference events (PCEs) organized by each of the Special Interest Groups (SIGs), and these include invited speakers, workshops, and discussions on topics of interest to each group. The SIGs are organized around the topics of Business English, ESOL, ESP, Global Issues, Learner Autonomy, Leadership and Management, Literature, Media and Cultural Studies, Materials Writing, Pronunciation, research, Teacher Development, Testing, Evaluation and Assessment, Teacher Training and Education, and Young Learners and Teenagers. IATEFL members also receive six copies of the IATEFL magazine annually, and membership to one SIG, each with its own website, newsletter and discussions. In addition to the scheduled conference sessions, attendees can enjoy a vibrant variety of scheduled social events during the conference, which take up five pages of the hefty 315-page conference programme.

On Friday, April 10th, I attended the Learning Technologies event, which included these three invited speakers:

Agnes Kukulska-Hulme: Orchestrating mobile learning outside the classroom
Dr. Kukulska-Hulme talked about the power of situation/location-based learning, particularly within the context of developing an app for new immigrants to the UK to help with their English language learning. She has co-authored a research paper for the British Council entitled "Mobile pedagogy for English language teaching: A guide for teachers," available free here.

Liliana Simon from Argentina (Diana Eastment Scholarship Winner): Digital Corner
Digital Corner is a resource centre that scaffolds teachers' use of technologies in the classroom in Argentina. An interview with Ms. Simon at IATEFL can be found here.

James Thomas: Bridging the gap between data acquisition and interlanguage research in learner corpora

This talk was about online error correction using Hypal, an online system where students upload work, teachers annotate errors and give feedback, and a corpus then collects and analyses all the error data. As one of my new IATEFL colleagues/Twitter pals, @DaveDodgson said, "I liked the way that technology was put to use to 'semi-automate' the correction process while maintaining the all important human factor of communication between learner and teacher, including teacher feedback, student responses, and making action plans."

The afternoon was devoted to three showcases highlighting the leveraging and repurposing of existing technologies for use in the language classroom.

Sharon Hartle on how to use Socrative, an educational quiz tool, with learners.
Dave Dodgson on the concept of game-based learning for the language classroom through a game app called *Can You Escape?*
Carla Arena with an overview of an EFL writing program pilot using *Google Classroom* as the main platform for a paperless project.

And finally, the day ended with a talk from **Diane Slaouti** called *Theorising our practice - teachers exploring the particular and the practical of technology in action*. She managed to incorporate many of the issues and recurring themes that arose throughout the event, making her talk relevant and contextualized to the audience. It was a great way to end the day on a reflective note, highlighting once again that we are living in exciting and challenging times, and that we seem to be facing a number of similar issues at the local and global levels as we look at ways to engage with the 21st century student in meaningful and effective ways. The next three and a half days passed in a blur of sessions and activity, all of it invigorating and energizing. One of the many things I like about this conference is the wide range of topics and types of sessions, from the immediately-applicable, practical workshops, to the more erudite talks which allow participants to view their context from another perspective, whether it's because of recent research, a different approach, a reimagining of current resources, social or political situations, or some other lens entirely.

It's difficult not to try to go to as much as possible, but luckily, there are many excellent bloggers and tweeters nowadays, and their hard work helps enormously, not only with post-conference reflection, but also in exploring new sessions after the conference has ended. Thanks also to the well-organized IATEFL team, many of the sessions are archived along with speaker interviews, and the plenaries are streamed live, with handouts and slides uploaded too. Delegates can also contribute their own 'online roving reporter' reports for the website, so even if you're not able to travel to the conference, you and your colleagues can access a great deal online.

I tried to attend sessions that focussed not only on my own current areas of interest, but sessions on other topics as well, as there is so much of interest going on in our field these days, and many of it overlaps and intersects. It's difficult to choose what the standouts were, as there were many, but some really engaging sessions for me were:

Ken Wilson: Only Connect: Seven strategies for ensuring teacher-student communication
Jeremy Harmer: An uncertain and approximate business? Why teachers should love testing
British Council Signature Event: Identifying and Developing the Skills and Knowledge a Teacher Needs
Dorothy Zemach: Teaching study skills to university students
Cambridge English Signature Event: The language

Perhaps though, one of the most meaningful takeaways from this conference was the sense that it isn't about the situational location, but rather about connecting with new and old colleagues as individuals, forming professional friendships that spark ideas which motivate and support us in tackling challenges. I made a point of speaking to strangers, and of going to some evening events so that I could continue those conversations. These included a British Council reception at the majestic Manchester Town Hall, a Grade 1 listed Neo-Gothic building, where I made friends with Danes teaching in Kurdistan and Canadians teaching in England. I attended the now famous IATEFL Pecha Kucha, which inspired our very own BC TEAL event. I danced at the charity fundraising Alice in Wonderland-inspired Macmillan party at the National Football Museum, which I know sounds a bit of a head-scratcher, but it really epitomised the go-with-the-flow nature of being at IATEFL! And, being a big fan of the show, I went on a tour of the Coronation Street set, which was a bit of a surreal experience, not least of all for the tour guide, who had never taken a group of international ESL people on the tour before. In many ways, he took on the role of an ESL instructor, carefully trying, in his Mancunian accent, to explain storylines, props, and characters to those who had never seen the show.

It might sound like I packed in a fair bit, but in fact, I missed the International Music Fest night, The Creativity Group Meeting, The Fair List event, The International Word Fest, Mrs Hoover's Singlish, the Extensive Reading Foundation Reception and Awards Ceremony, the Storytelling night, and the International Quiz. What matters though, is that others didn't; all these sessions and evening events served to act as the underlying glue that allowed personal networks and ideas to form and strengthen, and that is invaluable. We can't ask our students to be active global citizens if we don't participate in developing ourselves, personally and professionally.

The BC TEAL conference in May this year was another reminder of how there is a great feeling of camaraderie in our profession, both globally and locally. Just as the characters in Coronation Street gather in the Rovers Return pub to talk about their work day, their challenges and rewards, it's important that we also come together regularly to share our successes and challenges so that we too can engage with our colleagues, share stories, and add to the current discussions. To paraphrase Beth Maschmann, another recipient of TCF funding this year, we must foster our abilities to "travel" pedagogically, reflectively, and collectively, and I am truly grateful for the opportunity the TCF and the Pat Wakefield award gave me to do this.

Eilidh Singh *works at the UBC English Language Institute as one of the Head Instructor team, and she recently joined the BC TEAL Board of Directors as the co-chair of the PD Committee.*

What, Who, Where, and Why: The AIDS and Health Education Fund Award Report

by Catherine Evashuk

Professional development comes in different shapes, sizes, and colours; just like our eyes, our hands, or "other body parts," (wink wink) if you know what I mean. Are you blushing yet? Did that get your attention?

Holding students' attention was not a problem I encountered these last 12 months. Thanks to the TEAL Charitable Foundation's AIDS and Health Education Fund award, I taught 435 adult English Language Learners in 13 different schools. The main purpose of my visits was to bring Sexual Health Education to English language students of different levels and have teachers observe the lessons with the hope that they will repeat these lessons to future classes. This was a unique in-class professional development opportunity for the 28 teachers who invited me to their classes. The Sexual Health topics were anatomy, birth control, how to talk with kids about sex, consent, date rape, sexting, sexually transmitted infections, condom negotiation skills as well as screening tests such as mammograms and testicular cancer. It was also an opportunity to normalize Sexual Health Education in the English language classrooms because this topic is often left out; books don't include it, and teachers sometimes feel unprepared or uncomfortable presenting this information. At the beginning of each of my classroom visits I tell students and teachers that Sexual Health teaches health, science and safety.

In these classroom visits I wore both my Sexual Health Educator "hat" and my English language teacher "hat." There are so many lively and memorable moments to include here but two of them do stand out.

In the first one, I was visiting a lower intermediate listening and pronunciation class. After a short presentation on sexual consent, we were working on intonation while repeating condom negotiation skill dialogues.

Student A: "I don't know <u>how</u> to use condoms."
Student B: "I <u>do</u>. Let me show you how to put one <u>on.</u>
Student A: "I didn't <u>bring</u> any condoms. They're <u>too</u> expensive."
Student B: "Oh, I have <u>one</u> here. Later let's Google where we can <u>get free</u> condoms."
Student A: "I can't feel <u>anything</u> with a condom."
Student B: "That's awful! Let's wait and try a <u>different kind</u> that fits better."
Student A: "I'm <u>allergic</u> to latex. I <u>can't</u> use condoms."
Student B: "That's <u>terrible</u>. But luckily I have <u>non-</u>latex condoms. They're a <u>little</u> more expensive but they are <u>worth</u> it!"

You know the drill: student A says one part of the dialogue and student B says the other part. Then they switch roles. There are 14 different scenarios all dealing with A not wanting to wear one and 'B' encouraging their use. One male student, who was sitting in the front row, was paired up with a female classmate. She was saying her part and he repeated his part while completely covering his face with both hands for the whole activity. He worked hard on his pronunciation and intonation while peeking through his fingers to

read the dialogue. Clearly he was uncomfortable but he was willing to participate and learn. At the end of the class he thanked me for the lesson and said that he had found it very useful.

Another memorable moment took place when I was the guest speaker at an advanced level lecture listening class. The presentation was on Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). In order to talk about how HIV and other STIs are transmitted, I always pre-teach anatomy at the beginning of a lecture. I had just finished drawing anatomically correct, life size male genitalia on the board in order to label it when suddenly at the back of the room a student stood up and said, "This is going to be a very interesting lesson!".

I also learned that students are hungry for more information on Sexual Health. This was evident on the repeated requests I got in my feedback questionnaires asking for more lessons and longer workshops. Some teachers worried their students would feel uncomfortable, but they were later surprised at how comfortable their students seemed and how willingly they asked questions. Teachers also told me that students were less awkward talking about sexual health matters than they had predicted. While I won't deny that this topic can be uncomfortable, my experience has repeatedly shown me that people are less uncomfortable talking about sex when they aren't using their native language. I believe this is because they have not acquired the negative emotional baggage that comes with this taboo topic.

I invite all readers to a DIY professional opportunity: Bring Sexual Health Education to your classrooms. Your students need it and it is a chance to acquire a new teaching skill. You can start with a condom negotiation dialogue and there are many other Sexual Health Education materials that I have created that you are welcome to use. I do, however, recommend that you first prepare yourself and learn about what to take into consideration and what to avoid before, during and after presenting a Sexual Health topic in your classroom. I wrote an article about this in the 2012 Fall issue of the BC TEAL Newsletter entitled "Sex Ed in ESL" (p. 28: www.bcteal.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/BCTealFall2012draf9-copy.pdf). You can start your lessons by telling your students that Sexual Health teaches health, science and safety. That will get their attention….

Special thanks to Dan Nooney, Allyssa Satterwhite, and Kathryn Rockwell for helping me spread the word about these Sexual Health lessons.

Catherine Evashuk *is the winner of the TFC 2014 "AIDS and Health Education Fund" award. She has more than 20 years ESL/EFL classroom experience, has an MA in TESL and a BA in TEFL. In 2010, she became a Certified Sexual Health Educator. Please email her directly to request Sexual Health Education material and teaching tips at evashuk@gmail.com or http://www.abcofsexeducation.com*

Dreams Come True:
# Looking Backward, Looking Forward

by Saeed Nazari

Years back when I was doing my bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature at Tehran State University, I hardly imagined the possibility of presenting my research findings in globally recognized conferences such as the American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL) and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). With a vision in mind, however, I pursued my passion to succeed despite all obstacles. Ultimately, I not only presented in the conferences, but also received two prestigious travel grants from BC TEAL and TESOL to cover the costs of my travels to Portland and Toronto.

When the AAAL conference was announced, I thought it was the right time to present my findings. I decided to prepare a proposal in order to present the gist of my master's thesis. To meet the expectations of such a highly competitive conference, I closely followed the criteria on their website. I also sought advice from my colleagues at the University of British Columbia who had previously presented in the conference. Based on the gathered information, I tailored my abstract to best fit the conference objectives. After a few months, I received the acceptance email for my poster presentation on The Use of Language Learning Strategies by EFL Learners across Two Contexts. I eagerly started working on the design of my poster and cherry-picked the main themes of my thesis so that it could provide the audience with sufficient data and satisfactory visual effects. It was truly the most challenging part of my presentation, since I was forced to leave out many useful sections.

My presentation was scheduled on Tuesday March 25 from 9:30 to 11:30 at the Portland Marriott Downtown Waterfront Exhibit Hall. There were nearly forty posters presented in a hall crowded by approximately 500 participants. In my poster, I highlighted the role of language learning strategies as a pivotal factor in learner achievement. I enjoyed the opportunity to
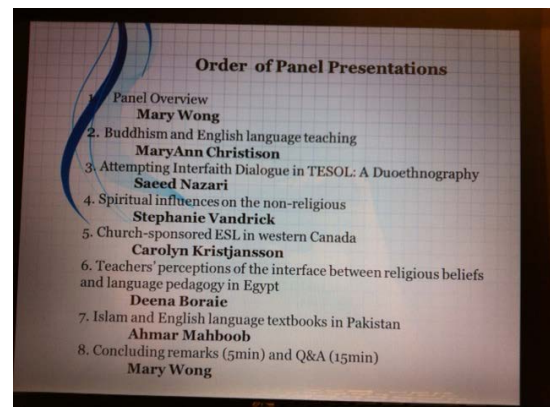
share my ideas with researchers and educators from across the world who were interested to know more about the implications of the study for their learners. They were also curious to learn about the data collection tools (questionnaires) and instructional interventions of the study.

This successful experience encouraged my presentation in the TESOL Convention 2015.

Employing the qualitative method of duoethnography (Sawyer & Norris, 2013), I carried out an interfaith dialogue for over three years with my research partner, Dr. Joel Heng Hartse, an ELT scholar and a true human. Duoethnography is a form of dual autoethnography in which two or more researchers collaborate to dialogically question the meanings they give to issues or constructs (Norris, Sawyer, & Lund, 2012). The outcome of our dialogue is forthcoming as a book chapter in a coedited volume on "Spirituality and ELT." Due to my contribution to the book, I received an email from one of the editors, Professor Mary Wong, inviting me to join as a panelist collaborating with the other authors. Our panel discussion was successfully presented on Friday, March 27 at the Metro Toronto Convention Center.

Supported with BC TEAL and TESOL travel grants, I attended the AAAL and TESOL conferences which provided me with unique opportunities to advance my knowledge and expertise in the field, and to share my knowledge with ELT stakeholders from around the world. Here, I should express my gratitude for the grants that have paved the way for my professional development.

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Saeed Nazari *is a doctoral student in the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy at UBC. For over fifteen years, he has been teaching EFL and ESL at the college and university levels in Vancouver and overseas. Saeed is interested in teacher education and intends to theorize a learner-centered curriculum in which each individual voice is uniquely represented.*

Leveraging Technology to Provide Oral Feedback on Writing Assignments

by Nathan Hall

A recent government survey in the UK on teacher workload found that marking took up the largest amount of an instructor's time outside of the classroom. An ideal solution to this problem would be to reduce the amount of time it takes to comment on student work while increasing the quality and quantity of that feedback. For myself, the journey to solve this problem started while in my MA TESOL program. One of the instructors audio recorded his comments on our work one week when there were multiple assignments to mark. Surprisingly, I found the feedback much deeper and far more extensive than any of the written comments I had received in the course to that point. At that time, I was teaching a writing course and was getting a large amount of student work to mark, and I wondered if giving recorded oral feedback may be a solution. I set up a small test assignment where students wrote a simple two-paragraph reflection on a subject. They gave me their assignments on paper, which I read over and wrote numbers next to the areas I felt needed some work. I then audio recorded myself giving feedback on their writing by referencing the numbers written on their papers. I gave the assignments back to the students along with links to their audio recordings and sent them off to the computer lab. Arriving at the lab, I was surprised at how the students immediately grabbed a pen and took notes directly on their papers while listening to my comments. Most of the students listened to the comments more than once before rewriting their paragraphs based on the feedback.

Building on that success, as small a sample as it was, I decided to explore what research had to say on the subject. At that time, studies focusing on English language classrooms and recorded oral feedback were limited, but by expanding the subject matter, I was able to find a few larger studies. The first study followed 53 ESOL students in New Zealand over 16 weeks. Students were divided into three focus groups based on the type of feedback they would receive on their written work: written and oral, written only, and limited feedback. After completing four writing tasks, the study found that direct oral feedback together with direct written feedback had a greater impact on improving accuracy than written feedback on its own (Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005). The second study involved 14 post-graduate students who were studying in a distance course from a UK university. Each student completed eighteen 1500–word essays; nine of the essays were given written feedback and the other nine received oral feedback via a five-minute video (screencast). Not only did these students mostly prefer the recorded oral feedback to written, but teachers found it saved valuable marking time. To give an equivalent of 35 minutes of written feedback, only five minutes of screencasting was needed (Edwards, Dujardin, & Williams, 2012). The third study, which was the largest, involved 111 individuals in 11 groups of students at a Norwegian University. Instructors used screencasts to give feedback, instructions, and messages to students. They found it improved clarity and allowed students to review the information, while saving the teacher's time by refining their instructions. Students mentioned that "video comments are regarded as being more precise and nuanced than written feedback" (Mathisen, 2012).

Following my personal success, along with what I had learned from the above studies, I now use screencasting to record short feedback videos for my students. This

involves getting the written work in a digital format so it can be viewed on a computer screen, and it also allows me to add short written comments. This requires a few tools that are either free or inexpensive. Here are the basic things you will need:

- **Screencasting software:** There are a number of free online and offline tools; it is just a matter of personal taste.
    - *QuickTime Player*: If you are an Apple Macintosh (Mac) user, you can use QuickTime Player, which comes preinstalled on the computer. Simply locate it in your Applications folder and choose to create a "New Screen Recording" from the "File" menu. You can choose to use the built-in microphone or you can add a USB microphone for greater clarity.
    - *Jing* (www.techsmith.com/jing): This is a free software from TechSmith that works on both Mac and Microsoft Windows (Windows) operating systems. It is limited to a 5-minute recording, but is simple to use and quick to learn.
    - *CamStudio* (portableapps.com/apps/utilities/camstudio_portable): This is a Windows only application that can be installed for free on any USB drive, including thumb drives. This allows users to record screencasts on Windows computers that do not have screencasting software preinstalled. It is free and fairly simple to use.
    - *Screencast-O-Matic* (www.screencast-o-matic.com): This is an online webtool that allows Mac or Windows users to record screencasts without installing any software on their computers. It does use Java, which some company computers have turned off. Simply go to the website and launch the application from there. You can then download the final video or store it online.
- **Document creation and annotation:** There are also many ways of displaying and annotating documents and scanned images. Here is what is readily available on all platforms.

- *Microsoft Word:* This is available on both Mac and Windows platforms for a fee. Most schools and students have access to it and are comfortable using it. Both the instructor and student can use the "Comment" tool to add written feedback and replies. The biggest problem with this is making sure you are still working from the same document. If you have the document on a network folder, you can each open the same document and work from there. If you have to email documents back and forth, this can become a problem.
- *OneDrive* (onedrive.com): This is a cloud service hosted by Microsoft that works on any computer with internet access. You need to sign up for a free account, but OneDrive offers plenty of free space with that account. You can share Microsoft Office documents with anyone without the problem of emailing back and forth. You can also create, read, and add comments to documents without having Microsoft Office installed on your computer. Simply use the Word Online option within OneDrive.
- *Google Drive* (drive.google.com): This is another cloud service, only this one is hosted by Google and works with all computers with internet access. It also requires a free account, but if a student already has a Google account, such as Gmail, this is already available to them without registering again. Documents are hosted online and can be commented on and shared with other users. There are also options for Google account holders to connect to free services such as Kaizena (www.kaizena.com) that allow for voice commenting.
- *Apache OpenOffice Writer* (www.openoffice.org): This is a free, open source word processor that is available for Windows, Linux, and Mac. It is compatible with Microsoft Office documents and can also be used to add written comments. It has the same problem as Microsoft Word in that

users need to email documents back and forth, but for students that have limited income, this is a great free option. There is also a USB drive version available for users to run from a thumb drive. This is great if a student needs to use a public computer and doesn't have access to a word processor.

• **Video or audio sharing:** Once a teacher has created a screencast or audio recording, that file needs to be shared with the student. There are a number of ways to do that.

 o *Class website or LMS:* If the class already has an online site, the teacher can share the file with the student through that site. This is one of the simplest ways and keeps an ongoing record of the student's work.

 o *Cloud host:* Using a host such as Google Drive or OneDrive, a teacher can upload the file and then share the link with the student. This also keeps an ongoing portfolio of the student's work, but is less integrated than a class site. Only the teacher needs to have an account with the cloud service, since the shared link is accessible from anyone who receives the link.

 o *Email:* This is not a great option since the size of video files are often quite large and can cause problems with end users. Audio files are not as large and may not be as much of a problem.

 o *YouTube* (www.youtube.com): Teachers can upload and share their videos using this Google-owned site if they have a Google account. You must make sure to set the video as 'Unlisted' or the student would need also have a Google account.

 o *SendVid* (sendvid.com): This is another video hosting site similar to YouTube, but does not require registration. Uploaded files are always private, accessible only by those who have the link. End users can also download the file for offline viewing.

Once you have decided on the tools that work best for your situation, you will need to give it a test run. Choose something small to work on such as a short paragraph or something the students have already done and received feedback on. This takes away some of the stress of getting through a large document while still getting used to the process. Open the document in your preferred document viewer and annotation tool. If the work was handwritten, you may need to scan the document first using a photocopier or flatbed scanner. Read through the document and look for areas you would like to comment on, but don't make any large comments on the document itself. Personally, I try to find the key things I would like my students to work on such as a spelling or grammar item, a formatting problem, or a genre issue. I then add a short identifying comment such as, "informal language," or, "sentence structure" in the area or areas that need work. I then turn on the screencasting software and talk the student through the comments, trying to connect to things we have done in class that will help them make the connection. For example, if we have been working on complex sentence structures and the student is still struggling with it in their writing, I would talk through the reasons why their sentence doesn't work as a complex sentence, and direct them to the work we have done in class on that subject. If I feel they need more examples of what I am talking about, I may create another document that I can pull up while in the middle of my screencast to show them while talking them through it. Essentially, this becomes another instructional moment that is more directed at each student without having to meet with that student one-on-one. Once my video is done, I simply upload it to the site I am using with the class and share the link with the student.

While the time to do this might take you longer than expected at first, the process becomes more streamlined over time. As mentioned earlier, give this a short run the first couple of times before attempting to use it on a longer writing assignment. Make sure you get feedback from the students on how they feel the system works for them. It may be that some students

are not as comfortable with this way of getting feedback and you may need to make adjustments for them. In one of my classes, one student liked the oral feedback, but had limited access to the internet. She did have a personal MP3 player which she took with her on the long bus rides to and from classes. As a result, I would copy my comments directly to her music player when she was in class, and I gave her a printed copy of my comments so she could look at things on her commute. This didn't take any extra work for me and fit the student better than using video comments. Other things to consider are privacy issues with cloud based storage, especially in places where laws tightly restrict it. Sharing the video or audio files directly with students may be necessary in those cases. You can also use sites that don't require registration, but make sure no personal data is in the document itself.

While this method did take a bit of learning on my part, the savings of time over the long term has been incredibly valuable. It has been encouraging to receive positive comments from students regarding their access to me. I've also had to be more precise in my instruction as I place students directly in the centre of their own learning. It's hasn't always been easy, but it has definitely been worth it.

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Nathan Hall *is an Instructional Resource Coordinator for LISTN. He has worked for Douglas College as an EAP and TESOL instructor and is an advocate for the proper use of educational technology in the language classroom. He is also an avid blogger and Twitter user in the areas of language teaching and educational technology. You can find out more at info.nathanhall.ca*

Ready and Prepared:
A Reflection on my TESL Program Experience

by Hiba El-Najjar

With two courses left for my psychology BA with TRU, I was unsure of what I would do once I graduated. In a hurried state, I found myself registered in the TESL program at Douglas College. Within weeks, I found myself sitting in a classroom filled with strangers. Our instructors were fast to tell us how much of a workload we would have, and we were constantly reminded of it with assignments, projects and group work. With the TESL program and my two online courses (for my BA), I was mentally prepared to have a tough battle; but was I ready?
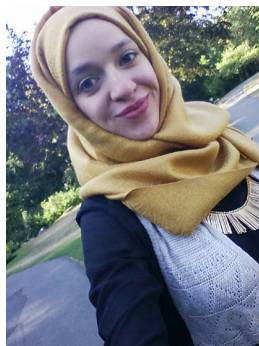
Theoretically, I thought that if I understood all the concepts of teaching ESL, I could overcome all assignments and all tests. However, the thought of being in a classroom and using the concepts and techniques we had been learning to teach ESL frightened me. "I can do this" I kept telling myself. I found myself truly struggling once the practicum came around, and this was the real obstacle that I had to pass. I felt that I got the short end of the deal with being put in a grammar based ESL classroom. I was quick to start my teaching hours, but I was also quick to make a lot of mistakes. Being observed by a sponsor teacher while teaching was very nerve wracking for me and reminded me of my lack of experience. I found that every time I made a mistake, it was not easy to learn from them, but it had to be done. Still, as I learned from one mistake, I took a step and made a new mistake and the cycle continued.

Understanding my mistakes and learning from them was my biggest struggle during my practicum, from making lesson plans, to dealing with students, to board work, to presenting the lesson. Practice makes perfect, and I can only practice if I know what my mistakes are; my practicum may have been a struggle, but it was a learning experience.

At the end of the TESL program, while working as an Arabic language teacher for children, I realized that I have been using many of the techniques we had learned correctly like concept checking, jazz chants, elicitation, and giving instructions. It was such a realization for me that what we learned does not apply only to teaching ESL, but to language teaching in general, dealing with others, and in everyday routine.

With no courses left, a psychology BA and a TESL certificate, I was sure of what I wanted to do. I want to be in a classroom filled with strangers who I can constantly teach and give a workload to; at least not as much as our program. I want to always be prepared with a lesson plan and hope to always be prepared in the face of any tough battles.

Hiba El-Najjar *is 21 years old. She has a bachelor's degree in psychology and now a TESL certificate from Douglas College. She is Palestinian-Canadian. She moved to Canada when she was very young from Saudi and returned to Saudi for a few years. She moved back to Canada with her family to study and here she is now, on the search for an ESL class to make her own.*

BC TEAL

Call for Submissions to the BC TEAL Journal

The *BC TEAL Journal* (ejournals.ok.ubc.ca/index.php/BCTJ) is a peer-reviewed publication of the Association of BC Teachers of English as an Additional Language (BC TEAL). The journal exists to promote scholarship related to the teaching and learning of English as an Additional Language (EAL) in British Columbia, with articles explicitly reflecting the varying contexts and settings of the BC TEAL membership.

The *BC TEAL Journal* invites the submission of original previously unpublished contributions, such as research articles or theoretical analysis, classroom practice, and opinion essays, from all sectors and experience levels represented by the BC TEAL membership. Research type articles should be no more than 7,000 words, plus references. Theoretical analysis, classroom practice, and point of view essays should be no more than 3,500 words, plus references. Please refer to the Author Guidelines for more information on submitting to this journal.

Manuscripts are accepted on an ongoing basis throughout the year, with papers that have completed the review and editing process being published in either the Fall or Spring issue. For more information on the submission process, please visit ejournals.ok.ubc.ca/index.php/BCTJ/about/submissions.

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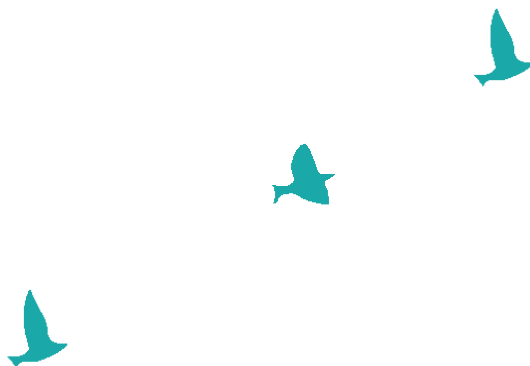
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