



The 44th Annual BC TEAL Conference, May 4-5, 2012, Capilano University

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Contributors:

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Letter from the President

Dear TEAL News Readers,

I write this letter to you shortly after meeting the newest iteration of the TEAL Board. This year's board is the biggest ever—20 members who come from all parts of the sector. For the first time in many years, the TEAL board is truly representative of the diversity of our field. We have board members from public post-secondary institutions, private language schools, and ELSA providers. Some of our members are relatively new to the EAL field, whereas others have years of experience, and years of volunteer dedication to BC TEAL. Be sure to check out the TEAL website to learn more about the board members.



As for myself, I have been on the TEAL board for several years, but now I am serving in the role of president. I look forward to the challenges and responsibilities entailed with being president. I know that with the help of the dedicated board members, and in particular, Past-President Michael Galli, I am in good hands.

Our membership continues to grow at a steady rate. As I write this, membership is at 740. It is exciting to see strong membership numbers and indeed strong interest in the Association and what it has to offer. *TEAL News* is obviously one of the benefits we offer to members, and non-members, as well as the community pages on the website. I sincerely hope that members explore the Groups pages, and join and participate in these mini-communities.

Of course, the annual professional development conference is TEAL's most anticipated event, and this year's conference was a resounding success. Please see the report and photos in this issue of *TEAL News*. In the past few years, TEAL has also hosted a number of regional conferences and other PD events. This year, BC TEAL will co-host the 2012 TESL Canada Conference in Kamloops. Conference co-chairs and BC TEAL board members, Karen Densky and Joe Dobson, have been working hard to ensure the national conference is a great success. I hope that many of our BC TEAL members will be in attendance to welcome our colleagues from across Canada, and to really showcase the talent and professionalism of the BC TEAL community!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shawna Williams".

Shawna Williams
President, BC TEAL
president@bctéal.org

Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the Spring issue of *TEAL News*. It is a pleasure to join BC TEAL in this capacity as the new editor. Sincere thanks to Patricia Nicoli who produced excellent newsletters in the past and remains involved still.

“See the Big Picture in EAL Acquisition” is the theme for this issue. It’s important that we see our industry from all perspectives and consideration of all involved. I have therefore chosen articles and information to broaden our knowledge and assist in seeing “who” and “what else” is out there to discover and learn from.

Patricia Nicoli suggested resurrecting the Teacher Profile segment and I gladly included it in this issue. Sylvia Ozbalt has maintained a long and committed career. Please “see” how she has maintained this enthusiasm which is easy as she vividly recollects her journey so far!



The articles in this issue have been chosen with care which I hope will assist you in “seeing” and extending a hand however you can and in whichever capacity you find yourself in the industry. Dr. Li-Shih Huang has generously shared her thoughts on Action Research. This is a growing area of practice and is sure to clear the frost from your lenses. Anea Wilbur has shared her work and what it entails, assisting EAL students with mental health issues.

Nathan Hall, who presented at the recent 2012 BC TEAL Annual Conference and who impressed me with his insight and knowledge of linking online tools for students and instructors, sheds light on how to incorporate Eportfolios into our practice. As an alternative to Conference reports I have chosen to include a series of “tweets” by Michelle Goertzen, outlining her experience at the 2012 TESOL Convention.

As the structure, policy decisions and demographics of our students change and rapidly, I have included an article by Scott Douglas addressing the issue of credit bearing EAL courses. Perspective will be gained from the issues he brings forward, providing his rationale in favour of this direction.

The Teal Charitable Foundation is prominently featured in this issue under the superb leadership of Jennifer Pearson-Terrell, who has made it her business to “see” deeper and acknowledge the effort of award recipients.

In closing, I would like to welcome our new president, Shawna Williams, who is at the helm of a wonderfully engaged BC TEAL Community. This would not take place without her wise leadership.

An exceptional thanks to the Newsletter Committee members who have graciously given of their time to assist with this issue.

I invite you to provide feedback on any segment of the newsletter and assist me in disseminating information and linking individuals to the field.

Adjust your eyes and mind and start “seeing” more profoundly and from several different angles!

Sincerely,

Carin Moolman
Editor, TEAL Newsletter
newsletter@bctéal.org

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

BC TEAL 2012 Conference Chairs' Report submitted by Shawna Williams

The 44th Annual BC TEAL Professional Development Conference was held May 4th and 5th at the beautiful North Vancouver campus of Capilano University. Over 400 conference delegates attended the plenary sessions, various workshops, publishers' displays, and fundraising events.

The theme "ESL: English as a Sustainable Language" was approached from a variety of perspectives. We were very fortunate to have Andy Hargreaves as our Friday keynote speaker. In his entertaining and inspiring way, Professor Hargreaves spoke to us about sustaining professional capital, a combination of human capital, social capital, and decisional capital. Following his address, conference attendees were heard referring to his talk for the duration of the conference. He also shared with me that his own experience at BC TEAL was "an absolute pleasure".

Friday's plenary panel introduced five perspectives of sustainability from local, institutional contexts to global perspectives. Having been a presenter on this panel—speaking on sustainability of ESL programs and the profession—I was touched by the many conversations I had with audience members following the panel. Indeed, issues of sustainability affect us all on some level.

Saturday's keynote speaker, Luisa Maffi, took a different stance, and engaged us in considering "the many voices of sustainability" and particularly, the role of English among almost 7,000 other spoken languages. She followed her keynote address with a workshop presentation, which has inspired many teachers to bring issues of biocultural diversity into their classrooms.

On a practical sustainability front, the conference book was printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper using vegetable inks. There was some criticism that serving food and refreshments on disposable plates and cups contrasted our theme. Fortunately, our host, Capilano University, has a strong commitment to sustainability, and most of the disposable containers were compostable. There are still steps we can take to improve our sustainability practices, and I hope that TEAL doesn't limit the commitment to one conference.

Of course, the workshops were an integral part of the conference's success. There were 56 sessions offered, and the vast majority of evaluation respondents wrote favorable reviews regarding the workshops. As conference co-chair, I wasn't able to attend many of the sessions, but overheard many participants discussing the various workshops and how they had more ideas for their teaching toolkits, or even how the more theory-based presentations could contribute to their reflective practices.

Networking opportunities are always a hit at the conference, and this year's inclusion of lunch allowed for more on-site mingling. Friday evening's wine & cheese reception drew a healthy crowd, who helped raise close to \$3000 at the TEAL Charitable Foundation silent auction and raffle.

Of course, much of the success of the conference must be attributed to our many sponsors for their financial support, as well as our volunteer committees for their much needed and appreciated in-kind assistance. BC TEAL is particularly thankful for the generous support of Capilano University, whose president, Kris Bulcroft, kicked off the conference with her own highly entertaining reminiscences of being an ESL instructor as well as being an adult language learner.

I sincerely hope that everyone who attended this year's Annual Professional Development Conference found that it spoke to their own particular needs and contexts in such a way as to help sustain their individual teaching practices.



CONFERENCE SNAPS



An engaged audience at Luisa Maffi's Keynote Presentation



Dr. Luisa Maffi, Keynote Speaker



Invited Speaker, Gilberto Diaz-Santos



(left to right) Nic Collins, Conference Co-Chair & Dr. Andy Hargreaves, Keynote Speaker



Plenary: (left to right) Luisa Maffi, Gilberto Diaz-Santos, Shawna Williams, Angie Gerst, Roumi Illieva



Michael Galli, Past President of BC TEAL announcing the TCF Raffle Winners



Joe Dobson & Karen Densky, Co-Chairs of the TESL Canada Conference October 11, 12, 13 at TRU



Sandra Boehm, BC TEAL's Administrator



(left to right) Shawna Williams, President of TEAL, Colleen Rogan, TEAL Board Member, and Brenda Lohrenz, TESL Canada Director



(left to right) Liet Hellwig, Former TEAL Board Member & Carin Moolman, New Editor of the TEAL Newsletter



Dedicated Volunteers

A Short Rationale for Credit Bearing English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Courses

by Scott Douglas

Introduction

As Canadian institutions of higher learning look to attract greater numbers of international students, one of the biggest barriers to entering English medium undergraduate studies remains the English Language Proficiency (ELP) requirements. For international students speaking English as an Additional Language and falling short of the ELP requirements, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programs are one option for beginning their studies at English medium post-secondary institutions in Canada. Increasingly, domestic students from linguistically diverse backgrounds are also turning to EAP in order to access higher education. However, these programs can be expensive, lengthy, and non-credit bearing. An important step towards justifying the cost and time involved in studying EAP would be to ensure that EAP courses are part of a credit bearing program of studies that counts towards the overall credits needed for graduation. The main rationale for doing so underlines the academic rigour and the intrinsic fairness of providing credit for EAP courses. As Canadian campuses further internationalize and embrace the changing demographics of the local student population, recognizing the language study efforts of multilingual students is a top academic priority.

The Academic Nature of EAP Classes

EAP is English language teaching with a specific academic purpose, and that purpose is full participation in the academic and social life of a post-secondary institution of learning. Because of this, effective EAP courses are grounded in developing the Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1981) necessary for success in educational settings. By building the language skills essential to function in the increasingly decontextualized and cognitively demanding nature of higher studies, namely CALP, EAP courses foster proficiency in the specialized language of higher education. This calls for a challenging academic framework that includes written assignments, problem solving, independent study, higher cognition, and academic vocabulary particular to undergraduate studies. By developing proficiency in the

specialized language of higher education, EAP is “designed to continue the normal linguistic / cognitive / academic / cultural development” (CATESL, 1994, np) of its students. EAP programs prepare students for the cognitive challenge of university level studies and for academic success. This entails standards driven content courses that are equal to the subject matter of other undergraduate courses (TESOL, 2008) and provides a solid academic grounding that calls for institutional recognition in the form of credit counting towards graduation.

Non-Remedial Content of EAP

EAP is a field of academic endeavour in its own right. It is not a precursor to higher learning, but a firm co-requisite of successful post-secondary studies. The content of EAP courses is not a repetition of high school, but rather the content mirrors and amplifies what students are doing during their undergraduate studies, such as gaining advanced language ability, cultural content, discipline specific rhetorical patterns, referencing styles, critical thinking development, study skills, learning strategies, core concepts, and research skills. EAP courses go far beyond remediating English language skills to fostering students’ academic engagement in a wide spectrum of abilities vital to undergraduate studies. These are skills that are obtained during the course of undergraduate studies, not before. Furthermore, developing an increasingly precise control of an additional language is not the same as having poor skills in a first language (CATESOL, 1994). EAP courses require advanced English language proficiency that is different from remediation in a first language (TESOL, 1987). In fact, EAP courses with demanding academic programs require students to participate in a level of study that is equal to other credit courses (CATESOL, 1994). By firmly being part of undergraduate studies and not a remedial prerequisite, credit is justifiably given to students who complete an EAP course.

Inclusion

The goal of EAP programs of study should be the promotion of equal access to the educational opportunities found on post-secondary campuses. Providing credit



for EAP emphasizes an institution's commitment to the inclusion of linguistically diverse learners. It further provides a sense of legitimacy because students in credit bearing EAP classes can see themselves as authentic members of the student body. Credit further provides access to a host of other opportunities that are available to all undergraduate students, such as university clubs, writing centre support, student services, student residences, and student government. This prevents the segregation and stigmatization of multilingual learners which may occur if they continue on to non-credit courses. True inclusive practice requires an active effort on the part of an institution to reach out and support the integration of multilingual students into the campus learning community. This requires courses with equal credit bearing status that facilitate full participation in the academic and social life of the institution.

Motivation

Credit bearing EAP classes also provide motivation for full active participation. EAP courses that earn credit toward graduation provide an attractive pathway to fulfilling the English language proficiency requirements for post-secondary studies. Credit can motivate students to take part in academically challenging programs of study with outcomes that provide a rich description of the English language abilities of successful EAP students. Further, receiving credit can increase student motivation and performance in EAP courses (TESOL, 1987; CATESOL, 1994) and students' attitudes can adjust to the potential awarding of credit, thus increasing student effort and attention in a course and preparing students for better academic success (Dobson and Kipnis, 2010). Credit provides a just reward for students who work hard and want to maintain a good Grade Point Average (Martino, 1992). Motivation is a key underlying factor in academic success, and credit provides a strong impetus for students to seek out programs of study that support multilingual learners.

Academic Rigour

Modern language programs on post-secondary campuses involve considerable academic rigour and challenge. Equally, credit bearing EAP programs must meet the same levels of academic rigour as other modern language courses that are subject to the same levels of oversight provided by an academic institution. Thus, as students receive credit for modern language courses such as Spanish, so too should

institutions give credit for EAP courses (Martino, 1992). By the same token, domestic students studying languages at post-secondary institutions abroad are often able to receive credit in their home institutions. It follows that EAP students in local post-secondary institutions have comparable learning experiences and find themselves in similar programs of study as their domestic counterparts do when studying in an international setting (Wood, n.d.). As a result, credit should be issued equally to both groups of students. This falls in line with the idea that students deserve academic credit for EAP, just as other students deserve credit for their language studies and courses in linguistic analysis (TESOL, 1987). When the academic rigour and required academic challenge are similar for two different programs of study, providing credit for both is a natural conclusion.

World-Wide Acceptance of Credit Bearing EAP

There is acceptance for credit bearing EAP courses around the English speaking world. In Canada, there are at least nine institutions of higher learning that provide credit for EAP courses (BCCAT, 2011). These include universities such as the University of Alberta and the University of Waterloo. In the United States, there are considerably more institutions with credit bearing EAP, with 49 out of 78 institutions surveyed by Williams (1995) offering credit. Examples of American institutions offering credit include the University of Michigan and the University of Southern California (BCCAT, 2011). In the United Kingdom, 18 universities, and in Australia, around 20 universities, also offer EAP credit (Melles, et al. 2005). Finally, New Zealand institutions of higher learning such as the University of Auckland also offer credit courses in academic language skills (Read, 2008). Thus, it is accepted practice in many post-secondary settings around the English speaking world to offer credit bearing EAP courses.

Conclusion

With rising numbers of both domestic and international students from linguistically diverse backgrounds studying at English medium post-secondary institutions in Canada, the importance of having credit bearing EAP courses as an alternative to non-credit English language classes and traditional large scale language testing continues to grow. Effective EAP courses put students through an academic program of study that challenges students in

“In Canada, there are at least nine institutions of higher learning that provide credit for EAP courses.”

equal measure to other courses they will encounter at the post-secondary level. By not giving credit where credit is due (Martino, 1992), institutions of higher learning are not recognizing the necessity and benefits of providing full academic recognition to EAP as a legitimate field of endeavour. Instead, by marginalizing EAP students in non-credit English language classes or relegating them to high stakes language testing, these institutions are side-lining themselves from a growing number of colleges, institutes, and universities that equate the value of multilingual learners with the value of the courses they need for academic success.

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An assistant professor in the Faculty of Education at UBC's Okanagan campus, Scott has worked with additional language learners throughout the world from the Middle East to Asia. His research primarily looks at the transition from high school to university and the vocabulary use



and academic achievement of non-native English speaking students. His other research interests include English for Academic Purposes curriculum design, online technology as a tool for fostering English language proficiency, and English as an Additional Language teacher training. He has also recently co-authored the English for Academic Purposes textbook *Q Skills for Success Reading and Writing 5*, published by Oxford University Press.

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Action Research

by Li-Shih Huang

When I was about to write this piece, I coincidentally came across a blog about the concern that “research is not adopted by those that could benefit from it most” and that “often, research never makes it beyond journal articles and into practice” (Landers, 2012). During this year’s American Educational Research Association (AERA) conference, which more than 13,000 researchers and educators from more than 60 countries attended, AERA president Arnetha F. Ball raised this same long-standing issue in her speech about how to bridge the knowledge-practice gap or the theory-practice divide. This brings us to this edition’s focus on *action research*. Do you have a question about your teaching or your students that has long puzzled you? Have you contemplated doing research in your own classroom that would help you solve pedagogical problems, but are unsure about how to tackle it? If so, read on. If not, I encourage you to explore with me for a moment the realm of action research and what engaging in it can offer you and our professional community.

I am a strong believer in the value and potential of research carried out by or with the involvement of teachers, in the pivotal role that teachers can play in cutting across that divide or bridging the gap between research and practice, and in doing the kinds of research that matters and is most relevant to learners in the real world. As language teachers, we all want to find ways to optimize learning for

our students. Since my first language teaching job in 1992, and continuing with my current work of training future language-teaching professionals and doing research related to second-language learning and teaching, I have never left my role as a practitioner teaching English-as-an-additional-language learners in a classroom context. This choice stems from my personal conviction about the ways that teaching and research feed off of and enrich each other, about the need to guard against doing research and discussing its pedagogical implications without walking in the teacher's shoes, and about the importance of establishing connections between research and practice. From teachers' perspectives, we know that practice is inherently and intricately influenced and embedded in a context, and that researching our own classroom is the most meaningful and direct way to build on our teaching skills and gain a deeper understanding of ourselves as practitioners, of our students, and of our classrooms.

In this installment, I will first briefly describe what action research is in the “What does it mean?” section. In the “What does research say?” section that follows next, I will share the challenges and opportunities you may encounter, as presented in the literature and as discovered in my personal action research experiences over the past decade. Finally, in the “What can we do?” section, I will share a user-friendly model that describes the steps involved in doing action research.





What does it mean?

You may have heard of some of the different terms that have been used to talk about *action research*, for example: *teacher research*, *teacher reflection*, *self-reflective inquiry*, *practitioner research*, or *practitioner enquiry*. The seminal work of Kurt Lewin (1848), a social psychologist who is usually credited as the creator of the term “action research,” describes such inquiry as involving a spiral of steps, “each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the result of the action” (p. 206) or a spiral of steps that consists of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Figure 1). Lewin’s view was that practices could be understood and changed only by involving practitioners in an inquiry.

Since then, various definitions of action research have been put forward in the literature. The definition advanced by Wilf Carr and Stephen Kemmis is among the most widely known. Their definition is also firmly lodged within the realm of the practitioner and closely linked to the notion of reflective practice, as developed by Schön (1983) (see Huang, 2011). The overall idea is that action research consists of research activities that are oriented toward enhancing practice. In their classic, widely cited definitions, Carr and Kemmis (1986) describe action research as being about improving (a) social/educational practices, (b) the understanding of these practices, and (c) the situations in which the practices occur.

Recent definitions include those by Ann Burns (2010), an internationally known advocate and leading expert in action research, who defines action research as “taking a self-reflective, critical, and systematic approach to exploring [teachers’] own teaching contexts” (p. 2). Most recently, Pappas and Tucker-Raymond (2011) defined action research as “intentional, systematic inquiry conducted by teachers in their classrooms or schools” (p. 3). Both definitions include the word “systematic,” which conveys the importance of the way data should be gathered, analyzed, interpreted, and disseminated. The word “critical” evokes the idea of an inquiring, questioning, or problematizing stance (Burns, 2010; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) and of activities that are geared to achieve best practices. The intentionality in action research resides in what Ellen Langer, Professor of Psychology from

Harvard University, called “mindfulness”¹ of the events and surroundings in testing our hunches, challenging our preconceived ideas, experimenting with new methods or procedures in our teaching, and carrying out planned actions with specific pedagogical questions in mind in order to change or improve our practices. (For a detailed historical account of the development of action research, refer to Burns, 2011.)

What does the research say?

In this segment, I will share some of the challenges and opportunities that you may encounter, as pointed out by other action researchers (e.g., Nunan, 2006; Rainey, 2000; Borg, 2009) and as encountered in my own practice.

Teachers are so inundated with work and available research and pedagogical materials that finding time to read studies that have the potential to inform their teaching is already a challenge. How can teachers find time to conduct

research? It goes without saying that the lack of time to engage in action research that is recursive or cyclical in nature is one of the most critical challenges faced by instructors. This lack makes action research difficult or even impossible. Hand-in-hand with the lack of time is the lack of institutional and research support to carry out such an inquiry. Other commonly mentioned challenges include a lack of knowledge about the processes involved in action research and the need for teacher training in data collection, analysis, and

interpretation.

The lack of knowledge and training and research methodology can translate to the encountering of issues related to maintaining a systematic approach and rigour in research methods and processes, which, in turn, can invite criticisms about the extent to which action research is valid and/or trustworthy. The dual-role of teacher-researcher and the student-teacher/researcher relationship also might introduce researcher biases, and, as such, researchers must take measures, such as clarifying assumptions and biases, involving a second observer or coder in data collection or

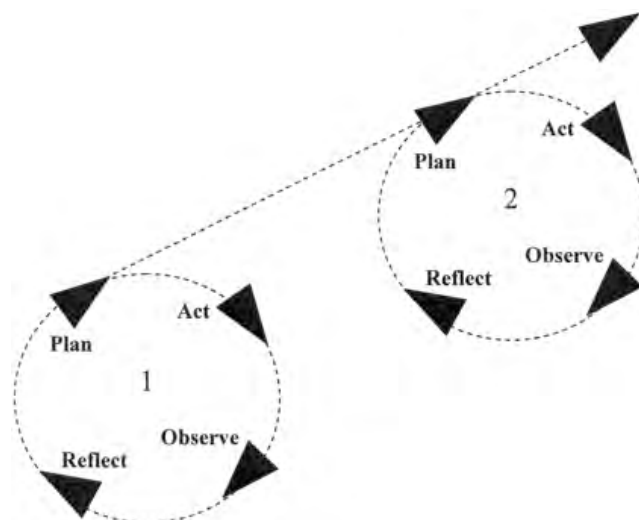


Figure 1. The Action Research Spiral (Source: Pagliari, 2007)

1 “Mindfulness” refers to a “heightened sense of situational awareness and a conscious control over one’s thoughts and behaviour relative to the situation” (Marzano, 2003, p. 65).

analysis, and using multiple sources of data to triangulate findings and interpretations to minimize the threat of subjectivity in data collection, analysis, and interpretation. In my most recent action research (Huang, 2012), I also encountered some of these various ongoing struggles. In particular, I have reflected on the methodological challenges. For example, there is, on the one hand, the demand for action research to adhere to standards of scientifically rigorous research, while on the other hand, one must keep in mind the pedagogically driven thinking goal of our work: to enhance our students' learning by improving our own practices. Any intervention that is undertaken to accommodate our students' needs throughout the research process is a natural component of the cyclical reflection, but such ongoing intervention derived from reflection-in-action (i.e., concurrent reflection) or reflection-on-action (i.e., retrospective reflection) may jeopardize the researcher's ability to make valid claims with all the intervening variables. Without objectively derived outcomes, including controlling factors that may have played a role in contributing to differences in the treatment/intervention, how do we know that what we are doing really matters in our students' learning? (For an example of action research and a full discussion of the challenges, see Huang, 2012.)

Finally, any research might produce a negative result or, after all the effort, produce no significant results at all. This is a normal part of doing research that is often underplayed, because of the inherent, long-standing bias of journals, which tend to publish studies that have produced noteworthy results, neglecting the fact that often much can be learned, both empirically and pedagogically, through the sharing of studies that did not produce significant results. The possibility of negative or inconclusive results, along with the way criticism is often perceived as something negative (rather than as useful information to help develop and improve our work), and, later, challenges in the dissemination phase of making work public, all add to the anxiety of practitioners. This tendency also points to the need for action researchers to be cognizant of the potential for biased reporting, which undermines the quality of the research.

With challenges also come opportunities. A substantial and diverse body of literature in other disciplines has accumulated over the years that provide guidance to teachers in conducting action research (see Slutsky et al., 2005). In the field of second-language acquisition, however, as Burns (2011) pointed out, "volumes for practitioners on the processes of conducting action research per se are still scarce" (p. 243). Nonetheless, the recent effort by the largest international professional association, TESOL, to encourage an inquiry stance towards language teaching

through the publication of a six-volume action research series edited by Thomas Farrell is a significant movement in acknowledging the value and importance of action research. The series offers a collection of studies conducted by language practitioners in various parts of the world. With a growing recognition of the scholarship of teaching and learning, publications that welcome the connection between theory and practice are more commonly accepting articles on action research.

We now know that action research is a tool that enables practitioners to discover ways to improve teaching practices (Sagor, 2004). Conducting action research can be considered a professional growth and development opportunity because, through such research, we can empirically test a new teaching strategy or evaluate a new curriculum, approach, method, or techniques and share our discoveries with our professional community. There is a rich body of literature that exemplifies how participating in action research can bring about positive change in various aspects of learning and teaching practices (see Burns, 2010; Ferrance, 2000; Johnson & Button, 2000; Sax & Fisher, 2001). Most importantly, instead of being consumers or objects of others' research, practitioners take the stage, and become part of the research design, implementation, interpretation, and dissemination of the results; they take on the role of a change agent that can transform and/or expand teachers' own perspectives, pedagogical practices, and thinking. Growing evidence also supports how language teachers benefit from collaborations with other practitioners or researchers in exploring common issues that circumvent commonly raised concerns about the time, support, methodological expertise, and dissemination involved in action research (see Burns, 2010).

What can we do?

So, what is the process involved in conducting action research? Various models intended to illustrate the processes involved in action research have been put forward (e.g., Elliot, 1991; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; O'Leary, 2004; Stringer, 2007). Kemmis and McTaggart's (1988) model "Plan – Act – Observe – Reflect" spiral of activity provides novices an easy entry to their action research journeys. Figure 2, first proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), is a classic and oft-referenced action-research model that is still valid and being widely adopted/adapted today; this model illustrates the four phases mentioned earlier, but in continuing, spiral cycles that convey the iterative or recursive nature of action research.

Briefly, in the **planning** phase, identify a problem or issue that interests or puzzles you. Then identify a plan of action that aims to bring about an improvement in understanding. With the realities and constraints of our particular practices

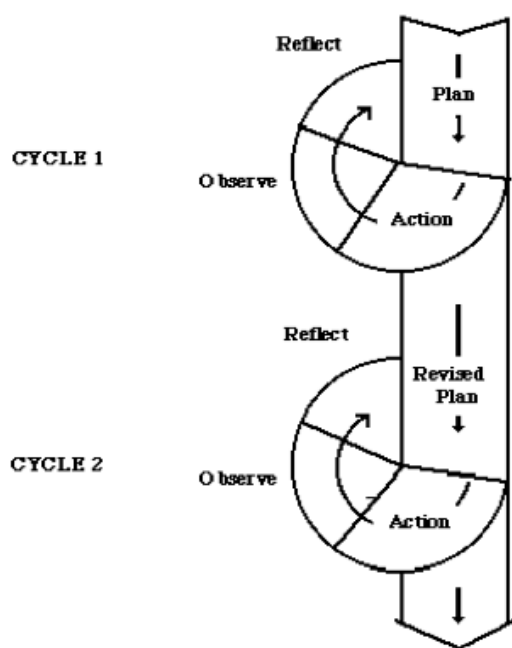


Figure 2. Cyclical action research model based on Kemmis and McTaggart (1988).

in mind, hypothesize what changes/interventions might bring an improvement and plan how to implement them.

In the **action** phase, implement the plan or intervention that has been carefully developed to address a particular problem or sets of problems. It is important to note that the required ethical clearance to safeguard confidentiality, ensure consent, minimize power relations, and so on must be obtained prior to the action phase, and then informed ethical consent must be obtained from those involved before carrying out the action.

In the **observation** phase, systematic observations of particular, relevant aspects of classroom practice are made to determine what is happening. This phase involves collecting the data needed to answer your questions (e.g., observing systematically, documenting the behaviours and contexts of participants, conducting interviews or using questionnaires to elicit the opinions or perceptions of those involved, collecting students' work that is relevant to your research questions, and inviting an outsider's observations).

In the **reflection** phase, reflect on what is happening and then develop revised action plans based upon new understanding or questions that arose during the previous phases. As Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) and Stringer (2007) pointed out, the reality of the process may not be as neat or orderly as presented in the model. The phases naturally overlap and are more fluid and open in response to the dynamic nature of learning settings and events in the

classroom. (For a detailed explanation of each of the four phases and cases of action research in our field, refer to Burns, 2010.)

With this user-friendly model in mind, seek out opportunities to establish a collaborative network of colleagues, researchers, and/or student teachers, who share your interests and passion, to offer mutual support and to alleviate any trepidation that you may feel about doing action research if you are contemplating it.

Conclusion

This column was inspired by teachers whom I have the pleasure to meet in person at conferences such as TESOL or on the Twittersverse. These teachers are committed to professional development and to searching for ways to make their classes not only effective but also the best possible learning experiences for their students. As Freeman (1996) once said: "You have to know the story in order to tell the story" (p. 89). No studies or research articles in the sea of literature out there can tell your story or directly answer your own pedagogical questions. I hope that this brief piece will prompt you to see classroom challenges as opportunities, to take risks in adopting different teaching strategies that may offer a glimpse of new possibilities for both you and your students, and to reach out to colleagues or other researchers as you start your own action research journey. By sharing what we do, together we can create a teacher voice, build stronger support for teacher inquiry, and share stories that have or will contribute to our professional community through research that can meaningfully connect theory, practice, and research.

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Dr. Li-Shih Huang is Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics and Learning and Teaching Scholar-in-Residence at the University of Victoria. She welcomes readers' comments or further questions about the content of this column, as well as suggestions about theories that they would like to have featured in upcoming columns. She can be contacted at ls Huang@uvic.ca. You can also follow her on Twitter at @AppLingProf or visit www.li-shihhuang.ca.





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Dr. Ken Beatty (Pearson-Longman)

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www.tru.ca/tc2012

TEAL Charitable Foundation

Awards, Scholarships and Bursaries

The TEAL Charitable Foundation (TCF) offers awards, scholarships and bursaries to support ESL teachers, students and programs. You are eligible if you meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Membership in BC TEAL
- ESL/EFL teaching experience in Canada
- BC TEAL volunteer experience

Funding is available for

- teacher education and professional development in the field of ESL instruction
- international travel to research or study in the field of ESL instruction
- the promotion of AIDS awareness and/or health education through ESL instruction
- research projects, special projects, conferences, seminars, matching funds, seed money and teacher/learner project.

TCF AWARDS	TCF AMOUNTS	APPLICATION DEADLINES
AIDS & Health Education Fund	\$3000	November 1
Nan Poliakoff Memorial Award	\$750	November 1
Mary Ashworth Scholarship	\$1000	November 1
Pat Wakefield Scholarship	\$3000	November 1
TCF Project Funding Award	\$3000	November 1
BC TEAL/ TESOL Bursary	\$1000	November 1
TCF Refugee Award	\$1000	January 31
David C. Lam ESL Scholarships (2 awards)	\$2500	January 31

Please note that in accordance with BC TEAL Bylaws, applications received from TCF or BC TEAL Board members or by project teams staffed by TCF or BC TEAL Board members cannot be considered for TEAL Charitable Foundation Awards, Scholarships or Bursaries.

Visit our website for additional information and application forms.

www.bcteal.org

Kue Bway's Journey

by Jennifer Pearson Terrell, Chair, TEAL Charitable Foundation

Kue Bway is the winner of the TCF Refugee Award for 2012. This year's award recognizes not only Kue Bway's academic excellence but also her long and brave journey as both a refugee and human being.

Kue Bway's journey as a refugee began in 1993 with her birth in the UNHCR Refugee Camp at Mae Ma Luangamp in Thailand. Kue's family were Karen refugees from Burma who had fled to Thailand in 1986 to escape the government's oppression. In 1993 when Kue was just seven months old her father passed away from tuberculosis leaving her mother and his four children to face life alone in the UNHCR refugee camp. Life in the refugee camp was harsh; food was scarce, living conditions were crowded and often inadequate and there was no formal education. Kue's family would remain in the same refugee camp for the next fourteen years. Finally in November 2007 with the support of Canada and the UNHCR, Kue was able to travel as a refugee to Canada with her mother, her aunt, two sisters and one brother.

As a refugee new to Canada, Kue Bway spoke no English when she started ESL classes at Queen Elizabeth Secondary in January 2008. Her ESL teacher Susan Ellis describes Kue as a very special ESL student with the following words;

"Teaching Kue Bway has been a real privilege. My time working with Kue has been like no other in all my experience as an ESL teacher.

I first met Kue in January 2008 when she came to Queen Elizabeth Secondary as a Grade 9 ESL student. At that

time, Kue had been in Canada for just one month. Kue and her family had difficult lives in Burma and Thailand and even now her single parent family struggles to make a life in Canada. However, I can honestly say that I have never met a student who worked as hard as Kue to master the English language.

Kue is a born leader because of her intelligence and personable nature. She often helps students in lower grades at lunch or after school. She instills the idea that academics are very important and that newcomers must try twice as hard to complete school. She also finds time to join

school groups and teams: Green Team, Badminton, Roots and Rhythms and Student Council as well as to volunteer in the community at her church, the Surrey Food Bank and the Immigrant Services Society."

During the past four years as a student at Queen Elizabeth Secondary, Kue Bway has traveled still further on her personal journey of discovery. Kue has faced with grace and perseverance the very real

challenges presented by a new country, a new culture and a new language. In the spring this incredible young woman will graduate on the Honour Roll from Queen Elizabeth Secondary. Kue is the only person in her family who has graduated from high school. In the fall with funds from the TCF Refugee Award, Kue will continue her journey by registering at Douglas Community College and beginning her life long dream of becoming a teacher. As Kue expresses in her own words, "My top goal is to become a teacher and help those less fortunate than myself. I know the positive difference a teacher can make to the lives of students and society in general"



Kue Bway with her ESL teacher Susan Ellis at the 2012 TEAL Conference

Silent Auction & Raffle

by Robin Steen & Chris Gradin

The TEAL Charitable Foundation (TCF) held its third annual silent auction and raffle recently at the 2012 BC TEAL Annual Conference at Capilano University, with all proceeds going toward the TCF Refugee Award Endowment Fund. Over \$3,000 was raised, outdoing any recent TCF fund-raising event. All moneys raised by the TCF to this end will be kindly matched by BC TEAL, as we pursue our \$100,000 goal in this worthy initiative.

Many thanks are due the TEAL members and conference attendees who purchased auction items and raffle tickets, or made cash donations. The deepest gratitude, of course, is reserved for those on the long list of generous donors who made this silent auction possible.

Appreciation also goes to committee members Elmira Mafi, Krystal Seko and Kelly Potter for their fund-raising

and coordination around the auction and raffle. As well, the TCF gratefully acknowledges Michael Galli, Adriana del Paso Gordillo, Jennifer Pearson Terrell and others who have helped support this important cause.

The TCF has many more fun and interesting events ahead, and we hope all BC TEAL Members will join us in our effort to create this annual scholarship to benefit one or two young people each year who have found refuge and hope in Canada. We can help them, but we need *your* help.

Robin Steen & Chris Gradin

Co-chairs, TCF Fund-raising Committee

Congratulations to TCF Award Winners

Pat Wakefield Scholarship (2012) awarded to **Wendy Royal** to research the feasibility and implications of granting undergraduate degree credits for English for Academic Purposes.

TEAL Charitable Foundation Refugee Award (2012) awarded to **Kue Bway** to study English at a post secondary institutions

AIDS & Health Education Fund (2012) awarded to **Lisa Herrera** and **Simran Sahota** of ISSBC for the development of “Talking About Pain Lesson Package” for ELSA Literacy [CLB 1] through ELSA Level 5 [CLB 6] students to be distributed province wide.

AIDS & Health Education Fund (2012) awarded to **Elizabeth Namazzi** for research into “Cultural Practices and the Spread of HIV/AIDS in Uganda: Students’ Perspectives and Curriculum Implications”.

David C. Lam ESL Scholarships (2012) awarded to **Navleen Bhatia and Xianni Kuang** for post secondary education in British Columbia.

TCF Photos



(left to right) Elizabeth Namazzi, Winner, Aids and Health Education Award, with Jennifer Pearson-Terrell, Chair TCF



(left to right) Kelly Potter, TCF Board; Krystal Seko, TCF Board & Photographer



TCF Fundraising Committee: (left to right) Chris Gradin, Elmira Mafi, and Chair, Robin Steen



(left to right) Wendy Royal, Winner Pat Wakefield Scholarship; Robin Russel, Winner, TEAL Lifetime Contributor Award; Anne Talbot, Presenter and former TEAL Board Member

Sylvia Ozbalt's conversation with Patricia Nicoli

How did you find a career in teaching English as an additional language?

How did I find this career? Backwards, I guess. I had never imagined I would find myself here, now for 21 years. I also guess that's true for many of us.

My parents were both linguists, and I grew up with dinner conversations about the pronunciation or etymology of one word or another. There were heated debates where the dictionaries would come flying out to administer the final verdict, or musings about the geographical origins of my new schoolmate's surname. Talking about language just felt too routine to me. It was not something I thought I would make a career of.

Furthermore, I had never imagined myself in the same profession as my mother. I saw her arriving every day from a full workday spent teaching adult ESL and throwing herself onto the bed for a short recovery before dinner. After dinner, she would spend the evening cutting and pasting (literally, in the '60s) her lessons together. She certainly seemed passionate and professionally fulfilled, but it looked intense, and anyway, I was always a bit of a rebel. I wanted to map out my own – though completely unformulated – plan.

So after completing a BA in Anthropology and Geography in 1980, I got into aerobics. For 23 years. In 1991, in the middle of an absolutely absorbing and exhilarating career in the fitness industry that had taken me from Montreal to Quebec City, I was invited to teach an English class at O'Sullivan College (Collège O'Sullivan de Québec), which was a client of the gym I owned at the time.

We had been providing the college with the Physical Education requirement for the CEGEP diploma program they were offering in Office Systems Technology. I was a

native English speaker, a rarity in Quebec City, and I had developed a relationship with both management and students that seemed to have made me enough of a fit.

O'Sullivan had a reputation for its strong English program. When I came onboard, they were expanding to two buildings with a total capacity of approximately 450 students who needed to take three to six English courses as a core requirement for graduation.



Sylvia Ozbalt, ELI Head Teacher

After one session of facilitating a free-style optional conversation course, I was asked by the owner-director, Jean-François Deschênes, to come into the core academic program. This was exactly at the time when a new English department coordinator, Shel Montgomery, had arrived and was poised to revolutionize the entire curriculum with a communicative, integrated-skill, task-based approach. This kind of approach was quite new to the city at that time.

I learned my core skills and purpose in the classroom through Shel, and with her sensitive, generous and solid guidance I discovered myself as an ESL instructor. Lunch hours and evenings were filled with collaborative team meetings about curriculum development, materials design, textbook decisions, and assessment standardization. These meetings involved

reflection and discussion of our philosophy, approach, methodology and rationale. Over the years, we developed what is now a fine program, and the process taught me a lot of what I know.

I continued running the gym and teaching English at O'Sullivan for the next 13 years, gradually reducing the amount of involvement I had with the former and increasing my dedication to the latter. When Shel and Jean-François left to pursue education projects in Senegal, I was offered Shel's role as English department coordinator, which made me responsible for the English Campus building we occupied,

instructors, policies, programs, parties and all. What an adventure and opportunity!

I stayed in that role until I moved to Vancouver in 2004. I thought it would be easy to find work here based on my experience, but it was not. I spent a few, frankly, very hard and hungry years jumping from one short-term contract to another – with quite a few breaks in between. I’m thankful now for the opportunity this period gave me to experience the range of institutions in the city. I soon understood that I would need specific certification to continue teaching ESL as a career, so I first did a TESOL In-Service Diploma at VCC (2008) and then an MA in TESOL and Applied Linguistics (DL) at Leicester University, UK (2011).

Now I work at the English Language Institute at UBC and could not be happier. Every step has been worth it because it has brought me to a place where everything I have learned is put into practice. I am challenged every day, and every day I have the privilege of interacting with a group of people I admire, learn from, and laugh with.

What recollections do you have of your first teaching job?

The amount of work, the meetings, the reflection, the creative energy, my growing confidence and the incredible highs are all part of my memories of my first teaching job.

I was running the gym, teaching aerobics part-time and teaching English part-time. Of course, anyone who has done either of these two jobs will probably agree that there is no such thing as “part-time”. I have, frankly, never in my life felt as close to “the edge” as I did during those first years. I still remember those dizzying moments, swaying through fluctuating panic, made worse by physical fatigue, eternal prep, lack of confidence, and an absolutely overwhelming feeling that this was all crashing in on me. Of course, the impostor syndrome also haunted me: At any moment someone would discover that I was completely and totally inept! Every group of students huddled in a hallway chatting was surely discussing what a terrible teacher I was.

Then I would get into a class and all this would vanish; I would be engrossed in the moment between the students and myself. Gradually, I stopped thinking about what they thought of me, and started thinking about them. It was exhilarating, but frankly, for the first months, maybe years, I remember often wondering if I had actually taught the students anything at all by the end of a class.

It was a steep learning curve. I chose to teach the advanced classes from the beginning. What was I thinking?! Shel told me us to go into every class and “teach to the students’ levels and needs”. In retrospect, I really don’t know how I managed to figure out what that even meant. I

would create, create, endlessly create. I would study my own lessons before every class until I knew them just ever so slightly better than I expected my students to. If they asked me a question I couldn’t answer (one of those “but why do we...?” questions), I told them I would call my mom and get back to them the next day. Both the students and I were “Learning by doing.”

Because the program and the “learning by doing” approach were so new, students were very skeptical and the line-ups outside Shel’s office were long. “I’m paying a lot of money; why do I have to find my own answers? Why won’t the teacher just tell me?” “Why are we writing letters? I want to do grammar exercises.” How Shel answered these questions taught me to respect and even to welcome them; I learned how important it is to have a solid rationale for what I ask students to do and to regularly share this rationale with them.

Shel and Jean-François were all about collaboration, teamwork and reflection. Shel’s solid theoretical background and pure passion in ESL provided the vision for the program and is still today the foundation of what I do. Everything I have learned since has largely reinforced it. Jean-François’ ability to draw the best out of people simply by respecting and listening to them, and giving them a platform for expression is a skill I also strive to develop. Since then I have also been inspired and advised by a lot of talented people, of which we have so many in our field. I feel incredibly fortunate.

Can you describe a memorable day in your teaching career?

It’s really difficult to choose one day. May I tell you about the beginning of a period in my career instead?

This very recent memory I feel has changed me as an instructor and as a person and has given me a whole new way of viewing my students and my role.

I was teaching an intermediate class of almost entirely Japanese students on March 11, 2011, the day the tsunami hit. As instructors, we spend a lot of time trying to come up with creative lessons to express useful, functional language that addresses student needs. We try to imagine the complex mix of context and culture and linguistic objectives - to provide students with tools for communication that we think they might need in the “real world” outside our classrooms. But when I had to walk into my classroom on that day, there was nothing more cuttngly clear: we had to communicate, through our cultural norms, in spite of our linguistic limitations, and it had to be real. Immediately.

It’s difficult to express the strength, depth, sorrow, joy,

friendship, compassion, understanding that we shared that day through language and through silence. I have always had close relationships with students, but this was something else entirely. The ELI offered an extension of studies to students who were scheduled to return home, and those who stayed were integrated into another program with students from other parts of the world: Thailand, Saudi Arabia, Korea and Argentina. The same intense bonding my class experienced that day spread across the program of approximately 50 students, and we were truly united. I realize this may sound unnecessarily dramatic, and I'm sure we're not alone to have lived such an experience during this period, but I will never forget it, or any of them. These young people for me represent the way forward in a world where we really need to reach out to each other more and more. If that can happen in an ESL class, I have faith it can elsewhere. Our students, I think and hope, learn much more than a language when they come together. For me, this makes teaching ESL make real sense.

How do you like your position as head teacher?

Being a head teacher is very new, so I'm still learning the ropes. I love that I'm learning something new. I love that I'm getting to know the inner workings and processes of the ELI. I love the mirrored perspective I'm getting: I already know what instructors see and struggle with, and now I'm getting to know what admin sees and struggles with. It's fabulous to see it as a whole. In fact, the concerns and objectives from both perspectives look quite similar; it's the role in addressing them that is a bit different. I'm amazed that in such a relatively large workplace there is so much harmony and respect across the board. It definitely makes it easier to move into the job.

In this role, I still see myself as an instructor first, maybe more like a coach. I love the aspect of guiding and collaborating with the talented instructors I have the privilege of working with. Right now, we are piloting our new English for the Global Citizen curriculum, and it's

exciting to be watching such an innovative and relevant program unfold.

I'm also enjoying the fact that I don't experience that daily build-up to the start of class, when I have to be fully "on" at exactly 8:30 or 10:20 to begin class. It's nice to spread the energy a little more steadily throughout the day. I can live without the classroom for the next few years while in this role, but I don't think I'll ever stop being a teacher.

I also love multi-tasking. Thankfully.

What advice would you give to someone starting her/his teaching career?

"Nothing is the end of the world, except the end of the world" – Shel used to say that when we were all in a desperate heap of confusion after a particularly challenging day. To this I add:

Be patient with yourself, in fact, be yourself. You don't have to know everything. Don't take yourself too seriously. You don't have to be a "model" teacher. I think that everything you add to who you are in the classroom and everything you have done in your pre-ESL life is something you can go to in order to enrich your classroom.

Remember, there is no such thing as a perfect lesson. The closest to perfection is what happens from your students' end, not yours. To facilitate this, focus on your students. Get to know them as people, not only as learners. Ask for their help and feedback. They will be happy to be included and will feel that it's ok for them also not to know everything. Create a classroom that is a safe, comfortable space. In this environment the knowledge, personality, cultural wealth you and the students have will express itself and the students will feed each other. Let them make it happen.

In turn, learn from your colleagues: Watch, share, observe, ask, collaborate.

Finally, never stop learning and experimenting. Try something new. What's the worst that can happen?

Announcing the next TESOL 2013 International Convention,

March 20-23, 2013

at the Dallas Convention Center

BC TEAL 2nd Sponsor Teacher Reception a Big Success

The 2nd BC TEAL Sponsor Teacher Reception was held on March 31 at UFV's beautiful Clearbrook Centre. Co-sponsored by Trinity Western University (TWU) and the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV), this event was another great success as guests enjoyed refreshments and informal networking. It was a pleasant evening that allowed us to express our appreciation to the many Sponsor Teachers who participate in the TWU and UFV TESOL Programs.

Our many thanks go out to Cheryl Isaac, Director, Continuing Studies, UFV, and Kay McAllister, MA-TESOL Assistant Professor and TESOL Certificate Director, TWU. Their support of this event was vital to its success.

Sponsor Teachers are critical to the development of

TESL students who so intensely need and appreciate the experience and support of these mentors. Our specialized field of practice would not be able to sustain itself without these individuals and we can't thank them enough for giving back to the profession in this way.

Thank you to all who participated in the Sponsor Teacher Reception and we look forward to making this an annual tradition.

Sincerely,

Michelle O'Doherty
BC TEAL – Fraser Valley Regional Representative

Michael Galli
BC TEAL – Past President

ESL Week Writing Contest

In honour of ESL Week—April 29th to May 5th, 2012—we are pleased to announce our 5th Annual Writing Contest!

The contest, sponsored by BC TEAL, is open to all teachers and learners of English as an additional language. Submit poems, articles, and stories related to learning and teaching English.

Categories include:

ESL Instructors (up to 1000 words)

ESL Learners:

CCLB Benchmark Level 3-4 Students (up to 200 words)

CCLB Benchmark Level 5-6 Students (up to 500 words)

CCLB Benchmark Level 7-8 Students (up to 500 words)

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ESL WRITING CONTEST 2011

Honorable Mention: Teacher Category - **Brian Gallagher**

Pacific Language Institute, Vancouver

Bio: Brian Gallagher, teaches at Pacific Language Institute in Vancouver. He was born in Lancaster, PA., moved a lot as a kid and served in the US Army for three years. He moved to Vancouver in 1971 where he met and married Kate and completed the SFU PDP program and in 1998 completed the UBC ESL certification. He has worked in a variety of ESL schools with PLI being most recent and served a couple of years at Maple Leaf Int'l School in Dalian, PRC. His love of teaching and learning has kept him in the business.

training haiku

Stuck in a meeting
We all gaze out the window
Wishing we were there.

the joy of learning

the day she was born she started writing
scribbling on the bright new slate
able & ready & eager
to transcribe everything and hand it to us
as a gift we could use to hear & see & taste & know
all of what there was in her brand new eyes and ears

& as she grew she turned chrees into tarers
upon which someday she'd purrrch an SPIIIII awna wurd uv wundrs
beeeooteeful beeeeoootiiful beuoooteeeefool be-you-T-full beeeyooteeful!!!!

then she was hustled off to school to see how it really works
and we stormed her tarers like troops well-trained in the basics
and we chopped her chrees down to treestumps
and we showed her there was nothing beautiful
about the way she spelt or felt or was or ever would be

she's 11 now and naturally hasn't written a word since her promotion
which is just as well, isn't it, because vocabulary doesn't really care
and needs no outside help when we can always count on it
unerringly to point the way as bright as any logic
toward the cold and lifeless night
into which we long to march
side-by-side & arm-in-arm
clinging together singing
patriotically out of tune
with the loss of human life
the lyrics proudly hail in us
an educated infantry
neutered by our own bayonets —
sanitized against the sounds we all once heard
before we learned to hear the truth
and nothing but
so help us, god.

Salaries in the EAL industry: A complex subject an Anonymous Survey

In an effort to gauge the thinking of educators in our field, I questioned three individuals with the pseudonyms that follow to give us a sense of the process and economic realities to be considered when earning a living in the English as an additional industry. I invite you to see it from a perspective which might not be your own. I am sure you will agree with me. It is indeed a varied and complex issue.” (Carin Moolman, Editor)

If the province of British Columbia introduced a standardized and regulated system for the education/training and salaries of English as Additional Language professionals (such as K-12 teachers or university professors), what would this hypothetical system look like? Elaborate on employers, employees and administration of programs.

Simyun: Over the years, numerous language schools have opened and closed, often at the loss of fees for the registrants and the unexpected loss of employment for the staff. If there were a standardized and regulated system, hopefully these incidents would no longer occur.

A similar system to K-12 would provide more job security. Employees with the same level of education and years of experience could expect to receive equal salaries no matter what institution they work for. If instructors were required to transfer to another institution for any reason (i.e. relocating, conflicting schedules), they would encounter the same standards at the new site, making the transition smoother from a financial point of view.

Annalee: I don't think this is possible or realistic. There is such diversity amongst students who enter the various programs we teach. I don't see how it could be regulated. Furthermore, there is such existing diversity in the job description and salaries for EAL instructors that I don't see how these can be aligned. I do think there should be baseline required credentials for instructors in any program; but, this is rather to give the wider industry credibility and to eradicate the notion that people who can speak English can teach it.

Kate: We could take a look at TESL Ontario, where membership AND certification AND ongoing professional development are requirements for employment at federally funded programs; this keeps membership numbers and engagement high.

Please share your thoughts regarding the pros and cons of the different levels of certification possible, (public and private), relative to the level of instruction and knowledge/experience required for the job and the subsequent salary.

Simyun: Some certification programs run for a few weeks, others for months or years, depending on the level attained. I believe the longer sessions allow participants to learn the methodology better and to give them time to plan and practise activities with their peers. I feel that it's important to have a practicum element as part of their program where the trainees actually have a chance to teach more than once, not just observe classes. The hands-on experience and feedback will give them a more realistic idea of what to do in the future.

The different levels of certification are not always recognized or necessary requirements at some institutions, so salaries may not match the effort that the candidates have put into their careers.

Annalee: The situation in EAL is likely similar to other professions. Generally, the better qualified one is and the more experience one has, the better paid, and possibly the better the institution as a whole. There are a wide variety of quick TESL certificates that can be acquired. Some are TESL Canada recognized and some aren't. Some certificates take only months to complete. Some have practicum components and some don't. This is just the entry level.

Teachers with recognized TESL certificates that include a practicum are much better suited to gaining the better entry-level positions at better schools (meaning, the ones which are not strictly business). However, I firmly believe that master's level certification in TESL gives teachers a solid theoretical basis to their teaching practice, and

indeed can make one a better teacher. For example, an in-depth course in second language acquisition can truly help instructors to better understand their students' stages of development. One can't possibly touch that deeply in a certificate level course which usually is aimed more at the fundamentals of teaching.

There are some amazing teachers who have several years of teaching experience but no master's level degrees; however, pursuing that higher level would absolutely benefit them. In the current market, there are certain levels of employment that teachers simply cannot even apply for without a master's degree. To me, the system makes sense. What is a shame; however, is that it seems the higher level jobs are the least secure.

Kate: I think it's a random and not based on skill/experience/educational credentials –type of situation.

There is talk of a lack of representation of lower paid staff in professional organizations such as BC TEAL as most new instructors are at a disadvantage financially for reasons such as not being eligible for benefits as this privilege is afforded to those working a certain amount of hours or not being able to afford to attend one or two conferences per year and/or not being able to take the time from work. What, if anything can BC TEAL do?

Simyun: Professional bodies or educational institutions could subsidize the conference fees for economically-strapped staff on a draw or rotating basis. Another suggestion is that organizations such as BC TEAL could have a realistic sliding scale of fees depending on whether the applicant is employed full or part-time, or still a student.

Annalee: I would disagree with the notion that there is a lack of representation of lower paid staff in BC TEAL. I was a student working part-time when I joined the organization. Many of the TEAL members are students, and being part of a professional organization can be very helpful for networking and therefore finding work opportunities. In terms of how active the members are, that is incumbent on the individual members themselves. TEAL offers many involvement opportunities for all levels of instructors. Also, a few years after finishing my master's degree and being in a university setting, I found the younger instructors were far more active in the professional organization than experienced instructors.

That said, the other points raised are valid. In terms of lack of benefits, it's a real shame that many experienced teachers are forced to work at a variety of institutions of

varying contract length, and find it near impossible to meet the requirements for benefits. It's a shame that more employers don't offer benefits such as sick leave, pension, and extended medical to more of their instructors.

I have often heard that some people cannot afford to attend conferences, and that is also a shame. I have always ensured that I attended conference for my own development, regardless of whether my employer paid my registration fee. Of course, being given time off from work to attend conferences seems to run the gamut. Some well-paid instructors at public institutions who are awarded PD funds cannot attend weekday conferences. Some policies allow for substitute instructors in order that regular instructors may attend conferences even though the institution might not always be in a position to pay employee conference registration fees.

Finally, however, it is wonderful for workplaces to offer professional development opportunities, and they should; it is up to the individual to take advantage of events, and if one has to pay out of pocket (as I have done myself many times), then ultimately it is more often than not, worth it.

Kate: I'm not sure I agree with these observations/assumptions. I benefitted greatly from BC TEAL as a new teacher where I wasn't paid much, but did have either flexibility in my own schedule or eventually class coverage (substitute teachers) to attend conferences. In my better paid job today, however, there is less flexibility and support to participate in Pro D. Also, BC TEAL can serve different purposes to different members. One of the greatest benefits for early teachers is to expand the repertoire of teaching strategies, new research and professional contacts. True, everyone needs these, but the opportunity TEAL membership and conferences provide to network and build a career cannot be overemphasized. I see it as investing in yourself and career; an extension of your education.

Further to that, I think the innovations of the updated website, distribution of job postings, SIGS and regional representation are all of great benefit to the membership at large, especially those not too settled into established careers.

Is effort in terms of staying on top of new trends, educating oneself and participating professionally recognized and rewarded financially? If so, has this been your experience?

Simyun: It probably happens at some institutions, but it hasn't been my experience so far.

Annalee: In my various workplaces, I would say that



recognition has always been there, but financial reward in terms of compensation has been mixed (from no support, to partial support, to full support). However, it has also been my experience that the measures I have taken to advance myself professionally (whether through education or paying my own registration fees) have likely paid off financially in the end, as I have changed jobs in the field a few times and the salary has increased accordingly.

Kate: In my experience, this has varied greatly. Some employers haven't rewarded me for such involvement, but the engagement has rewarded me with better opportunities!

Can you speak to the issue of TESL certification, awarded to large numbers of people, many of whom cannot then find work?

Simyun: Providing training for potential ESL teachers is a big business. Unfortunately, the marketplace is saturated. Recently, there was a posting for one position that got 300 applicants. Even some overseas teaching opportunities have age restrictions now. Do the training institutions even care that they're offering false employment dreams to many of their graduates?

Annalee: It's foolish for anyone in any profession to think that jobs are out there if only they finish a certificate. I am not aware of any reputable certificate program that guarantees employment upon completion. There is no lack of TESL qualified teachers, but those who are keen, professional, involved; in addition, a good teacher, are likely to find success in the profession. Unfortunately, it's a feast or famine industry where more often than not we're reliant on international students for whom Canada may or may not be the current destination of choice.

Kate: I understand the TESL certification as an acknowledgement of one's teacher training, which should be an asset in searching for work.

What percentage of your experience, education and professional interest is relevant to your current position? Elaborate on this point.

Simyun: As a teacher-on-call, I get requests to cover a variety of classes. So, my years of experience, education, and materials on hand make me comfortable, dealing with any situation. All I have learned over the years benefits my current students.

Annalee: Equally, all of the above. My experience encompasses teaching an array of levels and skills at a variety of institutions. A master's degree ensured that I

was eligible to apply for positions in higher salaried post-secondary institutions. My professional interest and active involvement in TEAL has meant that I have met people at various institutions across the province if not all of North America, and those connections have also contributed to opening the door for other professional opportunities.

Kate: Any and all of it on any given day. I may draw on my phonetics and phonology courses to assist students' pronunciation, on my undergrad teaching methodology course work to prepare interesting and relevant lessons, on my experience to work with challenging student and classroom dynamics, on a recent conference presentation to invigorate my practice, and on graduate coursework to critically assess what the individual and cultural implications of my work may be.

How has the industry changed since you started your career in terms of salaries?

Simyun: Unionized workplaces probably include an annual pay raise in their collective agreements. However, there are some schools where salaries have barely risen from the time I first subbed for them many years ago. These places need to keep up.

Annalee: Other than perhaps a slight increase due to cost of living allowances, I don't think the industry has changed much. Many of the private schools continue to pay in the \$20/hour range, and the ELSA programs tend to start around \$30/hour, and then the universities and colleges usually pay significantly more; however, they usually also require a master's degree.

The biggest change I'd see is in the money people can earn in overseas contexts. When I finished university in the mid-90s, graduates were swarming overseas (mostly Asia) as contracts for teaching English were plentiful, the requirements minimal (undergraduate degree in any field), and the salaries were very enticing. Additionally, there were few career opportunities in Canada at that time. Twenty years later, it seems there has been some improvement in requiring TESL qualifications, the salaries haven't risen significantly, and perhaps there are fewer teaching opportunities abroad for new graduates.

Kate: I haven't seen much movement industry-wide; I have the impression that salaries overall have stagnated, if not slipped in some areas.

What advice would you give to a young bright-eyed TESL/TESOL student who is on the verge of graduating

in terms of getting a job and sustaining a career?

Simyun: Don't expect to be working full-time off the bat or for top dollar. Consider being a teacher assistant or volunteer tutor to get some experience. Be ready to put in a lot of unpaid hours preparing for your class and marking the students' work. Relocate if there are no jobs open in your current location.

Annalee: Think of what Andy Hargreaves said at the recent 2012 BC TEAL Annual Conference: enthusiasm does not equal expertise. EAL instructors will need to work hard and work long hours. They may have to start out at a very entry level job making \$20/hour for a few years, but the experience that can be gained from those classrooms; which often also have a very structured curriculum to guide them, will be very beneficial. If they truly want to make this a career, then further master's level studies will eventually pay off in the end. It's a financial commitment, but it will open up other doors to better compensated employment. New graduates can't expect to walk into stable, on-going work. It's simply not the way the industry is set up. It's a huge challenge, but if they are passionate and stick with it, I sincerely believe that in the end, they will have a sustainable career. It's not easy; in fact, it's very hard. As Andy Hargreaves said: Teaching is hard.

Kate: Be prepared: consider your practicum a prolonged job interview. Be willing to try a variety of positions. Assemble an "emergency kit" of reliable activities and strategies, keep in good communication with your colleagues & supervisors and maintain professionalism. Have a side stream/alternate source of income and keep in mind why you chose this profession.



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Reflections on TESOL 2012

TESOL Conference 2012, Philadelphia by Michelle Goertzen

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 25 Mar
Just arrived in Philly- no flight problems, but 8 hours is a long trip.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 26 Mar
Two days for sightseeing and then TESOL 2012! Thanks BC TEAL!

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 26 Mar
Saw Liberty Bell (well the outside), Betsy Ross' house, the oldest-still-inhabited street, the LOVE statue, and the "most historic mile in America." #phillysightseeing

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 26 Mar
Goals for TESOL: Go to all grammar (for course I'm teaching) and identity (for thesis I'm writing) sessions. Looking for inspiration.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 26 Mar
Just spent 4 hours reading through TESOL 2012 sessions. How to pick?

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 28 Mar
Graduate forum didn't go as expected. Going to work in a coffeeshop instead. #homeworkneverstops

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 28 Mar
Noticed in coffeeshop: TESOL-ers can be picked out of a crowd. What is this TESOL ethos and do I exude it too?

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 28 Mar
First Plenary: Alberto Carvahlo. Talking about how all students matter. Born speaker.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 28 Mar
I'm walking by, shoulder-to-shoulder, many of the authors I read in my MA: Folse, Labov, Morgan, Vandrick, Coombe, so many #wow

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 29 Mar
TESOL-ers at breakfast are easily identified – still choosing sessions, still highlighting conference books.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 29 Mar
Glad I scoped out the room and arrived early; who knew a 7:30am interactive Grammar workshop would be packed? #whew

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 29 Mar
Running down to Reading Terminal Market for morning coffee. #freshandorganic

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 29 Mar
Grammar workshop: Good presenters, free grammar games and ideas. #notbadbutnotnew

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 29 Mar
Second plenary: Labov is about to come up and speak! I'm sitting very far away, though.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 29 Mar
Labov's plenary is academic. Talking about his research with dialects and social groups in Philly.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 29 Mar
So incredibly grateful to be here with instructors from China, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Germany. Getting a sense of our international community.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 29 Mar
Convention Centre: old train terminal, aka Reading Terminal, aka, Reading Railroad and it is pronounced "red-ing." #thingsilearned

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 29 Mar
Yes, the creator of monopoly was Philadelphian. And, yes, they are proud of it. There is a whole plaza with giant monopoly pieces here.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 29 Mar
A replica of the LOVE statue and me, in the convention centre. (picture)



Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 29 Mar
So glad I looked up pictures and research areas before I came. I know what Morgan looks like, what Hinkel's interests are, and Murphy's work. #didmyhomework

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 29 Mar
I can see why so many come year after year. More than ProfDev, it is like a family reunion for those who come again.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 29 Mar
There is no recycling anywhere. Coming from BC this seems weird.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 29 Mar
Spent two hours walking through exhibitor booths. The book prices are all reduced!

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 29 Mar
Practiced my small part for the presentation...for two hours this afternoon.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 29 Mar
Dinner of great Mexican food with TWU MA TESOL group. Had black bean enchiladas. #delicious

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 30 Mar
Excellent plenary by Christine Coombe on effective teachers. Apparently after three years of teaching, most are considered experienced.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 30 Mar
"There is no secret recipe for being an effective teacher" Coombe in plenary.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 30 Mar
"A teacher who truly wants to be effective can be with intuition" Coombe in plenary.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 30 Mar
Busy day of presentations ahead. Lots of Identity talk today! Most looking forward to Brian Morgan this afternoon!

Reflections on TESOL 2012



Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 30 Mar
Waiting for Keith Folse: Which Grammar, When, How and Why. The room is filling up.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 30 Mar
Folse is pronounced “fols__.” Oh.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 30 Mar
Folse is funny; he’s making fun of Krashen.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 30 Mar
“Our students have the right to sound as intelligent as possible” Folse on teaching grammar.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 30 Mar
“Just because there are 12 tenses doesn’t mean you have to teach them...I know, I know, heresy, right?” Folse on teaching grammar.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 30 Mar
Sweet deal! 40% off Keys to Teaching Grammar just for attending Folse’s presentation.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 30 Mar
My roommate lost her notes for our presentation. Poor girl...after all her work writing out her script. Hope we find it.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 30 Mar
There are no credentials here. Everyone is on same playing-field. It’s encouraging for a newbie.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 30 Mar
Seeing green-TESOL convention bags all over Philly.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 30 Mar
Eeeek. Just saw BM and I think I may have squeaked out loud when I spotted him! #soembarassing

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 30 Mar
Sitting, literally, 3 metres away from Brian Morgan. Have a case of hero-worship and should probably tone down.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 30 Mar
Oooohh. All of the identity people are in the room...the self-awareness is phenomenal

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 30 Mar
So inspired for my thesis! The books, the presentations, the people – all talking about what I want to talk about. #identitysession

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 30 Mar
A little surprised this academic session isn’t that full.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 30 Mar
Had black cherry green iced tea for lunch. Fresh fruit, too, from Reading market. TESOLers everywhere.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 30 Mar
Bonny Norton not presenting. #toobad.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 30 Mar
Just finished dinner. Now to practice, practice, practice for my part in the presentation tomorrow.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 30 Mar
Getting the nervous feeling about presenting now. Still over 15 hours away.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 30 Mar
1 more practice then off to bed.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 31 Mar
Met a man at breakfast who has been here solely to conduct job interviews. He says that’s how he got his job too.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 31 Mar
D-day. Presentation 5 hours away. What is it that is making me so nervous this morning?

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 31 Mar
Jiu Lin is presenting the future of TESOL in his plenary session by looking at trends in TESOL Quarterly. Growing need for ESP/EAP work. #quiteinteresting

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 31 Mar
T -2 hours till presentation. Going over my part and forgetting my lines. #ohno

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 31 Mar
Our presentation room is larger than I thought but there is no stage. How will the audience ever see my hands? I’m not tall.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 31 Mar
We’re up! Sound cutting out a little. #hopeallwillbegood. Here goes!

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 31 Mar
And done. Amazing how fast that went and smooth overall. Didn’t forget or freeze. #hooray #sighofrelief

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 31 Mar
Feeling almost giddy without the presenting pressure.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 31 Mar
Waiting for my last workshop to start. Brian Morgan and Stephanie Vandrick on the history and future of Critical Pedagogy, or "crit-ped."

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 31 Mar
"Is Crit-Ped just more mainstream or not as talked about?" Morgan and Vandrick on the future of critical pedagogy.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 31 Mar
Aw. Didn't win the raffle for all-expense paid trip to Texas TESOL 2013. Was really hoping for that.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 31 Mar
Wishing my peers and colleagues could be here as well. For me, this directly influenced my research and sparked ideas for my upcoming grammar course.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 31 Mar
Lady in the market said it must be exciting to be part of this with ppl from all over the world. And, you know, it is!

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 31 Mar
Last lunch in Reading Terminal market. Gonna cheat on my allergy restrictions and eat a gluten & dairy-filled piece of pizza. Been eyeing it all week.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 31 Mar
CATESOL members gave us free tickets for bus tour of Philly. Learned that Benjamin Franklin was a "pirate captain." #thingsilearnedonbus

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 31 Mar
Apparently the Philly Art museum guidelines say that clothes found on the Rocky statue should be left on for 2 days. #thingsilearnedonbus

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 31 Mar
Almost every part of TESOL has emphasized the need for grammar – acknowledging the errors of the past.

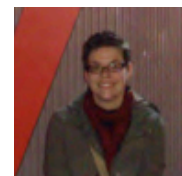
Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 31 Mar
And the conference is officially over. Kind of sad to be done.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 1 Apr
Now, to fit all of my new books in my carryon size suitcase. A final puzzle.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 1 Apr
This conference gave me a way to approach my grammar course that remains true to me. Thanks.

Michelle Goertzen @mitchgoertzen 5 Apr
One post-TESOL task: Emailed all presenters I could not see for handouts and notes. Had a 70% reply rate. Thanks TESOL!

Michelle was thrilled to have been awarded the Mary Ashworth Scholarship to attend TESOL 2012. She is an MA TESOL student at Trinity Western University, working on her thesis on the intersection of teacher identity and spirituality and can be contacted at michelle.goertzen@mytwu.ca.



TEAL NEWS

Do you love reading? Is writing something you have a flair for? Are you a stickler for correctness in language? Do you have an eye for detail? Is creativity something you need to practice regularly? Do you feel motivated to become more of a contributor and more involved in your professional association?

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How to get ESL Students to Accept Your Minimal Marking

by Isabel Haller-Gryc

Teaching writing can be an arduous task, but grading a students writing can be even more laborious and even futile. However, as writing teachers, we believe that our time spent meticulously marking a paper is time well spent. Unfortunately this is often not the case. As a teacher of ESL writing, I myself, on many occasions have had second drafts of papers submitted where my comments, and editing have been completely ignored. Is this deliberate resistance to my feedback? More than likely it is not. Zamel (1985) notes “teachers’ marks and comments usually take the form of abstract and vague prescriptions and directives that students find difficult to interpret.” (p.79) After reflecting on my style of grading, I realize that some of my responses to student writing, especially when dealing with content and ideas, are indeed cryptic and potentially confusing. I realize that although I use some standard editing marks, my students may be unsure of how to “correct” what I simply underline, circle or note as being “unclear” or “awkward”.

Feedback that concentrates on the quality of content and ideas may be confusing to an ESL student, but feedback on grammatical accuracy may be overwhelming. Compared to teachers who provide feedback on native speakers' writing, ESL teachers usually deal with many more mistakes due to their students' struggle with grammar and usage in their new language. ESL composition teachers may feel compelled to comment on these errors, so to prevent their students from assuming that their writing is mistake free.

Richard Haswell (1983) advocated a system of minimal marking and his approach could have two main benefits. Minimal marking can help teachers avoid wasting time on vague comments and marks that are ultimately ignored, and it can help students interpret feedback and fix their own work. I see the logic and value behind Haswell's system, however before this method can be applied to ESL writing, students need to understand the pedagogy behind it.

To some students, receiving a paper covered in ink may be discouraging, but many ESL students welcome and expect their teachers' responses even if they do not always understand the comments their teachers make. ESL students may assume that whatever is not marked is

correct. They may believe that the only way to improve their writing is to fix every mistake and therefore they may demand that their teacher mark every error. Because of these preconceived notions held by our students, as ESL instructors, in order to effectively implement a system of minimal marking, we must thoroughly explain why we mark some aspects of a paper and not others when choosing to follow a minimal marking method. Before I return any graded papers to students, there are three things that I explain to students in order to transition them to what may be a new system of feedback. My students need to be aware that I take into account carelessness, degree of importance, and a student's innate tendency to avoid correction when choosing to implement minimal marking.

Carelessness It must be pointed out to ESL students, that students in general, regardless of what language they write in, are guilty of carelessness. Students may not proofread carefully; often times, if they had, they may have caught their mistake. Although I may not mark every error, I do advise students to go back through their papers carefully. I emphasize that this often means that they have some careless errors. I tell students to re-read their papers aloud. Often when we read something in our head, our mind compensates for errors and we unconsciously correct these errors, and read them, as they should be. Reading something aloud forces you to read more carefully, and as a result, more errors may be caught. If in a testing situation where reading aloud is not an option, tell students to point to each word that they have written, this will slow down their reading, so to help them identify errors

Degree of importance Students need to understand that each assignment that a teacher gives evaluates different criteria. Sometimes an assignment is being used to evaluate ideas. Other times an assignment may focus on how well ideas can be organized. Some writing tasks may simply assess grammar and correct usage, while other writing pieces may attempt to evaluate content, ideas in addition to grammar and usage. It needs to be explained that even when a teacher assesses several skills at once, there is usually one skill that is weighted more heavily than others. This is easy for students to see if a rubric is used.



When using a rubric, tell students to read the rubric before writing, so they know what is the most important skill of focus. Teachers often prioritize target skills. I tell my students that if I mark everything on their paper, especially if it wasn't the target skill, they will not focus on what I feel are the most important aspects that they should be working on.

Tendency to avoid correction Students may quickly learn that taking risks is not rewarded, but rather punished. If every error is marked for correction, students may revert to more simplistic "safe" language and structures. Students need to realize that to advance to the next level, they need to expand their language and try new words and more complex structures. Discuss with your students your policy for using new and more advanced language. Perhaps allow "freebies" for errors on skills not yet taught. Not marking a student's attempt to extend their language may help students feel comfortable taking risks and ultimately will help them grow as writers.

Nancy Sommers (1982) points out that the amount of time that teachers spend on a paper ranges from 20 to 40 minutes. If the product of these efforts are ignored or misunderstood, then this time is wasted. Minimal marking can be effective, but ESL students due to an extreme desire to improve their language skills, may be resistant to this method and opposed to it. Explaining why you choose to limit your markings may help them to accept this practice and may lead them to be more careful, and creative as they write.

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Isabel Haller-Gryc is an English as a second language instructor at the Intensive American Language Center (IALC) at Washington State University. She received a BS in Elementary Education from SUNY New Paltz in 1998, and has been teaching in the field of ESL since then. Before she began teaching at the IALC, she worked as an ESL specialist in various public schools in Phoenix, Arizona. She has a MA in TESL from the University of Idaho, and a M.Ed. in Educational Leadership from Northern Arizona University.



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The Big Picture: Eportfolios as assessment and showcase

by Nathan Hall

Over the past couple of decades, the use of electronic student portfolios, better known as eportfolios, has become a valuable tool for both the teacher and the learner. Eportfolios initially originated as a way of archiving a student's body of work through pictures, scanned documents, and multimedia files on a disk or CD. Essentially, what this entailed was a static, one-way conversation with a limited audience. Over time, the internet grew and developed into a more dynamic platform, changing the way we work online. Websites no longer just display content; they create it as well, often at little or no cost. Creating a website online previously involved a good deal of programming knowledge which naturally excluded many people, including educators. That has all changed with the introduction of wiki and weblogs, known as blogs, which can be entirely created and administered online without expert programming knowledge.

What is an eportfolio, and what should it include?

An eportfolio is a body of work that the student has created in the classroom over time, and may also include peer creations. It features a multi-literacy approach with the inclusion of documents, pictures, videos, audio, and other digitally created content that can be shared either through a website or more directly through email or file copying.

Eportfolios are particularly beneficial in the area of formative assessment. Students can be evaluated over a longer period of time and the format allows students to edit their work and add to their work based on the feedback given to them. Used properly, an eportfolio has two streams of use: as process and as product (Barrett, 2011). Process refers to the ongoing assessment and reflection by both the teacher and the student. Product relates to the showcase of the final work the student has created. Teachers who design goals and objectives based on these two streams will find them helpful in locating areas that need to be addressed, as well as assessing whether students are moving forward in their learning. Students will also see the benefit in an eportfolio as they look back over the time they have been creating it and see that they are learning and growing in their abilities as language learners (Brammer, 2011).

Showcasing a student's work allows them to engage with a broader audience and to display their work for others such as family, friends, and future employers (Kryder, 2011). Finding the appropriate tool to use as a professional eportfolio is to some degree a matter of preference, although it must also allow for expansion in the future. Students should be able to take their eportfolio with them once they move on from the institution. Therefore, the platform must be flexible enough to allow the student to download the content, or it must be cloud based: content that is hosted on another server and can be accessed from any internet based computer. Considering the movement from computer based to internet based applications, it seems logical to take advantage of these free or low-cost online tools in the classroom.

There are a number of free web based tools that can be used to create and display the student's eportfolio, including the following blog or website builders:

1. *Wordpress.com*
2. *Posterous.com*
3. *Weebly.com*
4. *Blogger.com*

Each of these sites offer a similar set of features, therefore choosing a platform will primarily be a matter of personal preference. Watch for size or file limitations related to uploading to the site, and look for features such as automatic viewing of video, audio, or document files. Simplicity is also important as most students will have limited language skills and some will have only limited exposure to technology. Students should be able to password protect their work without having to give away private information, such as email addresses. Also, students need to be able to continue to use this once they have left the program. Ideally, the platform should not be tied to the institution or be limited to educational use only (Worley, 2011).

There are a number of free content creations, sharing, and editing tools that can be used online, many without



requiring the creation of login accounts. Some examples of tools that can facilitate in both process and product creation, include:

1. TitanPad.com:

This is an online real-time document creation tool that does not require students to register, yet still allows them to password protect the site. Many other document creation sites either remain public where anyone has access and can edit or delete content, or the site requires them to sign-up in order to create a private document. TitanPad can accommodate multiple people editing one document at the same time. This is especially useful during group work activities, allowing students to work on separate sections while still being able to keep tabs on what their partner(s) are doing. All of the work students create can be recorded in one document, enabling the teacher to review and comment on the work, and giving students the opportunity to go back and see their progress. This is an especially effective formative assessment tool if students are given both online and face-to-face feedback at various stages throughout the creation of the document.

2. Vocaroo.com:

This is an online tool that students can access without registration. Vocaroo is a very simple audio recording web application that saves the recordings to a unique web address and can be downloaded in a variety of formats. There are a number of ways that this could be used as both a process and product tool. Students could record their writing and then share those audio files with other students as well as the teacher to get feedback. Following that, students can then re-record the audio and post their finished work to their final eportfolio showcase. This is also a very effective pronunciation tool. Students can record themselves at various times throughout the course as they continue to work on pronunciation problems. They then review the audio to hear their improvement to encourage them in their growth as a speaker. Teachers may also find

Vocaroo useful in giving audio feedback on written work, which students are then able to listen to while reviewing their work.

3. Screencast-O-Matic.com:

This is an online screen-recording tool that creates a movie, together with audio of your computer screen as you work. Screencast-O-Matic can record one section or the whole screen and will provide a downloadable video file that is playable on most computers and mobile devices. Files can also be edited in most video editors such as iMovie and Movie Maker. This is an effective way of creating a product that can then be displayed on the student's showcase eportfolio. Students are able to record their presentations along with the narration, or create instructional videos that can be shared with others. Students can peer teach or teachers can create an online lesson.

4. Viewer.Zoho.com:

This document viewer can host documents online, documents can be downloaded and viewed offline, or embedded in a website or blog. It supports a wide variety of document types including all Microsoft Office files, PDFs, and a number of other lesser-known file types. This tool can be used to showcase student documents such as

resumes, cover letters, stories, and presentations on their final eportfolio. If the web platform that the student uses doesn't automatically allow for document viewing within the page, this is a free alternative that does not require the student to give out personal information. To make the document available for public viewing, Zoho Viewer required an email address, but a fake address could be given since this address is used solely to let the individual know when their document is about to expire on the web host.

5. <http://mp3cut.net>

This is an online mp3 trimmer that can be used in conjunction with files created with Vocaroo. If a student would like to delete a section of an audio file created with Vocaroo, he/she can simply download the file, upload it



to this site and select the section they would like and trim it. The resulting file can then be downloaded and hosted on the student's showcase eportfolio. This is particularly helpful since most editors require special software to encode and re-encode which results in a loss of quality and can be quite time consuming. This process is simple and the original quality is not compromised.

6. WeVideo.com:

This is a free online video editor that does require registration, but offers a number of valuable tools such as integration with Google Drive for storage. While there are a number of free software packages available to edit videos, most students would be required to install these on their computers if they wanted to work at home. By maintaining everything online, students can work anywhere where an internet connection is available without installing a single program. Students can record interviews, presentations, or conversations and edit them (reducing the size) in order to upload to their showcase site.

7. PDFescape.com:

This free online PDF editor and form filler does not require registration, making it a valuable tool for both students and teachers. Students can combine multiple documents into a single file. Teachers can edit documents for students as an alternative to the traditional copy and paste procedure at the photocopier. This saves time and paper, and provides professional looking handouts. PDF files are particularly valuable because they retain the formatting and limit the possibility of editing content.

8. RoohIt.com:

This is a web annotation and highlighting tool. Students can markup websites, share them with their classmates, and receive comments. This is a great collaboration tool for student project research, especially when students are working on different sections or from multiple locations.

There are hundreds of other free or inexpensive online tools that can be used by both teachers and students in the creation and editing of digital content; more than can be mentioned in this article. The most important thing is to create continuity for the students. Find tools that work well and stick with them throughout the process. This creates a routine and eliminates anxiety regarding teacher expectations. It is important for instructors to take the time to review eportfolios with their student at regular intervals, providing valuable one-on-one time that can encourage both students and instructors. Teachers who are willing to experiment on their own and find tools that work well are likely to find that their students will learn and adapt quickly.

Online tools can help build creative learning opportunities in the classroom, as well as providing a foundation that will take students well into the future.

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Nathan Hall has taught business and general English in various locations around the world, including the UK, and four years in Lithuania. He has also worked in the photographic and computer industries as a sales manager and training specialist. He is currently teaching business English at Global Village Calgary, and has just recently completed his MA TESOL at Trinity Western University.



Access Community Through English by Amea Wilbur

My name is Amea Wilbur and I am the Coordinator for a unique program delivered through Vancouver Coastal Health Mental Health Services. Access Community through English (ACE) was launched in November 2000 as a regional unit of Vancouver Community Mental Health Services. ACE is a free participatory ESL / Life Skills provision for adults with mental health issues who live in Vancouver.

Participants in our program gain English language and community life skills. It is likely that ACE is the only ESL/ Life Skills program within mental health services in North America

ACE fills a gap in services for immigrants and refugees with mental health issues. Our students can often face barriers to accessing health and community services. They often live in isolation and fail to find suitable English language learning opportunities elsewhere.

ACE provides the accommodation necessary for language learning for this population through its recognition of diversity, emphasis on a safe space, focus on community, citizenry, unique curriculum and flexible structure.

We usually run about eight classes a week at various levels including literacy. We are also able to provide one to one support to students through Peer Support Workers. We have a teacher and an occupational therapist on staff as well to work with our students. We are happy to accept new people and we do continuous intake. ACE also accommodates periods of illness and absenteeism. If you would like more information please feel to call 604-675-3987 or email Amea.Wilbur@vch.ca.

The following is written by one of our peer support workers and one of the students.

WHO AM I?

I AM WHO I AM....

I am a peer support worker (P.S.W.) at Access Community Through English (A.C.E.).

What is a peer support worker?

It is someone who has a mental health issue who supports

another person who also has a mental health issue.

My role at A.C.E. is to provide support to E.S.L. students. I am an E.S.L. tutor and a teacher assistant in a literacy class.

When I joined A.C.E. I did not have prior training in teaching.

This year, the literacy teacher gave me the opportunity to lead the class. I appreciated that she let me gain experience in a class room setting.

I get to go with the literacy class on various field trips, (e.g. Vancouver Museum, Burnaby Village) which I have enjoyed.

I like working at A.C.E. as a tutor and teacher assistant because it is interesting and varied. I am always learning and I enjoy the challenge and continue to develop myself. It helps me to work on building my self esteem and self confidence in a safe environment.

My supervisors are supportive, kind and caring. My colleagues who are also peer support workers are helpful. It is mentally healthy to be happy in your workplace.

J.D.

Student

My name is Fantaye. I was living in Greece working as a cook. I came to Canada in 1988. I started a new life in Vancouver with my children. I spoke a little English. I started working as a cook in the day time and I studied ESL at night at Vancouver Community College. But I struggled to learn English at VCC. I left VCC and I started ESL school at Access Community through English (ACE). I am in a literacy class and I also have one to one tutoring.

My goal is to be able to write letters to grandchildren and to be able to fill in government application forms.

Since I have been coming to ACE my English has improved and also self esteem. I always look forward to coming to ACE.

BC TEAL President's Report

BC TEAL President's Annual Report Presented at AGM – May 4, 2012

- Co-Chaired the TRI-TESOL Conference. The goal of the TRI-TESOL was to engage members from all 3 associations in a joint professional development opportunity. It was a very successful event.
- Attended and assisted at the BC TEAL Regional Conferences.
 - Interior Regional Conference held at UBC Okanagan, Kelowna,
 - Vancouver Island Regional Conference held at Vancouver Island University, Nanaimo.
- Managed hiring process of the new BC TEAL Office Manager.
- Helped organize the first ever Sponsor Teacher Reception with very successful results. A second event is scheduled for the Fraser Valley in late May, 2012.
- Successfully applied to host the TESL Canada 2012 Conference in October 2012, and am actively engaged with the planning committee. Also, efforts are being made to engage provincial affiliate associations in an inter-provincial panel at the TESL Canada 2012 Conference.
- Ongoing efforts to communicate with and engage more institutions and individuals in the Association; membership numbers and member engagement have been steadily increasing.
- On-going efforts to develop and maintain professional association with related organizations; e.g. ELSA Net, PSA, WAESOL, ORTESOL, etc.
- Ongoing efforts to strengthen unity of profession throughout the province; e.g. Interior and Island.
- Ongoing efforts to ensure the stability of the Association's finances by increasing revenues through increased efforts to market BC TEAL PD events and raise sponsorship and awareness of BC TEAL events.

- On-going efforts to support the TCF through fundraising efforts, the goal of which is to raise a new endowment for an annual Refugee Award.

Michael Galli
President – BC TEAL
2008 - 2012

BC TEAL Conference Report

AGM: Conference Report Shawna Williams & Nicholas Collins Conference Co-chairs April 29, 2012

Venue

Capilano University in North Vancouver is the venue for the 44th Annual BC TEAL Professional Development Conference. BC TEAL is looking forward to hosting the conference at Capilano for our expected 400 attendees. We are especially thankful to President Bulcroft for donating the facilities to TEAL.

Presenters

Many thanks go out to our keynote speakers who address this year's theme, ESL: English as a Sustainable Language, from their unique perspectives. Andy Hargreaves will deliver a talk, "Sustainable Performance beyond Expectations" and Luisa Maffi will speak on "Biocultural Diversity: The Many Voices of Sustainability". We are also looking forward to invited speaker, Gilberto Diaz Santos, and his presentation, "Mañana is Now: Training for ELT as a Sustainable Practice in Cuba." We appreciate the participation of our the plenary panelists – Gilberto Diaz Santos, Angie Gerst, Roumi Ilieva, Luisa Maffi, and Shawna Williams– as well as the moderator, Seonaigh MacPherson. We also extend our sincere thanks to the many presenters of the professional development workshops who will share their expertise and knowledge with their professional community.

Volunteers

The success of this year's conference is due in large part to the hours of volunteer work of the conference

planning committee, many of whom are Capilano faculty. This year's conference days' volunteers were recruited from TESL Training programs as well as ESL students from Capilano, and we are grateful for their assistance. Our amazing TEAL Administrative Manager, Sandra Boehm, went above and beyond in her conference planning duties.

Sponsorship

We are extremely grateful to the financial support from our various sponsors. With their support TEAL is able to maintain a strong role in providing professional development conference to the provincial EAL community

We hope conference attendees find this year's conference a rewarding and valuable experience.

BC TEAL Secretary Report

BC TEAL Secretary & Membership Report to the AGM May 2012

Submitted by

Sheila Mattila

BC TEAL Secretary, 2012-14

- It has been my pleasure to serve in the role of Secretary and Membership Chair for the past six months, a role which has included handling the administrative responsibilities of a signing officer and working on the membership of BC TEAL.

- During this time, individual membership has grown from 640 to 700 members, and institutional membership has grown from 15 to 20 members. These increases have created additional revenue for BC TEAL. We have also added new benefits for both individual and institutional members.

- With the launch of the new website, member traffic and engagement on the website have increased. It has also allowed us to streamline the membership renewal process. Members receive email reminders prior to their memberships expiring, and they are able to renew online.

- The goals going forward are to continue to increase the number of members in all categories and to continue to expand the benefits that are available to BC TEAL members.

BC TEAL Past President Report

Past President's Report

Submitted by Liet Hellwig

Annual General Meeting 2012

May 4th, 2011

Between May 2010 and May 2011 the Past President has fulfilled the liaison function of Provincial Representative with the national organization TESL Canada:

1. through teleconferences (with Skype or telephone);
2. through email correspondence to receive any information pertinent to BC TEAL and to provide TESL Canada with reports of developments in BC TEAL;
3. through participation in TESL Canada committees.

There has recently been a national TESL Canada Conference in the east of the country, namely in Halifax. It was held one week previous to this BC TEAL Conference. BC TEAL was represented in Halifax by our President, Michael Galli.

Regular correspondence between BC TEAL and TESL Canada took place in the past year after TESL Canada expressed its wish to hold the next conference in British Columbia, with the assistance of BC TEAL. Negotiation between the two organizations has resulted in choosing Kamloops as the location for the TESL Canada Conference in the fall of 2012. Preparation for this big national event are well under way.

BC TEAL Newsletter Report

Newsletter Report AGM

Submitted by Patricia Nicoli

April 2011-April 2012

TEAL News was available to all with the new website starting in fall 2011. The fall issue was published in October and another issue was published again in February for winter 2012. The spring issue will be published in June 2012.

These issues maintained the regular columns such as "Key Concepts in TEAL" by Li-Shih Huang, as well as "Book Reviews", the "Wired Teacher" by Scott Douglas,

“Teaching Tips” and the annual “ESL Writing Contest” winner essays. Along with these regular articles, there were an array of informative and interesting additional articles such as Joe Dobson’s feature article for fall 2011 and Wendy Royal’s article for winter 2012.

The TCF continues to submit information for publication regarding travel grants and scholarship awards.

Many thanks go to Sandra McGoldrick who has continued her role with dedication as layout manager and has established an appealing and consistent format for the graphic design for each issue. Along with the newsletter, Sandra has contributed her time and energy to the layout for conference booklets.

Much gratitude is expressed toward our advertising manager, Adriana del Paso for her contribution in securing advertising for the newsletter. Adriana has also given her time and energy to securing advertising for the conference booklets.

The new interactive BCTEAL website is a welcome initiative thanks to Carmen Larsen. The newsletter can be easily checked by anyone by clicking on the “latest newsletter” tab or by clicking on the “past issues” tab to find older issues dating back to 2002. In the past, Brian Wilson, was the person assisting with uploading the newsletter onto the website. For this past year Carmen has been responsible for editing the website status to upload the newsletter as well as to edit a message to announce the latest issue’s arrival. The new editor will now have access to the website and can upload the latest issue as well as edit messages.

WAESOL and TEAL News have started an exchange. For winter 2012, WAESOL sent an article which was published in TEAL News and an article from TEAL News was published in WAESOL for spring 2012. This exchange will continue for alternating newsletters.

We wish to thank our regular authors for their articles, the ESL writing contest committee, Aleah Gustafson, Seonaigh MacPherson, Joe Dobson and Janice Penner, as well as to all the people who submitted articles. Our appreciation goes out to all the official and non-official volunteer members of the newsletter committee who have made contributions this past year. These include, Marti Sevier, Karen Aughttry, Carol Falconer, Chris-Anne Stumpf, Joel Rhein, Tracey Bell, Louise Green and Eilidh Singh.

BC TEAL PD Committee Report

BC TEAL PD Committee Chair’s Annual Report

Submitted by Susan Peake and Rebecca Kullman

- One regional conference was held in the Fall of 2011 and one was held in the Spring of 2012. TEAL members also participated in an international conference in Washington state. All were well-attended and generated positive revenues for BC TEAL.

1. 2011 Fall Interior Conference, University of British Columbia, Okanagan Campus, Kelowna

- Date: October 15, 2011
- Theme: Be the Bridge
- Over 150 registered participants
- 30 presenters, 24 workshops
- 40 TESL students with poster presentations
- Plenary Speaker: Michael Galli, BC TEAL President

2. 2012 Spring Island Conference, Vancouver Island University, Nanaimo

- Date: Saturday, Feb. 11
- Theme: In Balance
- Approximately 50 participants
- 14 presenters
- Plenary Speaker: Dr. Ken Beatty

3. Tri-TESOL Conference, Highline Community College, Seattle, WA

- Date: Friday and Saturday, October 21 and 22, 2011
- Theme: English Without Borders
- Approximately 850 participants
- Over 200 Presenters
- Plenary Speakers: Keith Folse, Doug Biber, Dr. Lee Gunderson

Other events included:

- Co-hosting a Sponsor Teacher Appreciation Night on February 17, 2012 along with Vancouver Community College, Douglas College and Trinity Western University.
- Representing BC TEAL at the UVic Applied Linguistics Fair, March 9, 2012.

Future events:

- No Fall Interior Conference due to the TESL Canada Conference at Thompson-Rivers University, Oct. 11-13, 2012.
- Spring Island Conference, TBA.

BC TEAL Website Committee Report

BC TEAL Website Committee Report for the AGM May 6th, 2011

Submitted by Carmen Larsen
Website Committee Chair

In October 2011, BC TEAL launched our new website and since then it has received a lot of positive feedback from our membership. When designing the new site, the BC TEAL Board wanted to ensure that the website would provide a place where members could not only learn about what was happening in the ESL field in BC, but also connect with other ESL professionals. In order to achieve this, the new site includes updated Membership, TCF, Conference, and Newsletter pages as well as the new Community Area, which helps members keep up-to-date about TEAL events, announcements and job postings, as well as meet other ESL professionals in BC.

Website Budget

Total Cost to April 1, 2012: \$35,669.84

Member Involvement

We appreciate the tremendous support and very helpful suggestions we have received since the launch of the new website, and we strongly encourage members to keep helping us improve the site by posting suggestions and feedback on the Website Group page in the Community Area.

We also want to remind members that this is YOUR website so you are welcome, and encouraged, to get involved in online discussions in the Group Area. We have created a few Groups in the Community Area, so members can share their ideas, questions, and expertise with others. Group members can also upload documents onto the Group page, so they can share teaching resources such as lesson ideas and materials. Although each Group has a moderator, these Groups are meant to be member-driven, so don't be shy to post your questions, comments, etc. Also, if you have an idea for a new Group that you'd like to see on the website, please post it in the Website Group.

Future Developments

In an effort to continue to improve the new site and make it as user-friendly as possible, we will be adding a FAQs page in the next couple of months. Other possible future website updates include:

- More user features in Community area such as Profile Walls where members can post messages directly to each other
- Profile pages for Institutional Members
- Updated Conference features such as printable online schedules

We are also very pleased to announce that Joel Rhein will be the Website Committee Chair for 2012-2014.

BC TEAL Treasury Report

Treasurer's Report AGM

Submitted by Janice GT Penner
April 2011-April 2012

BC TEAL's financial status remained stable over the 2011 budget year. The SmytheRatcliffe accounting firm, which conducted a Review Engagement of all our 2011 documents, found our financial position and record keeping to be excellent. The creation of the website (\$18,500.00) was by far the greatest investment for our membership. Our income continues come from from conferences, advertizing, memberships, and interest from the GICs. TEAL will contribute our proportion of the Tri-TESOL profits to the new TCF Refugee Award account.

For 2012, we project an income of \$113,999 and total expenditures of \$131,685. The \$17,785 deficit is understandable given more investment required in the website (\$12,500.00), professional fees for the Bylaw revision and Review Engagement (\$8000.00) and the promise to match fundraising efforts of the TCF (to a maximum of \$50,000).

BC TEAL is very grateful to Lindi McCormick for her efficient bookkeeping services. The board has discussed all expenditures, so the treasurer's duties have not been too onerous. It was a pleasure to serve the membership as treasurer. If you have financial questions, please feel free to contact me via the BC TEAL office.