



# TEAL News

Winter 2017

THE ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE



## BC TEAL's Community of Practice: Reflecting on 50 Years

**Community English  
Classes for Women**  
page 8

**Do You Believe  
in "Neuromyths"?**  
page 14

**Extending Perspective:  
From Local to Global**  
page 17

**Education through  
Ethnography**  
page 22

## CONTENTS

Message from the President .....	3
Message from the Executive Director .....	4
Editorial: Egg Cartons and Teaching English as an Additional Language .....	5
Classroom Corner: Mixed Headlines .....	6
Community English Classes for Women .....	8
Teaching Syrian Refugees in a Small Community .....	10
Self-Care: An Ethical Imperative for English as an Additional Language Teachers .....	12
Do You Believe in "Neuromyths"? .....	14
Extending Perspective: From Local to Global .....	17
Understanding the Employment Conditions of English as an Additional Language Instructors of Adults in British Columbia .....	19
Education through Ethnography .....	22
Reflections on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) .....	23
My First ATESL Annual Conference.....	25
From BC TEAL to Pronunciation Teacher Preparation: An Update from Down Under.....	26
TESOL 2.0: Engage, Enrich, Empower at the 2017 TESOL International Convention & English Language Expo .....	29



**Follow us on Twitter:**  
[twitter.com/bctéal](https://twitter.com/bctéal)



**Like us on Facebook**  
[facebook.com/bctéal.org](https://facebook.com/bctéal.org)

### BC TEAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS (2016-2017)

**President** - Joe Dobson  
**1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, PAAC Chair** - Alison Whitmore  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, Conference Co-chair** - Alex Bale  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, Conference Co-chair** - Heather Barclay  
**Treasurer** - Tanya Ploquin  
**Secretary** - Michelle Ronback  
**Past President** - Shawna Williams  
**Executive Members-at-Large**  
**LINC Representative** - Ryan Drew  
**Outreach Chair** - Michael Wicks  
**PD Committee Co-chair** - Eilidh Singh  
**PD Committee Co-chair** - Cathy Ebert  
**Regional Reps Coordinator** - Karen Densky  
**Social Media Chair** - Nathan Hall  
**Publications Chair** - Scott Roy Douglas  
**TCF Chair** - Jennifer Pearson Terell  
**Website Committee Chair** - Jack Massalski  
**Interim Executive Director** - Brenda Lohrenz  
 executivedirector@bctéal.org  
**Administrative Manager** - Sandra Boehm  
 admin@bctéal.org  
**NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE**  
**Editor** - Scott Roy Douglas  
 editor@bctéal.org  
**Layout Editor** - Shawna Williams

### PHOTO CREDITS:

The images used in the newsletter have been used under regulations of a Creative Commons license.

The BC TEAL newsletter is available through membership in BC TEAL, open access on the website, and by special arrangement. It is published three times a year in winter, spring, and fall. Contact the editor for specific deadlines.

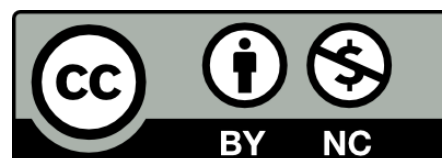
Contributors: We welcome articles of general interest to associated members. All material is submitted to the editorial board before being approved for publication.

Copy may be edited for length, style, and/or clarity without prior notice to authors. Please be aware that submissions may be reprinted.

Copy should be submitted directly to the editor as an email attachment. Advertising material must be submitted in .tiff or .jpg formats. For information on advertising rates, contact the administrative manager at the BC TEAL office.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policies of BC TEAL. Advertising included in this publication does not indicate endorsement by BC TEAL nor does it guarantee the accuracy of an advertisement's information.

### Copyright Notice:



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution—Non-commercial 4.0 International License. Authors who publish their work in the BC TEAL Newsletter retain copyright for their work and grant the BC TEAL Newsletter the right of first publication. Any subsequent sharing of any part of the BC TEAL Newsletter must acknowledge the work's authorship and initial publication (including the date) in the BC TEAL Newsletter.

# Reflecting Back, Moving Forward: BC TEAL Turns 50

by Joe Dobson

**BC TEAL** is Canada's oldest English as an additional language (EAL) professional association, and 2017 is an important year—BC TEAL turns 50! Over the past five decades, BC TEAL has served countless EAL teaching professionals at conferences, professional development workshops and sessions, and many other events. 50 years is a significant milestone and is a good time to reflect back.

What started as a small group of dedicated professionals who came together and founded the association has grown in ways they may scarcely have imagined. As I think about that group of founders, I feel indebted to the commitment and energy they had in creating BC TEAL.

I imagine that the folks who started BC TEAL 50 years ago, such as Patricia Wakefield, BC TEAL's first president, would be ecstatic and proud to see such a vibrant and involved professional community. Much like those who founded the association, the heart of BC TEAL remains the same—it has been built by a community of like-minded individuals who volunteer their time, ideas and energy.

2016 ended on a particularly high note for BC TEAL with several projects, initiatives and opportunities of note. In the fall, BC TEAL formally took over the assets—financial, physical, and intellectual—from LISTN (Language Instruction Support and Training Network), had a wildly successful (and fun!) interior regional conference held in Kamloops, and held many events facilitated by regional groups throughout the province as part of BC TEAL's EAL week celebrations. These events were on top of many other successes in 2016, such as the BC TEAL Refugee Project.

Wanting to continue building on the work of countless board members and volunteers over the past five decades, the BC TEAL board of directors held a visioning and strategic planning retreat in October. Using survey feedback from members and volunteers and building on the past work of the association, what emanated from the retreat was a diverse and impressive set of priorities and plans for BC TEAL going forward. Watch out in 2017—there are some exciting plans for the year!

In particular you don't want to miss the BC TEAL Annual Conference which will be at Vancouver Community College May 4-6 with three amazing keynote speakers: Andy Curtis, Penny Ur, and Jill Hadfield. Our 50th anniversary conference will be an amazing celebration.

As always the newsletter includes many engaging and meaningful articles including ones on employment conditions, teaching Syrian refugees, IELTS, and education through ethnography. That is just a sample of some of the wonderful articles in this issue. I also thank the many contributors to this newsletter and BC TEAL's Publication Chair Scott Douglas who not only edits the BC TEAL newsletter, but who also serves as the editor of the BC TEAL Journal.

Importantly, thanks go to the many BC TEAL volunteers—past and present—over the past five decades. They have made BC TEAL what it is.

Sincerely,  
Joe Dobson  
President, BC TEAL



Joe Dobson is the president of BC TEAL. He is a senior lecturer at Thompson Rivers University. His research interests include educational technology, teacher education, and intercultural communication.



# BC TEAL: A Reflection 50 Years in the Making

by Brenda Lohrenz

**AT 2017**, BC TEAL has arrived at a significant milestone—it has been in existence for fifty years! Where did we come from and how did we get here? As the new Executive Director of BC TEAL, I found an opportunity to delve into TEAL's past through Mary Ashworth and Patricia Wakefield's publication *TEAL: The First Twenty-Five Years*. Appreciation of our evolution was further augmented by reflections from six past presidents and other early contributors to the association.

Armed with this material, three particularly note-worthy points arose. The dedication and tenacity of those in the English as an Additional Language (EAL) profession, the efforts made to create a strong community of practice, and finally, a constant striving to evolve.

BC TEAL's start reaches back to a BCTF convention in 1967—a set of goals were brought forward and momentum started to build (Ashworth & Wakefield, 1991). Carol May, the first staff hired in 1985, vividly recalls the dedication of all who participated. Sylvia Helmer's account of "all hands on deck" for conference preparation brings to the fore how much TEAL was (and remains) a group effort. Tenacity comes to mind with accounts of BC TEAL setting up the first foundation *in the world* to be operated by an EAL association. Nick Collins, president in the early 1980's, sums up efforts to garner initial matching funds for the TEAL Charitable Foundation as acknowledgement of "the little association that could."

BC TEAL over the years reveals a strong community of practice taking shape. From the mid-1970s, Maureen Sawkins speaks to the fact that "we all shared the faith." In her words, the vision was to garner a grass roots community that could speak with one voice on behalf of our members and their students. TEAL's current past president, Shawna Williams, talks of the EAL community in BC coming together, even in challenging times, "like an act of solidarity for who we are as professionals and what we do." Christina Stechishin, president in the 90s, speaks to the necessity of learning from and valuing the experiences and challenges of all members.

As testament to our need to evolve, Michael Galli fondly refers to the "magic" of conferences where a community of professionals who practice a craft seek to improve, refine, innovate, and research. This evolution of practice extends also to the desire to meet the needs of our diverse EAL learners. Rather than remain complacent, to this day efforts made at BC TEAL are done with both dedicated EAL professionals and learners in mind.

In looking to where we are headed—opportunities abound. Long time BC TEAL contributor (and chief cheerleader!) Jennifer Pearson Terell suggests that an ideal BC TEAL would include an expanded role in the area of social responsibility. This keen desire was recently matched by the creation of a BC TEAL Refugee Project—the potential of our professional association shows no bounds.

In asking colleagues to provide some key words that capture a vision of BC TEAL, they include the following:

“Do not think out of the box, simply think that there IS no box

—Nick Collins (inspired by Mary Ashworth and Patricia Wakefield)

“Take time to redefine the new political reality and the role of our field (language and culture)

—Maureen Sawkins

“Connection. Community. Collaboration.

—Shawna Williams

As BC TEAL moves into its 50<sup>th</sup> year, a recent integration with LISTN has allowed further opportunity to re-envision the organization. Current board president Joe Dobson recently sent out some highlights of exciting initiatives that include online options for professional development and a new website. Complacency is definitely not part of the BC TEAL vocabulary, and as Executive Director, I remain excited by the prospect of BC TEAL—the next fifty years!

#### Reference:

Ashworth, M. & Wakefield, P. (1991). *TEAL: The first twenty-five years*. Vancouver, BC: BC TEAL/Pacific Educational Publishing, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia



Brenda Lohrenz is the Executive Director of BC TEAL. As the former Executive Director of LISTN, she has been active in coordinating provincial and national forums related to settlement language programming and policy.

# Egg Cartons and Teaching English as an Additional Language

by Scott Roy Douglas

**THE YEAR** 2017 marks a major milestone for BC TEAL as an organization. It has been 50 years since educators first came together in British Columbia to establish a professional association dedicated to the teaching and learning of English as an additional language (EAL). Thinking about the 50 years BC TEAL has been in existence, I recently paused to reflect on the role of professional organizations while reading a twitter exchange between @tesolmatthew and @nathanghall related to the breaking down of egg carton walls in teaching.

interaction, and continued professional development. As a member of BC TEAL, I'm not so much an egg in an egg carton, but rather a free-range egg in a nest with my friends.

The winter issue of our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year starts in the classroom with an activity mixing headlines, a description of community English classes for women, and a visit to a class for refugees in a small community. Next, the issue turns to professional development with a look at teacher self-care, an



The egg carton metaphor originally came from Dan Lortie's (1975) work. He referred to how teachers may experience feelings of professional isolation because educational institutions were designed in such a way that, rather than encouraging teachers to interact with each other, they separated teachers like eggs separated in an egg carton. Self-sufficiency and secluded teaching practices were the norm, with traditional classroom setups discouraging teacher-cooperation. It was hard for teachers to see out of their individual classroom pockets in the egg carton.

I paused to wonder if I'm trapped in an egg carton. Typically, one of the first things I do before I start teaching is close the door. Partly I do this because my classes tend to become boisterous affairs, but also partly I do this because all down the hallway, teachers all close their doors. Where the metaphor doesn't hold true is when I start to consider professional organizations such as BC TEAL. As a member, I'm constantly having opportunities to get glimpses into the classroom practices of my colleagues and transcend the egg carton walls. Whether it is #LINCchat on twitter, the activities of EAL Week, conference presentations, or articles in the newsletter and journal, it is encouraging to see within the BC TEAL community the potential for exchange,

examination of neuro-myths, a reflection on expanding perspectives, and an investigation into EAL teacher employment conditions. Articles by current graduate students follow with research method considerations and English language testing reflections. Finally, we hear from colleagues reporting from the recent ATESL conference, sending greetings from Australia, and encouraging participation in the upcoming TESOL International Convention.

## Reference:

Lortie, D. (1975). *Schoolteacher: A sociological study*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.



Scott Roy Douglas is an assistant professor in the Faculty of Education on UBC's Okanagan campus. He spends his days exploring English as an additional language teaching and learning.

# Mixed Headlines

by Edward Pye

- Tag Words:** Integrated Skills, Media, News, Current Events, Story-telling, Narratives
- Time:** 80 minutes
- Age/Level:** Modifiable for different ages and levels, but better at higher levels and ages.
- Numbers:** Three or more groups of two or four students
- Skills:** Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking, Creative thinking



**MIXED HEADLINES** is an integrated task in which students weave different stories together. It works well when related to a topic like media and current events, but it can be customized to a variety of topics as well as a range of levels and ages.

## Objectives:

- Finding news/stories from various sources
- Explaining the main “WH” details and narrative of a story
- Writing a creative storyline
- Narrating a storyline

## Preparation:

- In the previous class, give students the homework of finding a story. The type of story will depend on what topic you are studying. If it is general current events, then have them find an interesting current events story. If you are studying technology, then have them find a technology story. If you have younger or lower level students, have them find an interesting short story that they can understand and explain. The key is that the story must have a narrative. Instruct students to only choose

short stories in which they can identify the main details (answer the six WH questions) and follow the narrative. Let them know that they will have to explain the story in the following class which should make them choose better stories.

- Alternatively, this step can be done at the beginning of the class. I have students find stories at home because they usually have better resources and this step can take a while.
- You will need several stations for this activity. Students will be in small groups and each will need a station, so you may need to rearrange the desks/tables.

## Steps:

1. **Groups (2 minutes):** Put students into small groups and give each group a station. This activity works best with at least four groups. They will be split up later in the task, so there needs to be at least two students in each group. The ideal number for this task is four groups of four.

Continued on next page

## Mixed Headlines continued

2. **Warm up Questions (5 minutes):** Write the following questions on the board: “Has your friend ever given you the wrong information? What happened?” “Do news companies ever give incorrect information? Why?” Have the students discuss. Go over the answers together briefly.
3. **Explain your story (20 minutes):** Have students take out their news stories and have them explain them to their group members. Tell them to go over the main details of each story:
  - What is it about?
  - When and where does it take place?
  - Who is it about?
  - How does the story unfold? What happens?
  - Why does it happen? What were the events that caused this story?
4. **Make a new story (20 minutes):** Once everyone has explained their story, have them combine the details of each story together to create a completely new story. They should write the story down on a piece of paper making sure that it has all the main details.
5. **Divide Speakers & Listeners (3 minutes):** Once the stories are finished, take the pieces of paper from each team, split each team in half and have the two halves play rock, paper, scissors. The winning half gets to choose between speaking and listening. If they choose speaking, they will stay at their station and explain their new story. If they choose listening, they will rotate around to the next station and listen to the next group’s story.
6. **Rotate (1 minute):** Once the speakers and listeners have been determined, rotate the listeners to the next group where they listen. Speakers stay where they are and wait for incoming listeners. Make sure to rotate the groups in an orderly circle so that students eventually rotate back to their own station.
7. **Story-telling (5 minutes):** Have the speakers explain their story while the listeners listen. Tell the listeners to listen carefully because they will be explaining that story next. Listeners can ask questions for clarification if they need.
8. **Alternate Rotation (1 minute):** Once all the speakers have finished explaining their stories, rotate the teams again, but this time, the students who did not move last time (the speakers) will move. So, speakers move to the next station where they will reunite with their original team. However, now the roles are reversed. The incoming speakers will become listeners and the remaining listeners will become speakers.
9. **Story Re-telling (5 minutes):** Have the new speakers give the details of the story that they have just heard (the story always stays at the station even though the students rotate through). Again, tell the new listeners to pay close attention because they will be explaining this story in a short time.
10. **Repeat (Varying time):** Repeat the alternating rotation process. The listeners stay at the station and become speakers, while the speakers move on and become listeners and then alternate the next rotation. Do this until every team has been to every other station.
11. **Check the stories (10 minutes):** Stop the rotation when the teams are at the station just before their own. Bring the class back together and have the teams explain the story of the station that they are at. Have the team from the corresponding station listen and check if they have all the right details. Because this is a high-pressure information sharing activity, the details of each story will change as they get passed through different teams which will be met with great hilarity by everyone.
12. **Follow Up:** Once this is all done, explain the importance of listening carefully and getting the correct details. You may even want to go over some listening strategies or discuss why it is important for media outlets to report correct details.



Edward Pye is a New Zealander with an English literature degree from Otago University. Before moving to British Columbia, he taught in South Korea for eight years. Since then, he has worked as an Educational Programmer and EAP instructor on UBC’s Okanagan campus and as an EAL instructor at Okanagan College.



# Community English Classes for Women

by Amea Wilbur



**RIMA** arrived in Canada in February 2016. She came with her husband and four children, her youngest child is 4 months old. Her husband just started language classes. Rima really wants to learn English so she can help her children, make friends, and participate in Canadian society. She is lonely and wishes she had family close by to help her. Her son Sayid has a disability and she knows she will have to attend many doctors appointments with him. She sometimes feels like she is back in Syria listening to the bombs go off. She has many dreams for her family and particularly her children. She would really like to attend Language Instruction for Newcomer (LINC) to Canada classes but can't because her children are too young.

**BETWEEN** November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015 and June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016, 28,755 refugees arrived in Canada, many of them like Rima. They fled war, persecution, torture, and faced multiple losses before arriving on our shores. This story is based on the many stories I heard working with refugee women. There are thousands of mothers like Rima, who have come to Canada to make a better life for their children.

For someone like Rima, settling here can seem insurmountable. Rima does not know the language to be able to speak to her children's teachers, clinic staff, or dentist. She does not have

family or friends here to support her. She does not understand the education system and worries about what her children will learn here. She knows how valuable it is to learn English. She wants to attend government funded language programs called Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC). She can't attend until her youngest child reaches 18 months. She is worried because she also knows if she misses more than two LINC classes a month, she may be asked to leave. Rima also struggles with flashbacks, difficulty concentrating, and memory. Rima continues to have a lot of hope too. She believes her children will have different

opportunities than she had in Syria after the war.

In 2016, Pacific Immigrant Resources Society (PIRS) was fortunate enough to be awarded the BC TEAL AIDS and Health Award for curriculum development to support refugee women like Rima who have experienced trauma and are struggling to find their way here. I would like to take this opportunity to share with you how the award was used and the ways we are trying to respond to the needs of women like Rima.

In late 2015, PIRS saw a need to find a way to support newly arrived refugee women and their young children. My own doctoral research<sup>1</sup> identified some of the barriers that students who have experienced trauma faced in accessing government funded English as an additional language (EAL) classes, in particular LINC classes. Some of the barriers include lack of childcare space, attendance expectations, lack of understanding about the impact of trauma on learning, assessment practices, and not feeling ready for a LINC class. We at PIRS felt we might be able to fill a gap and respond to the needs of refugee women. We have 41 years of experience working with refugee and immigrant women. PIRS was not looking to replace the LINC classes but to provide language support for women who are not quite ready to enter LINC classes. In April 2015, we piloted an EAL class for refugee women, specifically women who have experienced trauma, at Edmonds Community School. We had 20 women and 21 children attend the program.

Our program and curriculum were different than the LINC program. We

<sup>1</sup> <https://open.library.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/24/items/1.0166644>

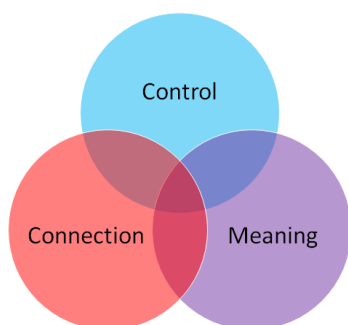
Continued on next page



## Community Classes for Women continued

wanted to be more flexible and responsive to the needs of the participants. Women, in the pilot class, brought their babies, and we were able to provide childcare for the older children. Many of the women had experienced violence and trauma, and some have never been in an educational setting before. Being comfortable and feeling safe is was the primary goal of the instructor.

We used the following guiding themes in developing the curriculum:



**Control:** Trauma can rob people of their sense of control and power over their lives. One of the first steps in supporting people with trauma is to provide a sense of safety and to equip them with the language to identify their feelings and experiences. Our curriculum covered language around feelings. We also developed lesson plans that addressed mental wellness and personal well-being.

**Connection:** Trauma can destroy the bonds between an individual, their

family, and their community. Therefore, one means of supporting students who have experienced trauma is facilitating connection with others. Our curriculum and classes offered opportunities for women to get to know each other and develop friendships in the classroom. As well, they learned about the education system, parenting in the Canadian context, how to best support their children, and social services.

**Meaning:** Trauma can dismantle one's sense of value in the world. Students need to gain a new sense of self and hope—so they can look toward the future. Our curriculum did this by having the women think about their own interests, passion, and hopes. The picture below highlights an activity that

was done with the students around self-identity.

BC TEAL has shown leadership by supporting the needs of refugees. I am honoured and proud that BC TEAL funded our curriculum and program. This funding has helped to ensure that women like Rima are given the much needed support and opportunity to engage in our communities. PIRS is hopeful that the continued support for refugee women, such as Rima, can continue. In this time when we are witness to divisive and social strain, it is essential that we continue to create innovative, and inclusive programs and curriculum. Our students can offer as much to Canadian society as it can offer them.



**TEAL Charitable Foundation**

*"Promoting the teaching and learning of  
English as an additional language."*

**BC TEAL Members are eligible to apply  
for the many TCF awards & scholarships.  
Visit [bctéal.org/tcf/](http://bctéal.org/tcf/)**



Dr. Amea Wilbur completed her Doctorate at UBC looking at how to make government funded language for adults more inclusive for students who have experienced trauma. She has facilitated numerous workshops on how to support students who have experienced trauma in the EAL classroom. She, along with Diana Jeffries, created "Beyond Trauma: Language Learning Strategies for New Canadians Living with Trauma" through LISTN. Dr. Wilbur currently works for Pacific Immigrant Resources Society as the Program Manager.

# Teaching Syrian Refugees in a Small Community

by Lian Clark

**IT ALL** started several months ago. I was taking the TESL program at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops. The program was about to come to an end, and I was feeling the pressure to look for a teaching position. When a job posting to teach Syrian refugees came through BC TEAL's website, I was really interested. With a background of helping immigrants to settle and integrate into the local community, I got the job. The position involved developing and delivering an eight-week English as an additional language (EAL) course to a group of newly arrived Syrian refugees in a small town in the British Columbia interior. The primary aim of the course was to increase their English skills so that they could integrate into their new community.

The location of this EAL course may be a small town, but it is definitely not a small community. Shortly after the arrival of the first four Syrian families, local people realized that language was the key for them to settle in their new lives in Canada. Since there was no government support at the time, the community raised enough funds to hire a teacher through donations and fundraising. In addition to financial support, there were always two volunteers from the community attending classes, and groups of volunteers to look after the children while their parents were in the classroom.

Learning English was a matter of survival for those newly arrived refugees. They needed language skills to carry out daily tasks, to communicate with people in the local communities, to understand Canadian culture, to look for employment opportunities, and to train for a job. Learning about etiquette is always important. After conducting a thorough needs analysis, I designed a course syllabus and planned for the first and subsequent lessons.

For my very first class, I planned to let my students know my expectations of them. Considering this group of students didn't know much English, and all of them spoke Arabic as their first language, I decided to bring in an Arabic-speaking interpreter to make sure all the students understood my introduction to the program. With the help of the interpreter, I welcomed the students, introduced myself, and distributed a notebook and a binder to each student. I explained that there were no textbooks for the class, and the students would learn practical English that could be used in their own daily lives. I

indicated that the class would often work in pairs or small groups to give students more opportunities to talk in English; however, if students were not ready to talk or say something in English, they could just listen for a while and participate silently by nodding their heads or pointing. Last but not least, I expected each student to speak in English during classes. They were only allowed to speak in Arabic at the beginning or at the end of each class, during the breaks. They could also speak in Arabic when they had questions or needed more information on something. Thanks to the interpreter, my expectations were clear to the students in the first class, and I did benefit from setting a respectful tone toward each individual and their culture; hence, the students would learn to respect, understand, and collaborate with each other.

**“...conflict not only fostered new ideas, alternatives, and solutions, but most importantly it led to growth and change by building more synergy and cohesion among us.**

The program started with a group of eight students, who were actually four couples. The first day, they chose to sit beside their spouses. Naturally, whenever there was a question, there was a discussion between spouses in Arabic. I assigned them to sit with different students during the second class. Soon, the students began to make friends and got comfortable with each other. Obviously, Arabic was still frequently heard in the classroom. When students got used to the relaxed atmosphere in the classroom, something totally unexpected happened.

The second week of the program, a class discussion went out of control; there was a debate in Arabic between two male students. The wife of one of the male students also joined the discussion with an upsetting tone of voice. In a minute, the discussion heated up and turned into an argument. As the high volume of the voices extremely agitated both parties, I failed to intervene. When the husband asked to be excused, I gladly let him leave the classroom before his wife burst in tears. The class finished with me introducing key vocabulary such as “conflict” and “argument” to describe what had just happened; however, I knew I had to come up with a way to turn things around. The next day, both families came to class, but I could easily see that they were avoiding each other. That day happened to be the birthday of one of the students, so we had a little celebration. Before sharing the cake, I deliberately made some interaction between the two

Continued on next page

wives to break the ice a little. After having some treats, I started the conversation by addressing the conflict and confessing how helpless I felt as a teacher. I opened a discussion for solutions in situations like that and asked the students to work in groups. I particularly asked them to write down their ideas of classroom norms and rules on a poster. That activity went great with all students participating and giving opinions. My students were puzzled when I said that I was actually glad that there was an argument in the classroom. I explained how this conflict not only fostered new ideas, alternatives, and solutions, but most importantly it led to growth and change by building more synergy and cohesion among us. After the class, one of the class-room assistants shared the heartwarming moment she just witnessed outside the classroom: two Syrian men double-kissed each other on the cheek, and hugged. Peace arrived.

When reflecting on this teaching experience, one of the unexpected challenges was flexibility. During the interview, the hiring committee and I agreed that “being flexible” is an important component of this job; however, we totally underestimated the extent of that flexibility. The challenges I experienced were having toddlers in the classroom with their parents, interruptions by childminders for unexpected incidents, constantly preparing backup plans to meet the students’ various learning needs, etc. Adjusting plans was the most frequent challenge. For instance, I planned to show a video on popular culture. After a few minutes of viewing, I realized my students had difficulty in following the language and cultural information. I had to adjust my plan to include a study of the key vocabulary, an explanation of some cultural norms involved, and a discussion on the differences between popular culture in Canada and Syria. stretching flexibility, the impact of a spontaneous question or discussion on my

students’ learning always delightfully surprised me. When I followed their needs and the flow of the class atmosphere, I was not only experiencing naturally emerging wonderful teaching moments, but also establishing my unique teaching style. Most importantly, I was establishing rapport with my students by showing my care for their learning and my effort in catering to their needs.

Thanks to the generosity of the community, the initial eight-week program was extended one more month, then another three months. It has been five months now, and the program is still running. Due to the one-year sponsorship agreement, which is coming to an end, some of my students are expected to find employment to support themselves. Even though they have made significant progress in the past five months, the language barrier would still be the biggest challenge for them to find suitable jobs. I expressed my concerns to a new friend I met through the BC TEAL Reginal Conference, and his wise insight into life has brought me some comfort: “Desire for the best is never too ambitious; doing what is necessary to get there is important for achieving satisfaction” (Michael Wicks).



Lian Clark is a new member of BC TEAL. She is teaching community EAL programs in the BC Interior. She has taught EAL at private schools in China. Having a background as a settlement and integration counsellor supporting immigrants in BC communities, she is interested in language learning and cultural transition as well as teaching students of refugee and trauma backgrounds.



Equip yourself to teach in Canada or abroad with an MA in TESOL from TWU.

[TWU.CA/MATESOL](http://TWU.CA/MATESOL)



TRINITY  
WESTERN  
UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE  
STUDIES



# Self-Care: An Ethical Imperative for EAL Teachers

by Diana Jeffries

**STARTING** a new life in a new country while coping with the adversity of migration is for most new immigrants and refugees an overwhelming and challenging experience. New immigrants and refugees are compelled to come to Canada for a variety of reasons. Even though Canada is a multicultural society, newcomers still need to learn English or French so that they can participate in Canadian society as a whole.

We as teachers support many students as they continue to find their path and weave into Canada's social fabric. However, we don't only teach language but we also help our students to make community connections that supports social cohesion. We celebrate our students' perseverance and resilience every day they show up in our classes to learn and engage with their new community. We become part of our students' strength and support them with resources that build their capacity to learn in our multicultural classrooms. We play an important role in helping students acquire the much needed English or French language skills for work and social inclusion.

Although we as teachers have an opportunity and obligation to support our students as they are learning English, I have found in my own teaching practice for the past 14 years that there is often little attention given by teachers and their employers on how English as an additional language (EAL) teachers cope with stress. Teachers struggle with relationships with administrators, time pressures, excessive workloads, societal expectations, and feelings of isolation in the classroom (Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2005). In addition, there are added demands made on teachers, such as the expectation that teachers will continue with education and training, and at the same time there is a lack of new and diverse teaching and professional development opportunities from within EAL education programs. These stressors can lead to disillusionment and depression.

There needs to be further studies on the stressors that are experienced by the unique and complex teaching assignments done by EAL teachers. Education programs often highlight their ability to meet the needs of students but rarely factor in the needs of teachers. Therefore, until the private, non-profit, and public sectors of education all take action to better support the needs of EAL professionals, it is up to teachers to

find ways of self-care. If teachers can't find ways to recognize and manage their stress, they will continue to be susceptible to compassion fatigue<sup>1</sup> and burnout.

Many teachers are unaware of what compassion fatigue looks like. While it is commonly linked with other stressors, there are hallmark signs of compassion fatigue such as: avoidance, detachment, addiction, sadness and grief, changes in beliefs and expectations, and assumptions. There can be somatic or emotional complaints too and all of these symptoms can signal to a teachers the need to step back and examine their workplace health.



Burnout is considered to be an element of compassion fatigue and it has been defined as the psychological strain of working with difficult populations (McCann & Pearlmann, 1990). Burnout is also seen in the deterioration and depletion of care caused by excessive work related demands (Brady, Guy, Poelstra, & Brokaw, 1999).

Burnout and compassion fatigue can be experienced by any teacher, but for those teachers

working with refugees that have experienced traumatic events, teachers can also suffer from vicarious trauma as a result of being exposed to the stories of trauma told by refugee students. Vicarious trauma is related to working with vulnerable populations that have suffered from pain and trauma, and that trauma is then vicariously experienced by the teacher. Vicarious trauma is often a concern for social workers and other health care providers, but arguably teachers can often experience it just as acutely. Those professionals more susceptible to vicarious trauma are those who are overworked, ignore healthy boundaries, have too high an expectation of their role as a teacher, are new to the profession or the particular classroom setting, and work with large numbers of people who have suffered from trauma.

Some of the impacts of compassion fatigue, burnout, or vicarious trauma on teachers include change in identity, world view, or even spiritual beliefs. While teachers are at risk of

<sup>1</sup> The emotional residue or strain of exposure to working with those suffering from the consequences of traumatic events. It differs from burn out, but can coexist. Compassion Fatigue can occur due to exposure on one case or can be due to "cumulative" level of trauma.

succumbing to these stressors, there are many things teachers can do to help manage it. There are protective factors that can help overcome these real obstacles to health and work as an EAL professional. The protective factors include: having a good social support, strong ethical principles of practice, continuing education, competence in teaching practice, and the ability to deliberately step back to minimize the impact on one's health and wellbeing. If left unmanaged, symptoms of burnout, compassion fatigue, and vicarious trauma can have a destructive effect on professional and personal lives. These destructive effects can also include losing the ability to have a positive helping relationship with students.

Self-care, therefore, is an ethical imperative. Teachers have an obligation to students as well as to themselves, their colleagues, and their loved ones—not to be damaged by their work. One way of doing that is through understanding the ABCs of self-care: Awareness, Balance, and Connection (Saakvitne & Pearlman, 1996).

Awareness refers to being attuned to one's own needs, limits, and emotions. It includes self-reflection, debriefing, journaling, meditation, and other mindfulness-type activities. It is developing awareness of how your work as a teacher will affect your worldview and psychological well-being. It is the awareness of your own needs.

Balance refers to the strategies for enhancing life balance between work, play, and rest. Balance includes: time spent with non-work friends and family, creative outlets, and basic physical care such as exercise, nutrition, and sleep. It means taking time for leisure pursuits such as listening to music, reading for pleasure, or spending time in nature. It also means knowing one's own limits, keeping boundaries, and recognizing that no teacher is alone in facing the stress of the workplace. Balance means maintaining realistic expectations of oneself at work and seeking out activities that foster a sense of control and optimism.

Connection refers to a connection with oneself, to others, and to something larger. These connection strategies include: developing a social network beyond the workplace, political activism that is attuned to your values, community involvement, and paying attention to spiritual needs.

The ABCs of self-care are much easier to set up when there is a self-care plan in place. The plan may include:

- Setting up goals such as taking a meditation workshop to build awareness of feelings at work.
- Creating balance goals by building in reminders to take breaks and get out into nature every week.
- Making connections a priority by spending more time in with friends and family away from work, or join a social group such as a choir or sports team.

For you as a teacher, developing a self-care plan is not only about minimizing the strain of working in a highly demanding

profession, it is also about enhancing the positive aspects of your work. Most of us teachers can testify to the joy of participating in the development of another person's education and growth and most teachers will meet the needs of students and the school administration, but in order to continue to maintain a high quality of education for others, self-care must become a priority for all. Self-care needs to be supported by employers. The continuous expectations and demands made by employers can be overwhelming for teachers, but if employers promote and encourage teachers to have a self-care plan then the work can still be done with care and compassion. EAL schools need strategies to design and promote supportive work sites, and employers must take responsibility for establishing a supportive and respectful environment where there is an understanding of the effects of working with vulnerable populations such as EAL students.

Making a self-care plan using the ABC's (Assessment, Balance, and Connection) will alleviate the stressors caused by compassion fatigue, burnout, and vicarious trauma. In my classroom, I spend the first five minutes doing some deep breathing exercises and light stretches. This is not only for my students to pause and calm their nervous systems, but also for my own benefit. I also do my best to make time for my life outside of work, and I find the ritual of meditation helps me to stay conscious and present at work. My empathy and compassion for others makes my teaching practice effective and fulfilling, but I can only maintain my care for others if I have a self-care plan for myself. We must take good care of ourselves by monitoring how we react in stressful situations in our profession and know that it is the obligation we have to ourselves and our students to promote self-care so that we can maintain health and happiness in the EAL profession for years to come.

### References

- Boyle, G., Borg, M., Falzon, J., & Baglioni, A. (1995 March 01). *A structural Model of the Dimensions of Teacher Stress*. Retrieved November 20, 2016 from PubMed: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/7727267>
- Brady, J., Guy, J., Poelstra, P., & Brokaw, B. (1999) Vicarious traumatization, spirituality, and the treatment of sexual abuse survivors. *Professional Psychology*, 30 386-393.
- Hakanen, J.J., Bakker, A.B., & Schaufeli, W.B. (2005, Nov. 05). *Burnout and Work engagement among teachers*. Retrieved Nov. 20, 2016, from Journal of School Psychology <http://curriculumstudies.pbworks.com/f/Burnout.pdf>
- McCann, L. & Pearlman, L. (1990) *Vicarious traumatization: a framework for understanding the psychological effects of working with victims*. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 3 (1) 131-149
- Saakvitne, K.W. & Pearlman, K.W. (1996) *Transforming the Pain*. New York: Norton & Company
- The American Institute of Stress. (2016, Nov. 20). *Compassion Fatigue Definitions*. Retrieved from The American Institute of Stress: <http://www.stress.org/military/for-practitionersleaders/compassion-fatigue>



Diana Jeffries has been involved in EAL sector for 15 years. She worked for ISS of BC (LINC) and was an instructor for other settlement programs where she specialized in working with refugees and multi-barrier learners. She presently works at Pacific Immigrant Resource Society in the women's refugee program, and she is the Literacy and Language Support Supervisor for DiverCity. Diana was the Chair of Research and Inquiry on the BC TEAL board of directors.

# Do You Believe in “Neuromyths”?

by Carol Lethaby and Patricia Harries

*This article was first published in The Teacher Trainer Journal Vol 30 No 3, Autumn 2016 pp 22-23. Reprinted with permission.*

## A Quiz

Before you go any further, you might want to try the quiz below. Read the statements and say whether you agree or disagree with them (or you can say “don’t know”).

1. We mostly only use 10% of our brain.
2. Individual learners show preferences for the mode in which they receive information (e.g. visual, auditory, kinaesthetic).
3. Vigorous exercise can improve mental function.
4. Learning problems associated with developmental differences in brain function cannot be remediated by education.
5. Differences in hemispheric dominance (left brain, right brain) can help explain individual differences amongst learners.
6. Shout bouts of co-ordination exercises can improve integration of left and right hemispheric brain function.
7. Individuals learn better when they receive information in their preferred learning style (e.g. visual, auditory, kinaesthetic).
8. Teaching to learning styles is more important in language learning than in other types of learning.
9. Extended rehearsal of some mental processes can change the shape and structure of some parts of the brain

These statements were part of a survey completed by 128 English Language (EL) teachers in Canada and the USA in 2015. They are based on research by Paul Howard-Jones and his colleagues at the University of Bristol, UK and formed part of a larger study designed to see whether the beliefs teachers have about the brain and how it works are in fact correct or whether teachers believe in so-called neuromyths” (ideas about the brain that neuroscientists consider to be false).

## Discussion of the quiz statements

Let’s take a look at the statements above and what neuroscience says about them:

### 1. We mostly only use 10% of our brain.

False: This is an extremely pervasive neuromyth and has even been featured in a recent movie (“Lucy” from 2015). We do in fact use 100% of our brain. This has been verified by brain scans of healthy brains as well as studies done on people who have brain damage or who have lost limbs, studies which show the ability of the brain to adapt to damage and make use of unused brain matter (Jarrett, 2015). Pervasive indeed! We found that 30% of the teachers in the study that we conducted believed in this neuromyth.

### 2. Individual learners show preferences for the mode in which they receive information (e.g. visual, auditory, kinaesthetic).

True: Learners do express preferences about how they like to learn, but they often get it wrong about how they think they learn best. Krätzig and Arbuthnott (2006) asked learners to identify their own preferred learning style and then used a standardized questionnaire to assess the learner’s preferred style. They found less than 50% agreement between the self-report and the questionnaire. In our study, ninety-one per cent of the teachers agreed with this statement. Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic (VAK) learning preferences seem to have become a well-established idea in English language teaching.

### 3. Vigorous exercise can improve mental function.

True: Studies have proposed that the parts of the brain that control thinking and memory are greater in volume in people who exercise when compared with those people who don’t. In addition, neuroscientists have known for many years that “brain-derived neurotrophic factor” (BDNF) is released during aerobic exercise and this stimulates the growth of new neurons. Eighty-three per cent of our survey respondents agreed with this statement.

### 4. Learning problems associated with developmental differences in brain function cannot be remediated by education.

False: This is a very important one for teachers. Cognitive neuroscience today “emphasise[s] the complexity of interrelation between biological systems and environments such as those provided by education, and highlight the enduring possibility of mitigation.” In other words, teaching *does* make a difference (Howard-Jones et al, 2009)! In our survey it was heartening that only 6% agreed with this statement, but that’s still eight teachers who believe that brain differences are innate and aren’t affected by education. Added to this, thirty-one of our teachers responded “Don’t know” to this statement.

### 5. Differences in hemispheric dominance (left-brain, right-brain) can help explain individual differences amongst learners.

False: The idea that each hemisphere has a distinct and separate function i.e. the left hemisphere is for language and logical, analytical thinking and the right hemisphere for creativity, is not supported by neuroscientists. Various studies have shown that both hemispheres are used for processing both logical and creative tasks and a recent study of over a thousand people has shown that there is no evidence that

Continued on next page

bctéal.org



some people have better connected or more dominant left or right brain networks (Jarrett, 2015). Categorising learners as either left or right brained, and focusing teaching on developing one hemisphere over another are not considered to be useful educational methods (Holmes, 2016). This is another very common myth and sixty-six per cent of the teachers in our survey agreed with this statement.

**6. Short bouts of co-ordination exercises can improve integration of left and right hemispheric brain function.**

False: The belief that the two hemispheres of the brain are highly specialized and that learners learn in different ways according to whether one hemisphere dominates over another has led educators to seek interventions to improve learning. One theory from the 1930s which stated that reading problems were caused by an overly-dominant right hemisphere appears to have influenced a body of opinion (realized by a program called “Brain Gym”) that believes exercise can alter any so-called imbalance between the right and left hemispheres of the brain (Jarrett, 2015). However, this idea has no support in scientific reviews. Similar to

statement 6, sixty-two per cent of the teachers surveyed agreed with this statement.

**7. Individuals learn better when they receive information in their preferred learning style (e.g. visual, auditory, kinaesthetic).**

False: This is considered to be “perhaps the most popular and influential myth” by Howard-Jones (2014) and to have achieved urban legend status in educational psychology (Lilienfeld in Hattie and Yates, 2015). The idea that learning is enhanced if learners are taught according to their preferred learning style, referred to as the meshing hypothesis by Pashler et al (2009), lacks supporting evidence and two studies in particular refute it. Krätzig and Arbuthnott (2006) found that learners learnt no better when tested using their preferred learning style (visual, auditory or kinaesthetic). Rogowsky et al (2015) examined the meshing hypothesis directly and the results showed no significant relationship between students’ preferred learning styles, the teaching mode and test results. Eighty-eight per cent of the survey participants agreed with

Continued on next page

*Where the World Comes to Study*





**INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE**

VGC International College is a proud sponsor of BC TEAL's Tears to Smiles campaign

**VGC International College runs it's own campaign:**



VGC's Educate for Change is an international initiative that puts money back into NGO's that support education in developing countries. For more information about VGC and VGC's Educate for Change Initiative please visit our website at:



**www.VGC.ca**

this statement, showing what a firm hold it has on our profession.

### 8. Teaching to learning styles is more important in language learning than in other types of learning.

False: This was a statement that was not part of the original statements by Howard-Jones and his team, but was added to our study to find out whether EL teachers consider learning styles to be particularly relevant to language teaching. In our study only 22% agreed with this, but this probably goes to show how important teachers think learning styles are to education in general, not specifically to language teaching.

### 9. Extended rehearsal of some mental processes can change the shape and structure of some parts of the brain

True: Good news! The brain's plasticity means that “thinking, learning and sensing can all change neural structure directly” (Fine, 2010: 177). Two well-known studies document this. In one study, (Draganski et al, 2004), the brains of volunteers who have learned to juggle were examined over three time periods using sophisticated brain imaging techniques. The brains showed temporary and structural change in areas connected with the processing and storage of complex visual motion. In 2000, Maguire et al looked at brain scans of London taxi drivers and observed that the structure of the brain changed as a result of the particular spatial navigation demands of the job. Seventy per cent of the survey participants agreed with this statement – good news for teaching – practice does seem to make a difference.

### How did you do?

So, how did you do? Which of the neuromyths did you agree with? The point of our study was to show how many EL teachers believe in these widely dispersed myths and to consider the part that teacher trainers and educators play in propagating and perpetuating the myths.

To read the complete article (Lethaby & Harries, 2016) about our study and the studies that ours was based on, please see the references below.

### References

- Draganski, B., Gaser, C., Busch, V., Schuierer, G., Bogdahn, U., and May, A. (2004) Changes in grey matter induced by training *Nature*, 427 (6972), 311-312
- Fine, C. (2010). *Delusions of Gender: How Our Minds, Society, and Neurosexism Create Difference*. New York: W.W. Norton

- Hattie, J., and Yates, G., (2014). *Visible Learning and the Science of How We Learn*. London: Routledge
- Holmes, J.D., (2016). *Great Myths of Education and Learning*. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell
- Howard-Jones, P. (2014) Neuroscience and education: myths and messages. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* Volume 15 December 2014 817-824
- Howard-Jones, P., Franey, L., Mashmoushi, R. and Y. Liao. 2009. ‘The Neuroscience Literacy of Trainee Teachers’ Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, University of Manchester, UK, 5 September, 2009
- Jarrett, C., (2015). *Great Myths of the Brain*. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell
- Krätzig, G.P. and Arbuthnott, K.D. (2006). Perceptual learning style and learning proficiency: A test of the hypothesis. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 98, 238-246
- Lethaby, C. and Harries, P. (2016). ‘Learning styles and teacher training: are we perpetuating neuromyths?’ *English Language Teaching Journal* 70/1: 16-27
- Maguire, E.A., Gadian, D. G., Johnsrude, I. S., Good, C.D., Ashburner, J., Frackowiak, R.S.J., et al. (2000). Navigation-related structural change in the hippocampi of taxi drivers. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, USA*, 97(8), 4398 – 4403
- Pashler, H., McDaniel, M., Rohrer, D., and Bjork, R. (2009). Learning styles: Concepts and evidence. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 9, 105-119.
- Rogowsky, B. A., Calhoun, B.M., and Tallal, P. (2015). Matching learning style to instructional method: Effects on comprehension. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 107, 64-78



Carol Lethaby is a teacher educator and materials writer based in San Francisco, California. She is part-time Assistant Professor on the New School, New York online MA TESOL as well as being an honoured instructor at UC Berkeley Extension where she teaches on the TESL/TEFL Certificate program.



Patricia Harries is a teacher and teacher trainer currently based in Vancouver, Canada. Over the last 25 years, she has worked across four continents in a variety of teaching, training, and management roles in secondary schools, language schools, university language centres, and for charitable organizations.

# Extending Perspective: From Local to Global

by Cari-Ann Roberts Gotta

Several years ago I decided it was time to do a master's degree. I was a dedicated, passionate English teacher and intended to continue to develop my career in the field, but felt that I wanted to step outside the boundaries of teaching English to speakers of other language (TESOL) to explore teaching and learning in a broader context. After all, English classes are certainly not the only places we find English language learners, and speakers of various Englishes are found all over the world. I applied and was accepted to the University of British Columbia's Master of Education, Adult Learning and Global Change (ALGC) program, and so began my journey to extending my perspective on adult education beyond the traditional parameters of English language teaching (ELT).

I refer to my learning experience as a journey because the changes in my perspective have not come from single illuminating moments, but have developed gradually over the course of my studies. When considering the options for graduate studies, the international nature of the ALGC program was a significant draw for me. I am somewhat well-travelled, and as a teacher of individuals from all over the world, I learn about different languages and cultures daily; therefore, I thought a program with a global focus was a good fit for me. In hindsight, I have not changed my thoughts on my suitability, but I now realize that my perspective and approach to teaching was much less international than I believed, as it was limited to the individualized and localized realms of linguistics and intercultural competence. Through my studies, my perspective has now extended from the individual to the collective and from the local to the global.

Interestingly, my previously narrow focus of ELT is exactly the criticism of the field by prominent writers studying the global spread of English such as Alastair Pennycook and Robert Phillipson. Pennycook (2001) critiqued applied linguistics, the basis of ELT, as "...limited to an overlocalized and undertheorized view..." (p.5). Likewise, Phillipson (1992) espoused the need to look at the wider historical, social, economic, and political contexts and implications of the field. When I first read these criticisms I struggled not to be defensive, but I questioned their claims on three bases. The first is on the pragmatic grounds. My thoughts were in line with those of well-known author David Crystal (2003). His view is that it is simply practical to learn English because it increases an individual's opportunities for employment and a nation's opportunities to participate in the global economy. I now understand that to be a gross simplification of the spread of English around the world that underestimates issues such as social, economic, and political inequalities and ignores

issues of linguistic human rights. Secondly, I considered the possibility that the work of Pennycook and Phillipson was outdated. ELT as a profession had its inception in the 1950s (Phillipson, 1992), so I had to question if 20-year-old literature, in a profession that is only 60 years old, was still valid. In my experience, ELT is a rapidly developing field with many areas of growth and specialization, so I reasoned that much must have changed in the past two decades. Here I was both right and wrong. A lot has changed in terms of classroom pedagogy and intercultural competence; however, the scope of ELT, the very source of criticisms, has remained unchanged. Finally, I questioned whether or not their work, focused as it is on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes where English is not a primary national language, is applicable to the context of English as an Additional Language (EAL) classes where English is one of the primary national languages. It is this final question which I will explore at length here.

I consider ELT a helping profession as well as part of the wider field of adult education, so it was hard to accept that the products of English language teachers' work may not contribute to the world in only a positive way. However, my new found and extended perspective on the field concedes that the Phillipson and Pennycook's criticism of ELT, as narrow and lacking in critical analysis, are applicable to at least some degree to the EAL context where English is a primary national language. At the beginning of the ALGC program I had to identify my learning goals and what the evidence of my learning would be. As an EAL professional with a strong focus on classroom practice, most of my goals were directly linked to teaching, and I identified teaching materials and practices to be evidence of my learning. Herein lays a double-edged sword. Connecting learning to practice is a strength at the same time as my narrow focus on the classroom makes me guilty of Phillipson's and Pennycook's criticisms. This leaves English language teachers with the challenge of extending our perspective outside our daily practice and then incorporating that extended perspective back into our daily practice. The intent is not to shift our focus, but to widen it. As English language teachers move from the individual to the collective and from the local context to the global context of our work, the connections are less direct and the implications less obvious, but are nonetheless important to our practice as EAL professionals.

In my experience most EAL instructors approach their role from the humanist perspective, an orientation to learning that focuses on the individual learners and their well-being

Continued on next page



(Fenwick, 2001). For me, this meant that when asked to identify the micro, meso and macro contexts of my work, I identified the learners' personal contexts, the institution I work for, and the field of EAL in Canada respectively. In contrast, my new extended perspective situates my institution with its programs and students at the micro-level, the field of TESOL in Canada at the meso-level and the field of ELT (both EAL and EFL) globally at the macro-level of my work context. What does this mean for practice? It means that my practice has more depth; it means that I connect the English as a global language to my Canadian classroom with more than just passing reference. One simple example is in recognition of the pluralism of English. In the past, I would highlight differences in Canadian, American, British, and Australian English in classroom discussions and lessons. Today, I reach beyond the core English speaking countries to explicitly recognize other Englishes such as the varieties spoken in African countries such as Nigeria and Asian countries such as the Philippines. This serves to validate both those languages and the students' prior learning, and to foster an inclusive learning environment.

Upon reflection, I think it is the constructivist pedagogy of ELT that led me to identify the learners as the micro level of my work context and to initially resist Phillipson's (1992) critique of ELT as lacking in context. As EAL instructors, we are trained to take a constructivist approach to lessons; we focus on the learners' individual contexts to plan lessons that are relevant to the learners' lives and we draw on their background knowledge and prior learning to activate their schema (Doolittle, 1999). With this narrow focus on context, I believed the students' personal contexts and histories to be the global aspect of my learning. However, I learned through my studies that the global aspect of teaching EAL is much broader than the international citizenship of the students. It encompasses ELT around the world and the role of English language teaching in globalization. Globalization has both beneficial and detrimental consequences (Chanda, 2002), and unfortunately, ELT plays a significant role in one of the negative effects, the decline of global languages.

Although the field of ELT's contribution to the decline of global languages is primarily a result of EFL and educational language planning policies which stress the importance of English for participation in the global economy, the focus on English for newcomers to Canada is also a factor. Families are the primary cultural carriers in society, but new immigrants are perhaps so busy with day-to-day tasks, working, and learning English that they may neglect to make a conscious effort to teach their children their mother tongue. This is particularly true once the children begin school and quickly become fluent in English. While learning English may be an important part of creating human capital, Skutnabb-Kangas (1999) stressed the need for fluency in a mother-tongue as well in order to be able to speak to family members and to form one's identity. She referred to this as a cultural right on the individual level. Similarly, when speakers are from a minority language group, it is considered the collective right,

and a linguistic human right, of the group to foster the development of their language (Phillipson et al, 1995). As EAL teachers, if we extend our perspective further than our local contexts, we can instruct in a way that recognizes linguistic human rights. The key to this is to situate English as another language rather than as a replacement for the languages of the students' home countries. This means foregoing English-only policies in classrooms and when possible incorporating students' first languages in lessons. It may also be possible through activities such as discussions and journal writing to bring the topic of language transmission to the next generation to the classroom.

It is in these ways and with these implications that my perspective has grown from individual to collective and local to global. Despite its congruency with criticism of ELT, at the time when I began to consider the options for post graduate studies, my inclination to explore the broader field of adult education was not at all connected to a critical reflection of the field of English language teaching. I see it now as the desire to go beyond my knowledge of teaching methodology and instructional strategies to contextualize my work and learning globally. I think it is likely that the implications of my studies and my newly extended perspective will continue to surface in my daily practice in the years to come and I hope that by sharing my journey outside the confines of ELT I have planted a seed for extending the perspective of your practice and of our field.

## References

- Chanda, N. (2002). Coming together: Globalization means reconnecting the human community. *Yale Global Online*. Yale Centre for the Study of Globalization. Retrieved from: <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/about/essay.jsp>
- Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a global language* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Doolittle, P. (1999). Constructivism and online education. *Proceedings from the 1999 Online conference on teaching online in higher education*. 1, 13. Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University.
- Fenwick, T. (2001). Experiential learning: A theoretical critique from five perspectives. Information series no. 385. ERIC Clearing House on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education. Columbus: OH.
- Pennycook, A. (2001). Introduction In *Critical applied linguistics: A critical introduction*. NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. UK: Oxford University Press.
- Phillipson, R., Rannut, M., & Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (1995). Introduction in Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and Robert Phillipson (Eds.), *Linguistic human rights: Overcoming Linguistic discrimination*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.



Cari-Ann Roberts Gotta is a BC native who has returned after a long stint in Alberta where she worked at Bow Valley College. She is currently the School Chair for International at Selkirk College and the BC TEAL regional representative for the Kootenays.

# Understanding the Employment Conditions of EAL Instructors of Adults in British Columbia

by Sherry Breshears

## Introduction

This year marks BC TEAL's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and the present newsletter is dedicated to reflecting upon the past few decades of our professional practice. This is a time to reflect back on where we have come from and consider where we might take the profession in the future. At this landmark moment, I propose that we take up a theme that has permeated the dialogue about English as an additional language (EAL) teaching for years: the problem of poor working conditions for a significant segment of teachers in our field.

I became interested in the topic of EAL teachers' working conditions early in my teaching career, and have explored the issue from various perspectives. I have taught in both the public and private language education sectors and have seen first-hand the work-related struggles that many adult educators experience. For several years I volunteered for the union at my workplace, and my master's thesis focused on unionization among EAL teachers in the private sector (Breshears, 2008). In my current doctoral work, I am looking at work insecurity in EAL teaching through a labour studies lens, in particular through the lens of precarious employment. Precarious employment is a framework for understanding the complexities of work insecurity and includes an examination of the factors that come together to create precarious work situations.

In recent decades, a body of empirical evidence has emerged to support the sentiment that EAL teaching for adult learners in North America is, in large part, insecure work. The evidence shows that EAL teaching for adults involves a high reliance on part-time and temporary work, low wages, a high proportion of unpaid work, limited access to benefits, and a lack of professional and administrative support. Reports also suggest that such problematic working conditions affect teachers' abilities to serve their students. As claims about difficult employment situations for teachers of adult EAL learners have emerged, so too has the concept of precarious

employment, but there has been little intersection between them.

I propose here that we begin to think about what employment conditions are like for educators of adult EAL learners in British Columbia. Which EAL educators are most likely to experience precarious employment, and why is this so? What are the consequences of teacher working conditions for the sustainability and quality of adult EAL educational practice? These are the questions I hope to answer as I begin the research segment of my doctoral journey.

## Previous Research: Employment Concerns for EAL Teachers in North America

In the 1990s in North America, several practitioners and scholars began to express their frustration with the unstable employment conditions and lack of professional status of the EAL field. In the early part of the decade, Elsa Auerbach, adult EAL literacy teacher and scholar, wrote:

A fact of life for [EAL] educators is that we are marginalized; college [EAL] instructors are often hired as adjunct faculty on a semester by semester basis to teach non-credit preparatory courses in academic skills centres. Elementary [EAL] teachers

teach in pull-out programs, travelling from school to school and setting up shop in closets, corridors, and basements. Adult educators teaching survival [EAL] have to work two or three jobs in order to survive; jobs with benefits, living wages, and any measure of security are few and far between. (Auerbach, 1991, p.1)

Over the years, several surveys that examine the employment situations of teachers of adult EAL learners have been conducted by professional organizations, unions, universities, and other research organizations throughout North America (Power Analysis, 1998; Sanaoui, 1997; Smith & Hofer, 2003; Sun, 2010; Valeo & Faez, 2013; Valeo, 2013; White & Naylor, 2015). Although these reports vary

“**The evidence shows that EAL teaching for adults involves a high reliance on part-time and temporary work, low wages, a high proportion of unpaid work, limited access to benefits, and a lack of professional and administrative support.**”

Continued on next page

somewhat in their focus, they consistently find that EAL teachers for adult learners often experience insecure employment conditions and that this has both personal and professional implications. I highlight here a few of the primary employment concerns identified by teachers across the surveys.

A central issue for EAL teachers of adults is the lack of permanent positions in the field. For example, two large surveys of EAL teachers of adults in Ontario found that only about a quarter of respondents have continuing contracts, while all others are casual or limited-term (Power Analysis, 1998; Sanaoui, 1997). Another key problem for teachers is the lack of full-time work. Four different studies reported that a majority of respondents are part-time (Power Analysis, 1998; Smith, Hofer and Gillespie, 2001; Sun, 2010; White and Naylor, 2015). Further to this, temporary and part-time employment could lead to a situation where a teacher held multiple jobs in order to protect against job loss or to make up for a lack of adequate work (eg. Sun, 2010; Valeo & Faez, 2013).

In addition to job insecurity related to temporary and part-time employment, teachers in the reports expressed dissatisfaction with their salaries. The sufficiency of the income package is best understood in view of both paid and unpaid work time. Some surveys highlighted the fact that teachers of adult EAL learners often put a large proportion of unpaid time into lesson planning and preparation, grading, administrative duties, staff meetings, and meetings with students. For a number of teachers, this non-teaching time brought their total work load to above fifty hours per week (Crookes & Arakaki, 1999; White & Naylor, 2015). Other complicating factors that add to job insecurity included working shifts or teaching at multiple sites or in multiple programs (Crookes & Arakaki, 1999; Sun, 2010; Valeo & Faez, 2013). Taken together, these common characteristics of EAL teachers' employment may be the reason that Sun's (2010) survey of over 1000 adult EAL teachers indicated that 43 percent of respondents felt that job insecurity was their primary employment concern.

Such difficult working conditions affect teachers' physical and mental well-being. In their study of over 100 adult educators in the public school system in B.C., White and Naylor (2015) found that teachers "spoke of their fatigue and, in some cases, ill-health because of their reports of 'doing more with less', constant lay-offs, and lack of prep time" (p. 8). Another concern is the relationship between challenging working conditions and life outside of work: "I really try to keep my work down to 40 hours a week. I want a quality personal life" (Crookes & Arakaki, 1999, p.17). Survey authors noted that work insecurity not only influenced educators on a personal level, but also "undermine[d] the professionalism of the field because many educators have to contend with juggling several jobs, receiving low pay, and being prevented from improving their instructional practices or keeping abreast of current research" (Sun, p.142).

Over the decades, it seems that the concerns expressed by EAL teachers about their job conditions have not changed. And while the empirical evidence strongly suggests a prevalence of precarious work conditions in the EAL education sector, there is little critical assessment of the factors that contribute to employment insecurity in the sector. I suggest that we look to labour research for tools that can help to illuminate the conditions that contribute to precarious employment.

### **Work Insecurity for EAL Teachers: Part of a Growing Trend in Precarious Employment in Canada**

There is an increasing trend toward work insecurity in Canada. Accompanying this trend is a growing dialogue about the diminishing quality of jobs. The term "precarious employment" has emerged as a way to conceptualize work that is uncertain in one or more ways. It generally includes temporary, part-time, and low-paid work, as well as work with minimal benefits and work that lacks union representation.

Precarious employment is best understood in contrast to the "standard employment relationship" which is conceived as "a stable, socially protected, dependent, full-time job" (Fudge, 2009, p.132). The standard employment relationship is what we typically think of when we talk about a "good job," or at least this is what we used to expect. The standard employment relationship involves a work arrangement that is full-time and permanent. It likely includes benefits and may be unionized. It's something one can build a career around. In contrast, precarious employment is based on a flexible model. It responds to the short-term, market-oriented or funding-dependent needs of the employer rather than an employee's need for stability. Since the 1970s, there has been an overall decline in work characterized as standard employment, an increase in precarious forms of work, and an erosion of the social safety net. Precarious employment can have profound effects on an individual's life, on quality of work, and on families.

### **The Usefulness of the Precarious Employment Framework for Understanding the Work of EAL Instructors**

There are clear parallels between precarious employment in the general labour market and work insecurity in EAL teaching. But what is the usefulness of applying the framework of precarious employment to EAL teaching in B.C.? Several aspects of this framework can help shed light on EAL teachers' work experiences beyond an education perspective, but with implications for educational practice.

First, aligning an analysis of adult EAL teachers' work with common characteristics of precarious employment provides a language for understanding work insecurity in an educational

Continued on next page



context and provides a new level of analysis. Once precarious forms of work are identified, we can start to see how one form is entwined with other forms, creating a cumulative effect. For example, if a person works part-time, they may be ineligible for employment insurance benefits. This leads to a situation where a teacher is more likely to stay in a “bad job” because they cannot afford to leave it.

The precarious employment framework also helps to clarify that work insecurity in EAL teaching is part of a broader trend in industrialized nations where companies and governments are shifting financial risks to workers by “flexibilizing” employment relationships. Current employment laws involve much fewer obligations on the part of the employer than they once did, and employers are thus less likely to retain workers on a permanent basis.

Additionally, we could also examine the landscape of education policy that shapes the field. The shrinking of publicly funded language education for newcomers to Canada along with the simultaneous growth of international education for full fee paying students is currently having an effect on the field. This shift has played out in the recent layoffs at local colleges and school boards and may have other yet-to-be-identified consequences for teachers’ work.

A final consideration is that the concept of precarious employment offers a framework for distinguishing how employment practices in EAL line up with those in other occupations and to link such practices with identifiable characteristics of an occupation. For example, research shows that there are more women than men in precarious employment (Vosko, 2006). Similarly, the studies about the work of EAL teaching referred to above on average show that 85 percent of EAL teachers are women (eg. Sun, 2010). This may lead to explorations of EAL teaching as a gendered occupation.

## Conclusion

The issue of employment conditions for EAL teachers of adult learners is an important one for organizations like BC TEAL who are committed to upholding professional standards and advocating for teachers. The framework of precarious employment offers a new lens for understanding the complexities of work insecurity in the field. As we come to understand the unique contours of EAL employment, we can start to recognize how to better support teachers so that teachers, in turn, can provide quality learning experiences for students.

## References

- Auerbach, E. (1991). Politics, pedagogy, and professionalism: challenging marginalization in ESL. *College ESL*, 1(1), 1-9.
- Crookes, G., & Arakaki, L. (1999). Teaching idea sources and work conditions in an ESL program. *TESOL Journal*, 8(1), 15-19.
- Fudge, J. (2009). The new workplace: Surveying the landscape. *Manitoba Law Journal* 33(1), 131-149.
- Power Analysis Inc. (1998). *Study of ESL/EFL services in Ontario*. Retrieved from <http://atwork.settlement.org/downloads/linc/ESLFSL.pdf>
- Sanaoui, R. (1997). Professional Characteristics and Concerns of Instructors Teaching English as a Second Language to Adults in Non-Credit Programs in Ontario. *TESL Canada Journal*, 14(2), 32-54.
- Smith, C., & Hofer, J. (2003). The Characteristics and Concerns of Adult Basic Education Teachers. NCSALL Reports# 26. *National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL)*. Retrieved from <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED508605>
- Smith, C., Hofer, J., & Gillespie, M. (2001). The working conditions of adult literacy teachers: Preliminary findings from the NSCALL staff development study. *Focus on Basics*, 4. Retrieved from <http://www.ncsall.net/index.html?id=291.html>
- Sun, Y. (2010). Standards, equity, and advocacy: Employment conditions of ESOL teachers in adult basic education and literacy systems. *TESOL Journal*, 1(1), 142-158.
- Valeo, A. (2013). The TESL Ontario member survey: A brief report. *Contact Magazine*. Retrieved from [http://www.teslontario.net/uploads/pinterest/contactarticles/Survey\\_Valeo.pdf](http://www.teslontario.net/uploads/pinterest/contactarticles/Survey_Valeo.pdf)
- Valeo, A., & Faez, F. (2013). Career Development and Professional Attrition of Novice ESL Teachers of Adults. *TESL Canada Journal*, 31(1), 1-19.
- Vosko, L. F. (2006). Precarious employment: Towards an improved understanding of labour market insecurity. In L. F. Vosko (Ed.), *Precarious employment: Understanding labour market insecurity in Canada*, 3-39. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- White, M. and Naylor, C. (2015). *Chapter Four: Working conditions and workload issues in adult education*. Retrieved from <https://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Issues/Worklife/AdultEd/Chapter4.pdf>



Sherry Breshears is a PhD Candidate in Education with a Labour Studies focus at Simon Fraser University. Her research interests include language and literacy education, the employment conditions of EAL teachers of adults, and international education in British Columbia. Her work draws from methods that consider how policy contexts shape everyday lives in educational spaces.

# Education through Ethnography

by Mark Rosvold

**IN THE FIELD** of education, there are so many different areas for practitioners to explore to become ever better and more informed instructors and researchers. Here I would like to discuss my experience doing ethnographic research, and how it can be such an important tool for teachers and educational researchers. Currently I am about to embark on this type of research in a few months to collect data that I will use for my MA thesis, so needless to say, this process is something I believe is a useful research method. However, here I want to reflect on a previous experience with ethnographic styled research.

A few years ago, during my undergraduate degree, I was tasked with the assignment of choosing an environment in which to conduct ethnographic research. Since this was a class assignment, and getting ethical approval to interact with others can be rather tricky to get for a class of undergraduate students, we were limited to the role of observer. Now this does of course have some limitations, as you are forced to infer and critically analyze with only external knowledge, all the while dancing with the devil of assumption. That being said, observation is still an excellent technique to gauge what is taking place. So, let me recount what I observed at the time, and what the take-away might be for those of us involved in English as an additional language (EAL) teaching and research.

The environment I chose to observe for six weeks was my city's transit system. Specifically, I chose the busiest and most frequent bus route that acts as a major academic artery carrying students and staff to and from the university. It was perhaps a cheeky move on my part, as it was the bus I took on a daily basis. This meant that I didn't have to go out of my way to spend time in an environment for six weeks that would have eaten up a great deal of my precious time as a fourth year student. As I reflect on this, and chuckle to myself for having done very well on an assignment that I perhaps lazily approached (or efficiently as I'd like to believe), I realize that this is more significant than I thought.

We are often placed in situations and circumstances, such as a daily commute that eats up one to two hours of our time, that we naturalize to such a degree that we can miss the opportunity to learn and walk away with new perspectives and ideas. Being consciously aware of my surroundings for six weeks on the bus that I had been riding, immersed in a book or music, for two years prior to this afforded me such a

difference of perspective that the environment morphed around me.

As one ought to do when engaging in ethnography, I took detailed notes of what I observed on the bus. Fortunately, I was surrounded by students and professors who were talking, reading, typing, or lost in absentminded oblivion, and as such my detailed note-taking didn't have to be done clandestinely. There were pages upon pages of notes that I took, filling a small notebook in no time flat, which ended up being the basis of a 20 page term paper. These notes ranged from the material description of the environment, to sociolinguistic terms specific to the transit environment, to interactions between various people. The interactions are what I will briefly discuss because I think that they reveal something important for EAL teachers.

**“Time spent on the bus is an excellent opportunity for our students to practice their communication skills**

Students, depending on the time of day, and the day of the week behaved differently, with fairly regular discernible characteristics. For instance, in the morning on Monday, I noticed almost no one speaking, and very few people doing anything apart from possibly listening to music. Most seemed entirely consumed with the task of keeping themselves awake or from having a meltdown—this was right around mid-term season. Then there was the Friday afternoon crowd.

These were a jubilant bunch all thrilled to be humans again for the two days to come. Between Monday morning and Friday afternoon there was an expected spectrum of behavior. What I noticed about the in between phases was that many students struck up conversations with others. I don't mean to say that it was akin to a speed dating arena where everyone was keen on quickly getting to know everyone else, but there was almost always a conversation or two on a packed bus that appeared to be forged in the moment between strangers. I would like to make note of the fact that this was a few years ago, and perhaps it might not be as prevalent now that technology seems to be further enveloping us and our spare time at an exponential rate.

The conversation that sticks in my mind without me even having to look back at my notes was one between two young men. I was sitting directly behind them and got to witness them meeting as one sat next to the other. Over the remaining 30-minute bus ride, they slowly warmed up to what I can best describe as a heated discipline based debate. One student was

Continued on page 24

# Reflections on the International English Language Testing System

by Tian Li

**ADEQUATE** English language proficiency is a critical prerequisite for people studying in English medium universities. English language proficiency tests, such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), are increasingly playing the role of gatekeepers to a globalizing world of higher education. For example, IELTS has been adopted as a means for ensuring baseline levels of English language proficiency required for entry into perspective programs by many universities in more than 120 countries. This test plays an important and critical role in many students' lives, and it can be useful to think about factors that impact the IELTS test's score.

The IELTS test is comprised of four test components, namely Writing, Speaking, Reading, and Listening. Candidates must complete all four components in order to receive a score. IELTS is not meant to certify whether candidates have passed or failed the test. Instead, institutions must determine the minimum selection band score for entry into their programs and courses. As an international student in Canada, providing my English language proficiency proof was an essential part in my application process. I chose to take the IELTS test and received an overall band score of 7.0, with every section 7.0 except for the speaking section. Thanks to my IELTS score, I was able to enroll as a graduate student in a Canadian University. After about one year's study and living in Canada, I took the IELTS test again and received an overall band score of 7.5, with every section improved except for the writing section. My score on the writing section decreased from 7.0 to 6.0. As a result, I started to think about my experiences related to acquiring English as an additional language in Canada and its evaluation by the IELTS test.

Reflecting on my approximately one year's learning experience in Canada, I think that interaction, natural acquisition contexts, and practice were the most important factors that have affected my English acquisition. Language development seems to occur as a result of social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, it is beneficial to me to study within natural acquisition contexts in which I am exposed to English since they provide me with more opportunities to interact with the social environment, practice, and gain more comprehensible input (Krashen, 1982; Long, 1996). My study environment, requirement to use the language, and learning

process have contributed a lot to my English acquisition. I have a good academic record at university, and I believe that my English has improved since I arrived in Canada. However, the score on my writing section decreased from 7.0 to 6.0 after one year's study in Canada according to my IELTS reports, which made me wonder what the IELTS academic writing module's scores mean.

The academic writing module consists of two tasks, which take 60 minutes in total. For Task 1, candidates write a report of around 150 words based on a table or diagram, and for Task 2, they write a short essay or general report of around 250 words in response to an argument or a problem. After

“the score on my writing section decreased after one year's study in Canada ... which made me wonder what the IELTS scores mean.”

over one year's academic learning in Canada, my English level should be enhanced based on my positive language learning experiences. The decrease of my score on the writing section seems unlikely if it indicates that my writing in English has become worse. I wonder what is the main reason for the decrease on my writing test score. In my opinion, the reason might lie in the writing topics I received for Task 2 in the IELTS tests that I took. In my first IELTS test, the topic was about culture and education. I was really interested in and familiar with that topic. However, the topic in my

second IELTS test was about politics, and I would have had nothing to say about that topic even in my first language. Therefore, I think the score candidates receive in the writing section is largely related to the topic in the test. It might be that the decrease of my score on writing is due to the topic I received rather than my real English level. This leads to the question of whether all topics are equal when testing English language proficiency. I wonder if all the topics for the IELTS writing section Task 2 come from a common knowledge base that can be accessed by all students from culturally diverse backgrounds to make sure that candidates' performance on writing shows their real English level.

Many programs in Canadian universities have their own specific requirements related to IELTS, not only regarding the overall band score but also the score of every section. For example, one teacher education program in British Columbia requires candidates to have not only an IELTS score of at least 7.0 overall, but also 7.0 on each of the writing and speaking sections. IELTS scores are valid within two years

Continued on next page



## Education through Ethnography Continued

a math major, the other in physics. They were arguing about the concept of infinity. It was quite fascinating to observe, though at points I was sorely tempted to remind them to play nicely with one another as it got heated. The passionate claims surrounding numbers and theories rivaled any discussion I have heard from English majors arguing about Joyce or Shakespeare. What I want to emphasize here is that, had I been involved in EAL at the time, I would have possibly concluded what I now have upon reflection. Time spent on the bus is an excellent opportunity for our students to practice their communication skills as well as content mastery. In fact, I might have taken this as an idea for a project for an EAP class where I would ask them to speak with a few people over two weeks and take notes when they got home.

Ethnography doesn't only have to be conducted by researchers with PhDs and a decade of specialized knowledge in a field. Life is rich with the opportunity to be consciously and acutely engaged with your surroundings. As EAL instructors, we are always looking for new ways to learn and instruct, as ours is a dynamic and changing field. So, I highly suggest keeping a little notebook handy, or for the more tech savvy out there, a notepad application where you can jot down your observations, because lessons and ideas are hanging from the branches of life waiting to be plucked if we only remember to look for them.



Mark Rosvold is a graduate student on UBC's Okanagan campus, where he is completing his MA (Interdisciplinary Graduate Studies). He is also a teaching assistant, research assistant, and has worked as a cultural liaison for visiting EAL and EAP students.

## Reflections on IELTS Continued

after the day the test taken. However, students cannot use two IELTS reports together that both have at least 7.0 overall, one with 7.0 on speaking section but 6.5 on writing section and another with 7.0 on writing section but 6.5 on speaking section to apply for the teacher education program in question, which means applicants need to spend time and money on taking the IELTS again and again until they meet all requirements at the same time. Considering the issue of varying topics and how unfamiliar topics may impact IELTS scores, I wonder if the rules could change to allow students to combine two tests to demonstrate English language proficiency.

### References

- Krashen, S.D. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. New York, NY: Pergamon Press Inc. Retrieved from [http://www.sdkrashen.com/content/books/principles\\_and\\_practice.pdf](http://www.sdkrashen.com/content/books/principles_and_practice.pdf)
- Long, M. (1996). The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition. In W. Ritchie and T. Bhatia (eds.) *Handbook of Second Language Acquisition*. New York, NY: Academic Press, 413-468.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard university press.



Tian Li is a graduate student in Faculty of Education on UBC's Okanagan Campus. She has five year's teaching experience as a math teacher. Her areas of interest are content and language integrated learning, additional language acquisition, and mathematics education.

Join BC TEAL, and become a member of BC's EAL professional community.

As a BC TEAL member, you can enjoy reduced rates at the annual conference, regional conferences, and professional development workshops. You are eligible to apply for the many TEAL Charitable Foundation awards and scholarships. And, you can connect with a network of like-minded colleagues across the province.

BC TEAL Membership costs less than \$50 per year, and there are discounts for students, the unemployed, retirees, and BC TESOL (BCTF K-12) members.

Visit **[bcteal.org/membership](http://bcteal.org/membership)** to learn about the many benefits and to join.

# My First ATESL Conference

by Samantha Ranson

**THE ALBERTA** Teachers of English as a Second Language (ATESL) 2016 annual conference was both an interesting and informational weekend. I attended and spoke at this conference, and I am so glad I was able to take part. It was an exciting and interactive experience. The ATESL conference took place at the Fantasyland Hotel in West Edmonton Mall. It was also one of the largest turnouts the ATESL community had ever received for a conference, and it was an amazing and positive experience.

The theme of the conference was an important one: Inspiring through inclusion and communication. I think this theme is so significant because any individual (either instructor or student) can personally relate to the importance of inclusion and communication in any learning environment, especially within an English language learning setting. While dealing with both cultural and linguistic barriers, newcomers can feel a sense of segregation and miscommunication within society due to their English language ability and the potential cultural differences. Therefore, as instructors, it is part of our responsibilities to bridge possible differences within the classroom, hoping our efforts will percolate into the general society outside of the classroom.

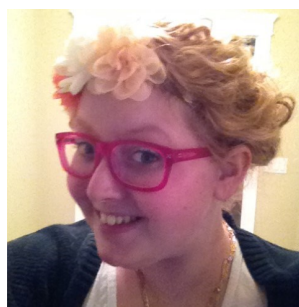
I learned a myriad of new and applicable information at the conference by attending both the keynote speakers and other presentations. For example, when attending the workshop “Integrating Grammar into Task-based Language Teaching,” I learned that tasks do not occur in isolation. They occur within a context; this idea means that there always needs to be a pre-task and a post-task and learning needs to be meaningful. The speaker also reminded me of the long-standing importance of comprehensible input at the language learners’ instructional level, and that the variables of supporting linguistic accuracy need to be taken into account to support and create proper comprehensible input for language learners to gain knowledge appropriately.

Another thing that was of particular interest was the grammar presentations available. For example, I attended “Teaching English Verb Tenses: Is Your Present Perfect?” This presentation reminded me of two very important things. First, as a native speaker, I have a fluent level of grammar and vocabulary; however, I need to always be aware of appropriate grammar learning methods so I can explain to my students the processes behind how the language works. Secondly, I should not decontextualize grammar and activities in the language learning environment. Students can learn much more effectively and quickly through application and activities.

I attended another presentation entitled “Rubrics That Inspire: Assessing Vocabulary in EAP Writing Classrooms.” I really enjoyed this presentation as it focused on what should be put into a vocabulary rubric to make it meaningful within an EAP learning environment. I learned that some of the important factors are: contextualized vocabulary, vocabulary appropriate to the genre, and abstract vocabulary. Essentially, teachers want to know what is the depth and breadth of knowledge of students’ vocabulary and how students can apply this knowledge to their language use both inside and outside of the classroom. The presenter then described multiple techniques and exercises to both test vocabulary knowledge and support both myself and the rest of the audience realizing what is meaningful vocabulary assessment.

Finally, I was fortunate enough to speak at the conference myself. I presented on my MA thesis project. The presentation was entitled “Metanoia Experiences: The Relationship Between Second Language Acquisition and Metanoia.” Essentially, my presentation discussed the development of the awareness of identity change and English language acquisition when sudden moments of realization take place. When these moments, or metanoia, occur, both instructors and students can create stronger bonds and more meaningful learning experiences, promoting inclusion and communication. I received a strong turnout to my presentation, and I was impressed by the welcoming and friendly atmosphere of the ATESL conference. I found that countless people came up to me and went out of their way at this large conference to find out who I was and what my presentation was about.

As a new member of both ATESL and the overall English language teaching community, I felt calm and safe. I had meaningful moments of both learning and networking. I was so impressed with the warm ambience of the whole community, and I hope to present and attend this conference again next year in 2017.



Samantha Ranson completed her Master of Arts in Education at UBC’s Okanagan campus focusing on metanoia and additional language teaching and learning. She also has a Bachelor of Arts (English) and a Bachelor of Education (Elementary Education and Teaching English Language Learners). A BC TEAL member, she has recently joined ATESL on moving to Alberta.

# From BC TEAL to Pronunciation Teacher Preparation: An Update from Down Under

by Michael Burri

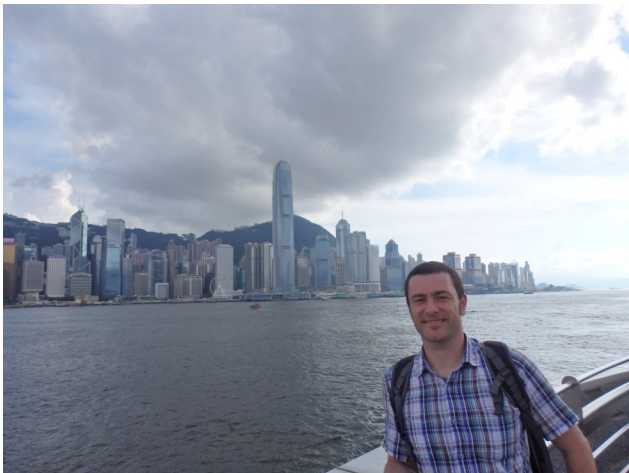
**MARIO ANDRETTI**, a famous racing driver, once said: “If everything seems under control, you’re not going fast enough.” The last 3.5 years of being a doctoral student in Australia have certainly been spent in the fast lane. Like most PhD students would attest, balancing research, teaching, marking, research assistant work, publishing, and family life can be challenging. Yet, being able to balance all these different factors can also be tremendously enriching and, dare I say it, *fun*! Instead of just summarizing my last 3.5 years, I thought I would use the *BC TEAL* acronym to guide my discussion about key aspects that have helped me navigate—as well as survive, enjoy, and complete—the fast-paced adventure of being a doctoral student.

**B for BEING PREPARED.** Going into my PhD well prepared was critical. Prior to my doctoral studies, I often questioned the wisdom of living in Surrey and working at the downtown BCTI campus in Vancouver. Now I know, however, that this long commute was an important preparatory stage because it allowed me to read extensively on the train. Having read (and summarized) most of the key literature and research on pronunciation pedagogy provided me with a valuable head start, and it enabled me to begin my PhD confidently, knowing that I was familiar with the literature in the area of my proposed course of study.

**C for CONNECTIONS.** Networking with people face-to-face as well as online (through Twitter and several Facebook groups) to discuss research, publications, work, teaching etc. has been informative and inspirational. Moreover, presenting at various conferences (AILA, TESOL, AAAL, Face of English, LED, Mekong TESOL) in several different countries (Canada, Vietnam, Japan, Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand) has been beneficial in that it provided me with opportunities to engage with the language teaching and research community. Connecting with people has been one of the most important factors in my doctoral journey because it inspired me to keep working on my research.

**T for THANKFULNESS.** Reminding myself occasionally that being a PhD student is a real privilege helped me push on and move forward! I was fortunate to have been offered two scholarships by the University of Wollongong (UOW); hence, I was getting paid to do a PhD. Being aware of this privilege allowed me to maintain a positive outlook when things seemed to spin a bit out of control.

Continued on next page



At the Faces of English Conference in Hong Kong in June 2015



At the AAAL Conference in Toronto in March 2015



## From BC TEAL to Pronunciation Teacher Preparation: An Update from Down Under [continued](#)

**E for ELASTICITY.** Being flexible to adjust to unexpected circumstances was a critical element throughout my PhD journey. Upon enrollment I realized relatively soon that I had to change the focus of my initially proposed research in order to collect data in a pronunciation teacher preparation context. That also meant that I had to write and defend my proposal within five months (PhD students are usually given 12 months to complete this process at UOW). This was not what I had expected; yet, I had little choice but buckle down and get the proposal done. Towards the end of my candidacy, flexibility was required again, as my wife and two of our three children suddenly had to return to Japan for several months due to a family emergency. My oldest son and I remained in Australia. Even though it was wonderful spending all this time with him, turning overnight into a full-time dad delayed the submission of my thesis by several months. These instances helped me better understand that life takes its course, and that flexibility is a useful means to navigate through stormy times.

**A for AUTHORSHIP.** Having to write an 80,000 word dissertation (or *thesis* as it is called in some universities in Canada and Australia) was perhaps my biggest concern at the beginning of my PhD. I lacked confidence in my ability to write and craft convincing, empirically based arguments. Subsequently, right at the beginning of my doctoral journey, I

decided to write on a daily basis; it did not matter whether that was a sentence, a paragraph, or an entire page. This turned out to be a good decision, even though I did make the occasional acquaintance with the infamous writer's block. Composing regularly (as well as receiving excellent feedback from my two supervisors) resulted in a gradual increase in confidence and writing skills. Oddly enough, I now find writing to be an interesting and empowering, almost liberating process, and I'm currently working on several manuscripts that I hope to get published in the not-so-distant future.

**L for LIFE.** Sometimes I had to tell myself that there were more important things in life than doctoral studies. Having my family with me definitely helped me in this regard. The Illawarra region – of which Wollongong is the main city – is an incredibly beautiful place and there are so many things to do. Thus, every few months we would rent a car, load up the kids and all the camping equipment we had shipped from Canada, and take off to explore a national park, caves, a coastal town or a nice and quiet beach. These little adventure trips were refreshing. They allowed me to spend time with my family and get my mind off research (although my children would occasionally look at me and ask: “are you thinking about your research again?”).

[Continued on next page](#)



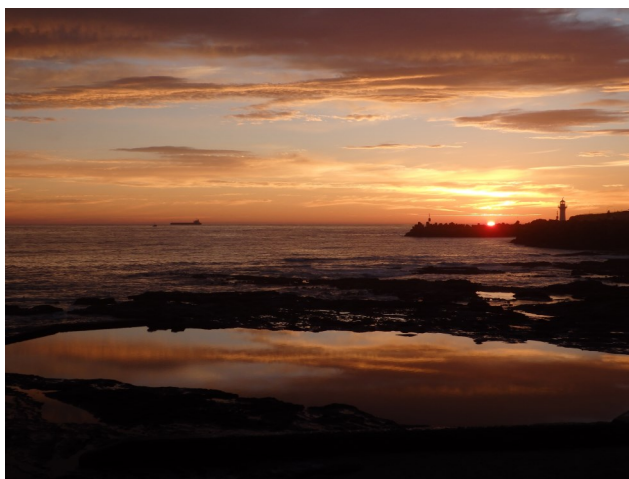
Hiking up Mt Carrialoo



Hiking along the beautiful coastline at Royal National Park



The beautiful Illawarra region



An amazing sunrise at the harbor in Wollongong

Compartmentalizing the experience of doing a PhD in a foreign country into six neat “boxes” is, of course, a bit of an artificial exercise. Throughout the past 3.5 years, these six components (as well as a multitude of other factors) were interwoven in interesting ways, but they did play a critical role in helping me complete my doctorate. I submitted the final/revised version of my thesis last October, and some of you may now be wondering about the actual focus of my PhD. So, here is a quick summary.

## Being prepared Connections Thankfulness Elasticity Authorship Life

My thesis is a collection of four journal articles that are book-ended by an introduction/methodology chapter and discussion/conclusion chapter. The study examined the process of 15 student teachers learning to teach English pronunciation during a postgraduate course on pronunciation pedagogy; an area in additional language teacher education that lacks empirical research. To obtain a thorough understanding of this process, I triangulated several instruments to collect data: two questionnaires (one at the beginning and one at the end of the course); observations of all the weekly lectures (13 in total); four focus groups that were held three times during the course; students’ assignments; and one-on-one interviews with seven of the 15 participants. The amount of qualitative data was overwhelming (remember the Andretti quote?) but collecting this mountain of data was necessary in order to really understand what learning to teach English pronunciation entailed.

Once the initial data analysis was completed, the findings were divided into four journal articles, with each article exploring pronunciation teacher preparation from a different perspective. The first paper examined the general impact the pronunciation pedagogy course had on participants’ cognition (thoughts, attitudes, knowledge and beliefs; Borg, 2006) about pronunciation instruction (Burri, 2015a). The effects participants’ linguistic backgrounds had on learning to teach pronunciation was the focus of the second paper (Burri, 2015b), while the third paper investigated the connection

between participants’ teaching experience and learning to teach pronunciation (Burri, Baker, & Chen, accepted). The last article then examined the relationship between student teachers’ cognition development and their identity construction (Burri, Chen, & Baker, under review). The objective of the discussion chapter was to amalgamate all of these findings and form a theoretical model of what constitutes learning to teach English pronunciation. I am going to present this model—the first of its kind—at the TESOL Convention in Seattle next March. It would be great to see some of you there!

Besides presenting at the TESOL conference, I have been offered a 2-year full-time lecturer position in the School of Education at UOW, starting February 1, 2017. I am delighted to have been given this opportunity, as it will allow me to gain valuable experience in a familiar environment. This means that my family and I will be staying in the Wollongong area for at least another two years. I am not sure what is going to happen afterwards, but one thing is certain, the past 3.5 years have been a truly life-changing experience down under.

### References:

- Burri, M. (2015a). “My perspective changed dramatically:” A case for preparing L2 instructors to teach pronunciation. *English Australia Journal*, 31(1), 19-37.
- Burri, M. (2015b). Student teachers’ cognition about L2 pronunciation instruction: A case study. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(1), 66-87. Doi: 10.14221/ajte.2015v40n10.5
- Burri, M., Baker, A., & Chen, H. (accepted). “I feel like having a nervous breakdown”: Pre-service and in-service teachers’ developing beliefs and knowledge about pronunciation instruction. *Journal of Second Language Pronunciation*.
- Burri, M., & Chen, H., & Baker, A. (under review). Joint development of teacher cognition and identity through learning to teach L2 pronunciation.



Michael Burri is a lecturer in TESOL at the University of Wollongong. Prior to his move to Australia, he got his MA in TESOL from TWU (2008), worked as instructor/program coordinator at BCIT (2008-13), and enjoyed being the BCTEAL PD Chair (2008-10). His professional interests include pronunciation instruction, L2 teacher education, teacher-based assessment, and contextualized pedagogy. He tweets about L2 teaching/learning/research at @michaelburri and some of his publications and conference presentations can be accessed on his website at [www.michaelburri.weebly.com](http://www.michaelburri.weebly.com).



# TESOL 2.0: Engage, Enrich, Empower at the 2017 TESOL International Convention & English Language Expo

by Margi Wald

**JOIN** the international community 20-25 March 2017 in Seattle, Washington, USA, for the TESOL International Convention & English Language Expo, our 51<sup>st</sup> annual gathering. Experience what makes TESOL and its affiliates unique: present and future teachers, administrators, researchers, and advocacy leaders *engaging* in conversation about language education and policy; *enriching* their knowledge, networks, and professional experience; and *empowering* themselves and their students to learn and lead in a 2.0 world.

The convention offers participants multiple ways to develop their own English language teaching and learning knowledge with the most up-to-date research and practices alongside a network of colleagues from around the world. Opportunities include:

- Featured speakers and concurrent sessions that draw on the latest developments in TESOL;
- PreK-12 Day that presents sessions on new strategies and resources for working with English language learners (ELLs);

- Pre- and post- convention institutes that comprise in-depth workshops on hot topics in the field;
- Doctoral and master student forums that encourage our field's future teachers and scholars to hone their research and presentation skills;
- The Electronic Village and Technology Showcase that demonstrate the use of current computer-based and other technology resources for language teaching and learning;
- The Expo Hall that features the latest classroom and training materials;
- Association, affiliate, and interest section colloquia and business meetings that provide forums for member updates and input;
- Educational Site Visits that provide a real-life glimpse into diverse educational settings for linguistically and culturally diverse populations; and
- Many social events that allow for informal networking, including the all-TESOL closing celebration on Friday.

Here's a preview of the TESOL 2017 featured speakers, who will set the tone as we embark on the next half-century as an association.

**Opening Keynote: "Power and Empowerment: An Urban Indian's Comic, Poetic, and Highly Irreverent Look at the World."**



The convention will open with a not-to-be-missed keynote by world-renowned author, poet, and screenwriter Sherman Alexie. Alexie will share Indigenous stories of language and identity, and pain and perseverance—and the ways those stories can empower English as an additional language (EAL) teachers and students.

Continued on next page

*The World Comes Together at TESOL*  
**TESOL 2017**  
 International Convention  
 & English Language Expo

21-24 MARCH 2017 • SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, USA



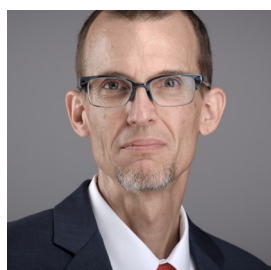


**James E. Alatis Plenary:  
Ruminations of an Old Language  
Teacher"**



We are also excited to welcome Guadalupe Valdez from Stanford University, eminent expert on bilingualism, who will reflect on her evolution as a language teacher, from the assumptions she made about language learning and classroom practices in her early days to the changes she has made as her practice has become better informed by theory and research. And she will encourage all of us to keep evolving as language educators.

**Keynotes on Teaching and Learning  
in a 2.0 World**



In his presidential address "Professional English Language Teachers in a 2.0 World," Dudley Reynolds, 2016-2017 TESOL International Association President, will ask us to think about our roles, responsibilities, and contributions as language and teaching professionals in a changing world of education that prizes non-traditional learning, interdisciplinarity, and technology.

Yong Zhao, originally from Sichuan Province and now a professor and



fellow at several institutions worldwide, will put forth in his plenary "Perils or Promises: Education in the Age of Smart Machines" a plan for a new paradigm for student learning—what he calls "creative, entrepreneurial, and global 21st century education."

**Invited Speakers**

The invited speakers for this year's convention share their professional development experiences and discuss programs that support research as a fundamental activity for all TESOLers, not only one that generates knowledge but also one that we all engage in and use results from to evolve our practices.

**Colloquia: "What the Research Shows."** Learn about pedagogical implications of current research findings in three invited colloquia: "Teaching and Assessing Vocabulary," "Teaching Second Language Reading," and "Teaching and Responding to Second Language Writing." These "What the Research Shows" colloquia bring together experts in the fields of vocabulary, reading, and writing (Keith Folse, Norbert Schmitt, Averil Coxhead, Neil J. Anderson, Dana Ferris, William Grabe, Xiangying Jiang, Ann Johns, Cui Zhang, and more!) to highlight best practices for teaching and learning.

**Topics for a Global, Multicultural World.** Hone strategies for teaching in a 2.0 world: enhancing teacher development through TESOL affiliates (Aymen Elsheikh, Okon Effiong), developing EAL professional expertise" (Aida Walqui), building students' multicultural capital (Sylvia Acevedo), working with at-risk high schoolers (Yasuko Kanno), constructing culturally linguistically sustaining pedagogies (Shondel Nero), among others.

**Two Special Sessions.** Gain practical ideas and participate in hands-on materials development in our first ever invited workshop, "Fear Not the Virtual Classroom: Student Engagement in Online Learning." And join fellow TESOLers in memorializing and honoring Braj Kachru, the originator of World Englishes and the circles of English model, at a panel

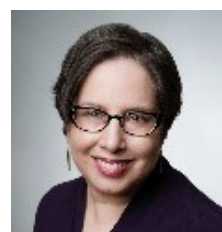
discussion of his legacy for the future of English(es).

**The Venue: Seattle, The Emerald City**

Surrounded by the lush, magnificent beauty of the Pacific Northwest, Seattle boasts a rich cultural history that includes contributions from the Native peoples as well as the Scandinavian, African American, Asian, and Latino people who were later drawn by the city's booming economy. Today Seattle is the home of innovation where companies like Boeing, Microsoft and Amazon got their start.

The Washington State Convention Center is located in the heart of Downtown, just steps from everything Seattle has to offer. In minutes you can walk to the iconic Pike Place Market, where you can browse the stalls for specialty foods, jewelry, and unique souvenirs. You'll also be in easy walking distance of the Seattle Art Museum, Aquarium, and several theaters, cinemas and music venues. Downtown Seattle offers world-class shopping, as well as a broad spectrum of eclectic boutiques in the nearby Capitol Hill neighborhood. When it's time to eat and drink, you'll find yourself surrounded by hundreds of restaurants, featuring cuisine from nearly every region of the world. In the birthplace of Starbucks, Seattle's Best, and Tully's Coffee, you'll never be far from your next latte. And you'll find plenty of friendly bars serving locals' favorite craft beers and Washington wines.

On behalf of the 2017 Convention Team, I invite you to connect with colleagues in Seattle this March. For complete program, registration, hotel, and visa information, please visit the convention website. Get involved. Join the conversation. Explore the future. Engage, enrich, empower yourself, the association, and the field!



Margi Wald is a lecturer in the College Writing Programs and director of the Summer ESL program at the University of California, Berkeley. She co-edits *The CATESOL Journal*. She is also the Conferences Professional Council Chair for 2016-17 for the TESOL International Association.



# BC TEAL

## Call for Submissions

### **BC TEAL Newsletter**

The deadline for submissions to the next issue of the BC TEAL newsletter is April 1, 2017, with publication in early June. The theme for the Summer 2017 issue is "BC TEAL: Celebrating 50 Years!" Please contact the editor with your submission ideas: [editor@bctéal.org](mailto:editor@bctéal.org).

### **BC TEAL Journal**

The *BC TEAL Journal* is the peer-reviewed scholarly publication of BC TEAL. It exists to promote scholarship related to the teaching and learning of English as an Additional Language in British Columbia, with articles explicitly reflecting the various contexts and settings of the BC TEAL membership. The journal is freely available as an open access publication, and BC TEAL members are encouraged to register as reviewers, authors, and readers on the journal website (<http://ejournals.ok.ubc.ca/index.php/BCTJ>).

The *BC TEAL Journal* invites the submission of original previously unpublished contributions, such as research articles or theoretical analysis, classroom practice, and opinion essays, from all sectors and experience levels represented by the BC TEAL membership. Research type articles are typically 7,000 words in length, plus references. Theoretical analysis, classroom practice, and opinion essays are typically around 3,500 words in length, plus references. Manuscripts are accepted on an ongoing basis throughout the year, with papers that have completed the review and editing process being published as they are ready. Articles are gathered into a single issue over the course of one calendar year. We are currently accepting papers for publication in 2017. Please refer to the *BC TEAL Journal* website (<http://ejournals.ok.ubc.ca/index.php/BCTJ>) for more information on the submission process. All papers should be submitted through the journal website.

Recent articles published in the *BC TEAL Journal* include topics such as:

- Writing effective TESOL conference presentation proposals
- Using canine assisted therapy with international students in British Columbia
- Gathering writing centre feedback from students from diverse linguistic backgrounds
- Understanding metanoia and additional language acquisition for EAP students
- Defining, learning, and measuring academic language in K-12 settings



# ~ Celebrating 50 Years! ~

The BC TEAL Annual Conference and Anniversary Carnival

Tibl Hadfield

Penny Ur

Andy Curtis

May 4-6 2017  
Vancouver Community College  
1155 E Broadway, Vancouver, BC  
[bctéal.org](http://bctéal.org) / #bctéal50

# ~ Celebrating 50 Years! ~

THE GREAT

2017 BC TEAL Anniversary Carnival

May 4th 2017



~ The Main Attraction ~ Tibl Hadfield ~ Prolific Author and Professor ~

Vancouver Community College ~ 1155 E Broadway, Vancouver, BC V5T4V5 ~ [bctéal.org](http://bctéal.org) ~ #bctéal50