TEAL News

Winter 2018

The Many Voices of TEAL

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Strength through Diversity
by Joe Dobson

BC TEAL is incredibly diverse in numerous ways such as our personal backgrounds, beliefs, approaches and teaching philosophies, and the contexts in which we work or study. The theme of this issue of the newsletter, "Many Voices of TEAL" certainly reflects the reality of our profession in BC and the diversity of the BC TEAL membership.

When I hear the phrase, "many voices", it makes me think of "many hands" and the strength that comes from diversity. For many years, the TEAL/EAL field of both teaching and study has been one sometimes viewed as less than or which has been sometimes undervalued and is sometimes "othered". I beg to differ. The diversity of our membership, and our students, is not a deficit. I see the value those in our field bring to discourse in education and in the academy as bringing important and valued perspectives. Similarly, the diversity our students bring to our respective classes and campuses is one to be celebrated and tapped into.

Related, some may have seen the videos that BC TEAL launched last year (if not, they can be found on our YouTube channel and will soon be front and centre on our new website). They highlight some of the sectors BC TEAL represents: post-secondary education, private sector, LINC programs, and K-12 sector. They're worth a view as they offer some perspectives on the diversity in our field. However, these videos cannot begin to show the real diversity of BC TEAL which includes: teacher education, students, researchers, curriculum experts, publishers, and, of course, instructors and administrators. And that doesn't touch on the diversity of ethnicities, beliefs, sexual orientations, and more that the BC TEAL membership is comprised of.

I trust you will enjoy this edition of the newsletter as much as I have. Special thanks go to Natalia Balyasnikova for her work and care in editing this wonderful edition of the newsletter and the many who have contributed to it: your many voices, and those of our students, are what make BC TEAL special.

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.

Editor's Message
by Natalia Balyasnikova

I am happy to welcome you to the new year with this issue of TEAL News. The theme for the Winter issue—Many Voices of TEAL— reflects the importance of multiple perspectives on various issues in our work. From the Classroom Corner feature to an overview of a new issue of our own *BC TEAL Journal* the collection of articles in this issue really speaks to this theme.

In line with the theme, we are featuring practice-based articles that point to the importance of cooperation to help students grow. All these articles challenge us to try out new tools and approaches in our classrooms. Let us know, if you were inspired to bring any of these ideas into yours! We are also very excited that to feature research-informed pieces on our pages, such as the article on the effectiveness of portfolio-based language assessment in LINC classrooms. Our continued interview series, this time features Dr. Lee Gunderson of UBC. Dr. Gunderson's influential work has been recognized by multiple awards, one of them being the BC TEAL Lifetime Contributors Award. If you want to share your research or interview your colleagues about their research, BC TEAL Publications are a wonderful venue to do so!

As we are nearing BC TEAL's 2018 Annual Conference, we want to remind our readers about last year's BC TEAL Lower Mainland Regional Conference. Hopefully, this article will inspire many of our readers to attend the Annual Conference and share their thoughts on this event in the Summer issue of the newsletter!

My most sincere gratitude goes out to all the authors for contributing to this issue, to Shawna Williams for working on the layout, and to you—the readers—for being with us. This issue is packed with classroom activities, ideas for innovative learning tools, insights from research and much more. I hope that these articles will not only enrich your practice, but also inspire you to share your ideas with our readership. Please email editor@bcteal.org with any suggestions for new features, sections or topics you would like to see on these pages, I would love to hear from you!

Natalia Balyasnikova is a PhD Candidate in TESL and a sessional instructor at the University of British Columbia.

A New Look for BC TEAL 50

by Brenda Lohrenz

OUR newsletter theme "the Many Voices of TEAL" provides a great starting point for BC TEAL—*the next 50 years*! As Joe noted in his message, the many diverse voices of BC TEAL serve to strengthen us all. At our fall retreat, the BC TEAL board of directors and staff asked some hard questions such as 'Where do we see ourselves boldly heading?', 'What identifies us?', 'Where are we deliberately placing our priorities?', 'How are we shaping our direction as a professional association?'. Our facilitator reminded us that a vision encapsulates *where* you want to be – our impact, while a mission signifies *how* you want to get there – our objectives. After much thought, reflection, and distilling down, we pulled myriad concepts together to form some clear and (hopefully!) impactful messaging:

Our newly unveiled logo

VISION:
BC TEAL is committed to lead and support excellence in English language education.

MISSION:
BC TEAL supports English language education by providing professional development, raising awareness, and sharing expertise.

In addition, we are excited to share our updated look and our newly revamped website in the coming months. Here is a glimpse of how our past is evolving and informing our present!

We value your insights and skills, and look forward to learning and growing with you. Should you at some point want to join our board of directors and contribute further to discussions and activities happening behind the scenes, there will be a call for board nominations closer to our spring conference and AGM. To that end, be sure to reserve May 3-5, 2018 at UBC Vantage College for our exciting annual conference themed Space and Pedagogy featuring a pre-conference symposium hosted by TESOL International Association.

In the meantime, BC TEAL is honored to work alongside you to support and enrich your professional EAL journey!

Sincerely,
Brenda Lohrenz
Executive Director, BC TEAL

BC TEAL logos over the years

Brenda Lohrenz is the Executive Director of BC TEAL. She is active in coordinating provincial and national forums related to settlement language programming and policy.

Dialogue Journaling with Penzu Classic

by Errol Pitts

IN THIS ARTICLE, I review Penzu Classic's free journal as a tool for facilitating online dialogue journaling. As a technique to foster writing skills, dialogue journaling can be used with young and old, native and non-native learners in any educational setting (Peyton & Staton, 1991, p.2). Dialogue journaling (DJ) is informal written communication between a student and teacher (tutor, self or more advanced peer) in a journal on a scheduled basis. Regarding non-native learners, many teachers use it to develop writing fluency, but it has also shown other benefits—for example, increasing grammar knowledge (Rokni & Seifi, 2013), stimulating interest in writing (Holmes & Moulton, 1997) and reducing writing anxiety (Holmes & Moulton, 1997; Liao & Wong, 2010). Not all research, however, is as supportive. For instance, Yoshihara (2008) found that DJ did not improve writing fluency to a statistically significant degree, but it did improve the learner-teacher relationship (Yoshihara, 2008). Other auxiliary uses include the ability to extend learner-teacher contact time and provide information on learners' needs, interests and progress (Peyton, 2000).

For years, the paperbound journal has been used to facilitate this interactive writing activity—but now there are online journals that can be used in place of it. Being virtual, these journals remove geographical barriers, eliminate the frustration of reading messy handwriting (a grievance voiced not only by teachers but also by learners) and simplify the burden of dealing with late or lost journal entries (Longhurst & Sandage, 2004). There are many virtual journals, but one that stands out is Penzu Classic (http://classic.penzu.com). Although it offers three kinds of accounts, teachers and learners only need its free-of-charge Basic account to facilitate DJ. The Basic account provides one free journal where a learner can write an unlimited number of journal entries on an authentic-looking writing pad. The learner can also share his or her journal entries with a teacher,
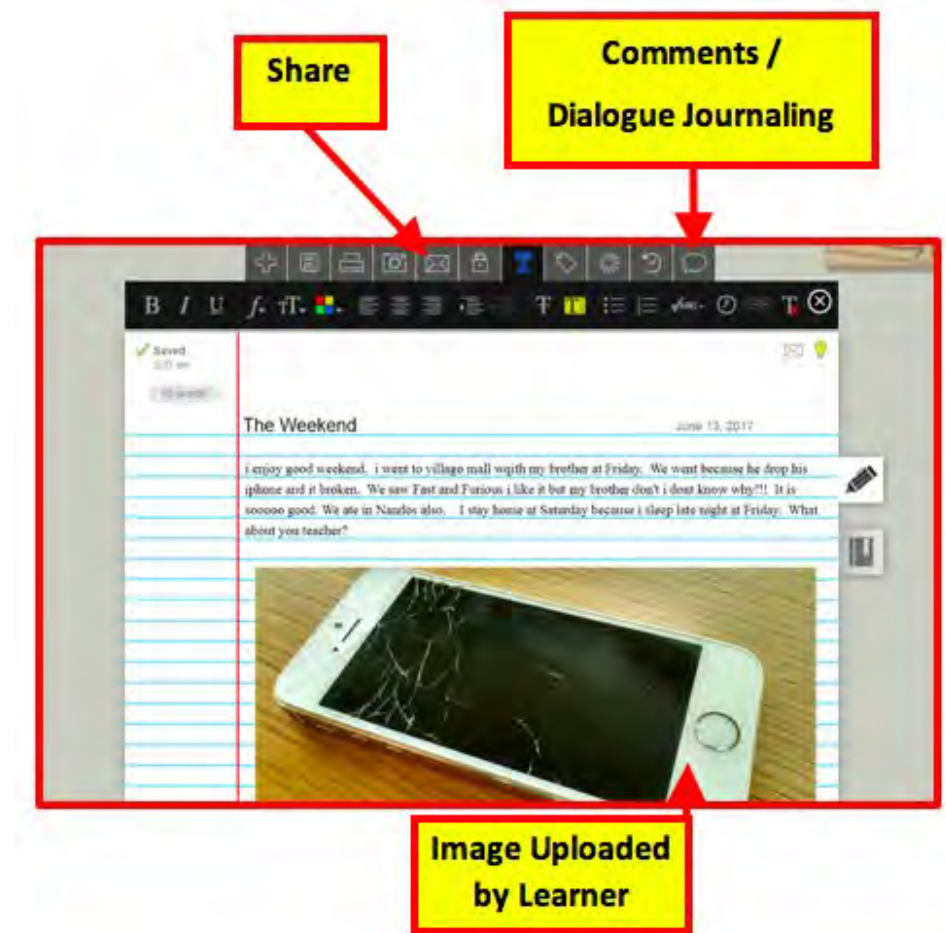
Figure 1: A Journal Entry

and, moreover, the learner and teacher can write back and forth on the journal entries within dialogue bubbles, giving the written dialogue a conversation-like feeling.

Key Characteristics of Dialogue Journaling

In addition to being relaxed and scheduled, dialogue journaling is learner-centered, conversation-like, not assessed and discreet (See Linnell, 2010; Peyton, 2000; Peyton, 2000; Putney, 1991 for further elaboration).

Learner-centred

The learner decides what to write about. To illustrate, primary school learners can write questions about an upcoming field trip; middle or high school year learners, opinions on a new social trend; post-

secondary or adult learners, reflections on a course assignment or challenge at work. But if the leaner cannot decide what to write about, the teacher can step in and suggest a topic relevant to the learner or the curriculum (Linnell, 2010, p. 23). Regardless of whether the topic is selected by the learner or by the teacher, sensitive or inappropriate content can appear because of the open-ended nature of the writing. Therefore the teacher must make restrictions on topics, and ethical and legal responsibilities clear to learners (Peyton, 2000).

Conversation-like

In DJ the learner and teacher take turns "asking questions, offering opinions, requesting clarification, voicing appreciation, or expanding on something

[written]" (Denne-Bolton, 2013, p. 2). This interaction simulates oral conversation and, as Peyton and Staton (1991) highlight, emphasizes the dialogical nature of reading and writing.

Limited Error Correction

Since the teacher is a participant rather than an evaluator in a written conversation, error correction is not stressed (Peyton, 2000, p. 2). However, the teacher can provide some discrete methods of correction in case the learner expects mistakes to be pointed out. In these cases, Linnell (2010) and Peyton (2000) have some suggestions, for example, teacher modeling [i.e. recasting] corrections in a reply. If the learner wrote, "I went to villago mall *wqith* my brother *at* Friday." The teacher could reply with, "I went to the park *with* my wife *on* Friday." Another way to correct is by writing a "P.S." at the bottom of a journal entry (Peyton, 2000).

Private

The teacher should not share journal entries with other learners because confidentiality encourages risk-taking and expressive writing. But if the teacher attains the learner's permission beforehand, Longhurst and Sandage (2004) note that, reading an entry out loud in class can be beneficial because the teacher's request [to read the entry to other learners] itself is a form of encouragement and an affirmation of the learner's thinking (p.72).

Dialogue Journaling and Second Language Acquisition Theory

Dialogue journaling encourages second language acquisition by providing three ideal conditions. First, since the teacher is able to tailor responses to provide understandable yet slightly challenging reading texts, the dialogue journal is a good

venue for comprehensible input (Linnell, 2010, p.24). Krashen's input hypothesis asserts that one condition for language acquisition is exposure to comprehendsible input, i.e., language that is understood but "a little beyond" competence Krashen, 1982). Second, since the learner and teacher are conversing, albeit through writing, about authentic topics, the dialogue journal is a good place for
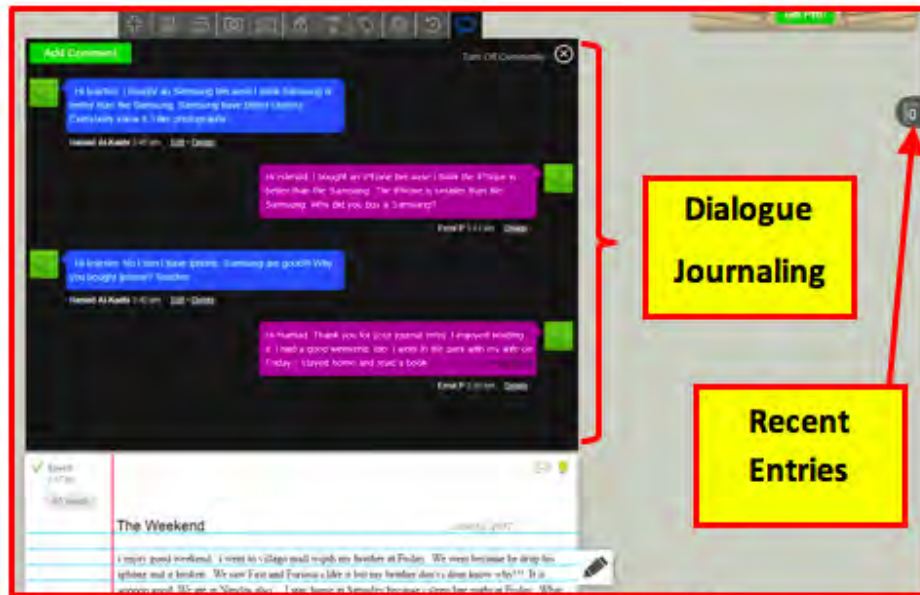

Figure 2: A Journal Entry with Dialogue Journaling

the negotiation of meaning—clarifying, checking comprehension, paraphrasing (Linnell, 2010). This helps the learner to notice gaps in his or her abilities, and therefore, according to Long's (1996) interaction hypothesis, aids in facilitating language acquisition.

Third, because the writing topics are self-selected, the learner is interested. And because the writing is uncorrected, the learner's confidence is nurtured, and the learner feels comfortable to experiment with language. According to Krashen's affective filter hypothesis, language acquisition is aided when a learner is motivated, self-confident and feels safe to take risks (Krashen, 1982).

Overview of Penzu Classic's Free Journal

Even though it is free, the journal is secure and user-friendly. It is protected with two passwords. Learning how to use its features takes very little time. To illustrate, in order to create a journal entry, the learner logs in and then is

brought to a writing pad ready to be filled with words. By selecting the coloured cube icon, a primary school learner can write in a kaleidoscope of colors, revealing emotions or modeling patterns. By selecting the bulleting, indenting, aligning, and numbering tools, an older learner can fashion outlines, essays, letters, poems, lists—a variety of texts.

Similar to creating a journal entry, other features are also straightforward because of their intuitively labelled icons. For example, to share a journal entry, the learner selects Share (the envelope icon) and then enters the teacher's email address. To open a shared journal entry, the teacher selects Recent Entries, and then selects the shared journal entry. To comment—or dialogue—on a shared journal entry, the teacher selects Comments (the speech bubble icon) and then types a message appearing in a speech bubble above the journal entry.

Some shortcomings

No tool is perfect, and *Penzu Classic* is no exception. I found three shortcomings that I hope will be addressed in the near future. First, while there is a free Penzu app, DJ is not yet fully functional on mobile devices. As a result, DJ is limited to desktop and laptop computers.

Second, there are no painting tools, e.g., a freehand pencil, eraser or brush. Such tools would more effectively include very young children and those with limited literacy skills. As we know, these learners often use illustrations either as a compliment to their writing or as an alternative to writing in their journal entries. Another related flaw is that there are no drawing tools for diagrams, flowcharts, graphs, equations, or

symbols. Without these, applications in subject areas like science and math are restricted. How can a primary school learner describe photosynthesis without diagramming it, or a high school learner ask questions about a quadratic equation without writing the equation?

Third, it is not possible to dialogue directly on a journal entry; dialoguing must take place above the journal entry in dialogue bubbles. Providing feedback, particularly through recasting, would be more effective if it was located next to the errors, rather than above the journal entry in speech bubbles. However, with *Penzu Classroom*, another kind of account offered by *Penzu Classic*, the teacher is able to write directly on the journal entry—but *Penzu Classroom* has an annual teacher's fee of USD 50.00.

Conclusion

Providing three conditions that are conducive to language acquisition, dialogue journaling as an authentic, communicative technique is one way to supplement the teaching of writing skills to non-native learners. P's free journal, although not without flaws, is an easy-to-use tool to facilitate secure DJ on laptops and desktop computers.

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Cultural Explorer
by Edward Pye

Tag Words:	Culture, Customs, Taboos, Speaking, Discovery
Time:	60+ minutes
Age/Level:	Intermediate+
Numbers:	Works best with a larger class

CULTURAL EXPLORER is an extremely active and fun activity that highlights the existence of cultural differences and highlights the need for cultural sensitivity.

Outcomes:
- Learn new vocabulary
- Investigate different cultural norms
- Understand intercultural sensitivity

Preparation:
- Print enough "new country" cards for each team (see next page)

Steps:
1. **Warm Up** (10 minutes) – Put students into three teams and ask them to discuss cultural differences. The teacher should create these questions depending on the make up of the class, but question topics like cultural greetings and gestures always work well.

2. **Explain the directions** (15 minutes) – Each team will now become one of the countries on the "new country" cards. Give out the cards to the teams and have them discuss the cultural characteristics, customs and taboos of their new country. Tell students that they will have to pretend to be a person from that country, so they must understand the rules.

3. **Play** (20 minutes) – Instruct the class to mingle and

meet people from the new countries. The goal is to find out as much information about the other 2 countries as possible. However, students must also follow the rules of their culture while doing so.

4. **Review** (10 minutes) – Once everyone has meet and found information, bring the teams back together to talk about and compare the information they found. Once they have done this, bring the class together and see which team was able to find the most correct information about the other new countries. This should also include their cultural customs and taboos.

5. **Follow up** (5 minutes) – With the class, discuss the cultural taboos from their own country and how we can be sensitive to people from real countries. Do these made up countries share any similarities to existing countries? What should we do when we meet someone from another culture?

Edward Pye is a New Zealander with an English literature degree from Otago University. Before moving to BC, he taught in South Korea for 8 years. Since then, he has worked as an Educational Programmer and EAP instructor on UBC's Okanagan campus

New Country - Sovistan

Food	Lots of fruit, ground vegetables. They never eat meat. The national dish is a sweet vegetable curry.
Clothing	Long free flowing beach wear. Necklaces and bracelets – lots of jewelry.
Music	Lots of guitars and bongo drums.
Sports	Beach soccer and volleyball.
Social Customs	They love hugging. They are very informal people and always use slang language. **Women are the leaders, so men are usually shy and don't speak much while women are confident and speak for them.** If someone is being rude to them, they stomp their feet on the ground to show anger. If they are happy, they wave their hands in the air. If someone walks away, they will follow them.
Taboos	It is rude to talk about animals or meat. Animals are considered sacred. It is rude to shake hands. It is polite to hug.

New Country - Wakkia

Food	Lots of meat – beef, poultry, pork and goat. Rice is a side dish. The national dish is roasted pig with apple.
Clothing	Warm clothing. Big jackets and animal skins. Big hats with animal heads on them.
Music	Violins and Piano music with beautiful female singing.
Sports	They play a sport that is a mix of soccer and ice hockey.
Social Customs	**They don't like touching, so they usually just bow or wave to people. They will give a high five if they are very happy.** **They don't speak much. They usually only speak to talk about their work. They don't like talking about fun activities.** Men and women always accompany each other. They are never apart. They also usually take turns speaking, the man says one sentence, then the women and so on.
Taboos	It is rude to touch another person. They will walk away if someone touches them. It is rude to speak loudly, you should speak quietly and with restraint.

New Country - Tsymwanna

Food	Lots of fish and small animals like rabbits. They also eat a lot of spicy meals, the national dish is spicy fish stew.
Clothing	They wear t-shirts, pants and generally plain clothing. They are not interested in **fashion at all because they think that it is trivial. They don't like to talk about fashion.**
Music	**They don't really listen to music except for classical music.**
Sports	The national sport is Chess which is played at a festival once a year.
Social Customs	They are very formal. They like to shake both hands – right and left and then they pat three times on the back. If they learn some new information, they like to pretend to write it on their hands. If they are angry at someone, they stop talking to them immediately and walk away. **If they are happy, they say "SNORP SNORP!!"**
Taboos	It is very rude to wave at someone – it is considered very informal. It is rude to talk about fun activities.

If I Teach it to them, Will they Use it?
A Scaffolded Approach to Genre Writing

by Michael Landry

AS AN EAP reading and writing lecture in an ESL Foundation Program, I understand that one of the biggest challenges is getting our students to reuse previous taught language spontaneously. It's not that we are unhappy with their progress, it is that we want to leave our students inspired to apply their new-found knowledge to tasks. What I have found in my own practice is that students' use of previously taught material in new tasks can only be achieved with effective redundancy and scaffolding. Below is an example of how I have successfully helped my students recognize opportunities to apply new knowledge.

Providing the building blocks
Let's begin by looking at a teaching point. Conditionals are something that most EAP writing programs cover. In my classroom, the presentation stage might begin with a task designed to allow the language to emerge naturally. I have found that contextualizing the language in a natural and familiar situation enables me to elicit the target language from the students and often speeds up acquisition. In the case of teaching zero and first conditionals, I sometimes provide the students with some situations which they in turn have to work together and create sentences which highlight a cause-effect link. This is typically followed by a concept checking activity and further practice with the form.

Once the students have a grasp of conditionals, I return to the writing genre we are working on. Writing a body paragraph for an argumentative essay is an example familiar to most teachers. Typically, prior to working on conditionals, we would have already covered the parts of a body paragraph: how to write topic sentences, methods of exemplification, and providing elaboration. The next stage is to add conditionals to into the mix.

Recognizing opportunity
First, I scour authentic texts to find examples of how other writers use conditionals. Next I create a handout with those examples and ask the students to highlight (in pairs) the conditionals in each. Next, I elicit from the class the stage in which the conditionals were used (i.e. topic sentence, examples and so on). Upon completing this noticing activity, the students are usually able to see the language emerge from an authentic text, and more often than not they recognize that these complex patterns appear in the elaboration section of a paragraph.

Providing opportunity
The final stage involves them applying the language. In the activity below (Figure 1), the students are asked to identify the

I. In addition, there are many measures individuals can take to control their weight. *This has been shown in the case of regular exercise.* _____; as a result, they manage their weight.
Sample response: When people exercise daily, they burn the calories they consume

II. Another way gene therapy can help society is by cleansing the gene pool. *The treatment of diabetes is a good example of this.* _____.
Sample response: If scientists can remove the genes responsible for diabetes before the baby is born, the child will be able to live a normal life.

Figure 1: Example of using conditionals to provide student voice

I. There are many reasons why cellphones should be banned in class. Firstly, they are distracting. Chatting apps illustrate this point clearly. _____.
Sample response: Because they want to sure close ties with their peers, many students chose to read their notifications rather than listen to their instructor.

II. Another reason why they should be banned is because they hurt academic integrity. Cheating on exams is a good example of this. _____.
Sample response: Although phones are prohibited in examination rooms, students still find a way to peek at their phones during assessments.

Figure 2: Example of using subordinating conjunctions to provide student voice

significant to university students is because it can help students to restore their energy.

For example, many university students have pressure due to their study. Also, sometimes it can cause mental health problems. If they know how to avoid their stress, they can have more energy to do things they need to and feel good both mentally and physically. In addition, pets have an impact on avoiding stress. Having a dog is a good example of this. Based on the survey, 62% of students think dogs can make them happy and help them avoid stress. Because every time when they play with their dog, the tiredness goes away; consequently, having a pet it is a good way for students to avoid their stress. Finally, doing things you like can influence reduce stress. Watching movies

Figure 3: Student Sample A

Health is related to education for many reasons. One reason why health is significant to education is because having a healthy lifestyle can help students succeed. Grades are a good example of this. Because most students have a timetable, they can develop a good healthy lifestyle; consequently, they can have a good mental state to study. In addition, eating healthy food has an impact on study. Eating vegetables is a good example of this. Because there are many vitamins and nutritious, students can get more energy from the vegetable; consequently, that will improve their learning efficiency. Finally, psychology can influence our academic record. A lack of

Figure 4: Student Sample B

topic sentence, supporting point, and example in each prompt. Next, the students are asked to elaborate using conditionals. I have also used a similar activity to practice subordinating conjunctions (Figure 2).

This staggered approach has resulted in more students applying previously taught material later on in their own writing. I was pleasantly surprised when these patterns started to appear in their drafts for their final assessment (Figure 3 and Figure 4).

Overall, I feel much more motivated as a teacher when I see results like these. The examples above reveal that the students have begun to see the value of mastering these sometimes mundane aspects of language learning. If we want our students to be successful, we need to engineer it. With proper scaffolding and redundancy, we can definitely help our students to grow as academic writers.

Michael Landry worked in Asia and Canada as an academic manager, teacher trainer, and university lecturer. He is currently a lecturer at Ryerson University's Real Institute in Toronto. His research interests include discourse analysis.

A Conversation with Dr. Lee Gunderson

by Yuya Takeda

Lee Gunderson is a Professor at the University of British Columbia, teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in second language reading, language acquisition, literacy acquisition, and teacher education. He has served as a preschool teacher, a primary-level elementary teacher, a reading specialist, a teacher of primary gifted students, a primary learning disabilities teacher, a principal, and a vice-principal in a bilingual school. At UBC he has served as Head of the Language and Literacy Education Department and the Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology and Special Education. He received the David Russell Award for Research, the Killam Teaching Prize at the University of British Columbia and the Kingston Prize for contributions to the National Reading Conference.

In 2008, he was granted the British Columbia Deans of Education Media Contributor of the Year Award and in 2009 he received the UBC President's Award for Education through the Media and the BC TEAL Lifetime Contributor Award and in 2010 an Honorary Life Membership in the Learning Disabilities Association of Vancouver. He has served as Chair of the Publications Committee of the International Reading Association and is founding Chair of the Pippin Teacher's Professional Library. He is a Past President of the National Reading Conference. He has conducted long-term research that explores the achievement of approximately 35,000 immigrant students. He has published articles, books, and commentaries and in 2009 his research formed the basis for a documentary film called Planet Vancouver.

Dr. Lee Gunderson

Yuya Takeda, a UBC doctoral student, sat down with Dr. Gunderson for an interview.

To begin, could you tell us about yourself and your work.
I graduated from UC Berkeley and my degree was in language and literacy, specifically my research was focused on reading of first language students, English reading. I've been at UBC since 1981 and at first, I started of working on first language, but it became very interesting to me that so many immigrants were moving in and that English was becoming a second or third foreign language for more and more students. So, I had fortunately had a very good background in applied linguistics and second language. So, I branched out and the rest is history.

Today, what is your personal philosophy of teaching English to speakers of other languages?
The best way to talk about my philosophy is that there is no single way. Individuals who are learning English as their second, third or fourth language are individuals. You can't say we are going to do systemic functional linguistics for all of them, because some of them just don't learn that way. Vietnamese students are really into visual learning more than they are oral learning, so typical approaches that involve non-visual images are just not working for them. But then not all Vietnamese learners are visual learners.

Is it correct to think that external factors play important roles as well?
Yes, for example parents' determination. Some cultures that I've become familiar with, for example very rich Japanese, Chinese, Vietnamese, Mexican families, are highly motivated for their children. In fact, they create possibilities. For example, I visited a family from Taiwan originally who had two children in secondary school in Vancouver. During spring break, they were going to go on a family trip to Greece because that's what one of the sons was studying in his class. That's advantage and motivation.

You have been a part of our profession for a very long time. How have you seen the field change over the years?
I have been watching second language students since the 60s and I'm really sad to say that it hasn't gotten better for them in schools in the US and Canada. In the 60s they weren't doing well, in the 70s they weren't doing well, in the 2017 they are not doing well. Which is to me very sad. Part of the interesting difference is that the population has changed dramatically, so we just keep studying.

And what kind of changes do you want to see in the future?

One of the things I would like to see change is the view of EAL students as a monolithic group. In many jurisdictions, including Vancouver, it is viewed that EAL student are lower than the overall achievement level at schools. That's true in some cases, but not all cases. In some cases, EAL students raise achievement, because they are incredibly smart. I would also like when you refer to a category a subcategory of EAL, refugees. When you refer to refugees as a singular group it's really unfortunate, because there are some refugees who are

dents. And they are in use today. So, if you an immigrant student and you arrive to Surrey or Richmond or West Vancouver and you are secondary level, you get the same assessment. In 2008, you might have gotten ten different assessments, depending on where you went. We have a website www.eslassess.ca. It is presently undergoing some reimagining, but Assessment Consortium members can sign up on to the website and they can download an assessment to use in their school districts. What I like about the project is that it involved individuals from all the school districts and people at UBC, graduate students and me.
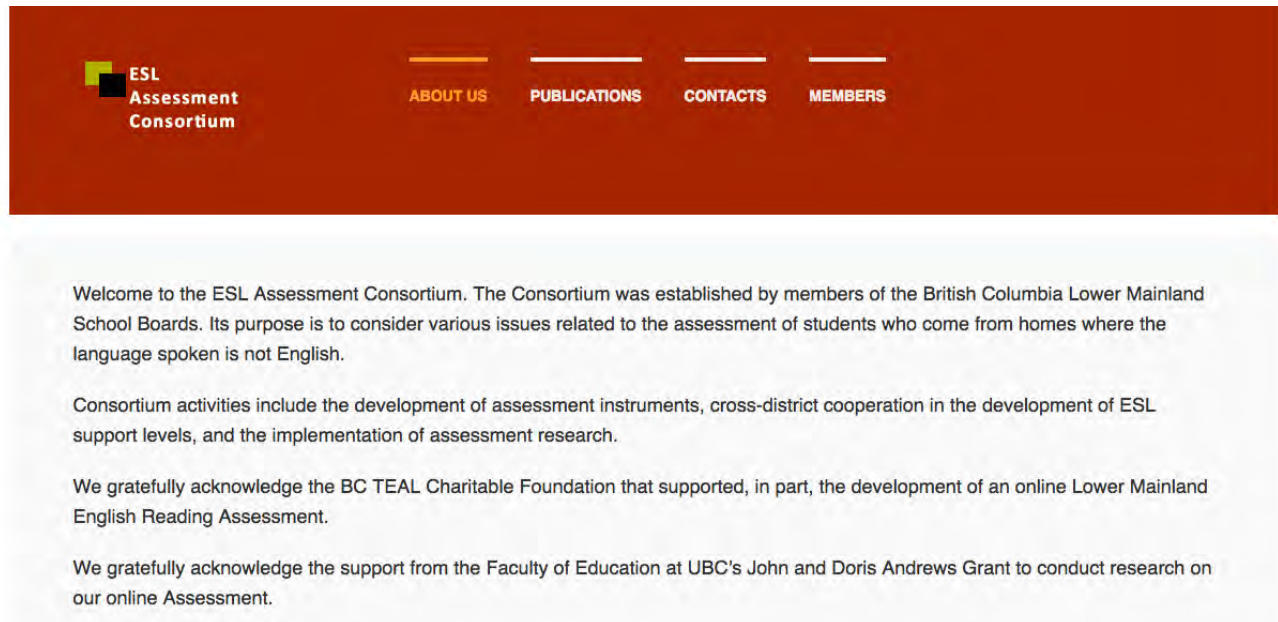
ESL Assessment Consortium webpage

really advantaged socioeconomically, who achieve very well. And the problem is that it causes problems for very recent refugees to Coquitlam school district, to Langley school district who really are disadvantaged. Who are from Iraq, Syria who come from warzones, who have never been to school where five years ago there were refugees from the same countries who came who spoke really good English, who have been to school. In my view, it's really terrible just to refer to all of them as refugees, because there is so much baggage to the term refugee or EAL or ESL.

Tell us about a project you are most proud of. Why did you decide to undertake it and what have you learned as the result of implementing it?

I believe that the one that is most successful involves an invitation that I submitted to school district super intendents in 2008. I invited them to organize an ESL Assessment Consortium. The ESL Assessment Consortium involves representatives from all Lower Mainland School Districts who come and meet. We have developed, invented and published assessments for secondary ESL, elementary, and primary stu-

What is your most recent project? Why did you decide to undertake them?

The most recent project is a volunteer project working with an institution in Delhi, India. It's a school called Freedom English Academy and it has data on about 90,000 students. I am involved in it because it is providing a service to people who are very poor in 90 communities around Delhi, who are the poorest, who couldn't possibly go to any school, particularly a school that would have any quality at all. It gives them an opportunity to go to school and a certificate in English that allows them to participate in technology, in jobs that require English. I am trying to figure out for them if there are any factors or features that can predict people dropping out. Because they have a very high dropout rate, even though a tuition is free. There are certainly professors at UBC and higher learning that would say that English is hegemonic, that it is ruining the world. On the other hand, these individuals are finding their lives are so improved by an ability to communicate in many situations.

Thank you very much for sharing your stories.

BC TEAL Lower Mainland Conference Highlights

By Augusta Avram

FOR A BC TEAL member and supporter like me who has often benefited from PD events organized by the association, the decision to attend this year's BC TEAL Lower Mainland Regional Conference was an easy one. The theme, "Rethinking Communication: Trends, Tools and Strategies", also held great promise; as language professionals, we need to stay informed about the realities and the communicative needs of our learners and keep pace with the ways language changes and evolves. The Conference took place on Saturday, November 18th, at Columbia College. The choice of presentations to include in my schedule for the day was clearly guided by my interest in the impact of technology on the ways we communicate and teach. It was a great learning experience, and I would like to share some of the highlights here.

Nathan Hall presenting (with Augusta in front row)

My morning started on a high note, with Nathan Hall's "Unscripted: Releasing the Potential of Authentic Listening in ELT", delivered with his usual contagious enthusiasm. Nathan is a teacher trainer and EAP instructor for Douglas College and a Community Coordinator for Tutela, to mention just a few of the many roles he fulfills. As expected, I left with a list of technology tools and practical suggestions to put to good use in my class. The issue of using authentic listening input with language learners has always been controversial, even though both teachers and linguists will agree that comprehending as Michael Rost writes, "natural, real-time language use...is the target of virtually all language learners". As Field writes, the teachers who opt for purpose-written materials that are graded and scripted need to remember that these usually simplify syntactic structures and vocabulary and sometimes use a reduced speech rate. One of the arguments against using authentic material is the idea that it's not accessible to lower level learners; however, as pointed out by Nathan, it's all a question of choosing the right type of task. He introduced nine types of listening tasks that teachers can choose from when

Dr. Maite Taboada's plenary

Listening to the plenary presentation

using authentic material: Restoration, Sorting (use information in a text to sequence, categorize, or rank items such as jumbled up texts and pictures), Comparison, Matching (listen to a number of short texts and match each one with the most appropriate theme given), Jigsaw Task, Narrative Completion, Embellishment, Evaluation, and Reconstruction. Finally, as promised, tech tools were introduced and reviewed. VLC, for example, is a free and reliable multimedia player that you might want to install on your computer. If you are tired of ads when watching videos, you have the choice of SafeShare.tv. Are you a MAC user who wants to record a screencast video? All you have to do is open Quick Time. If you want to find out more about all these, I encourage you to explore nathanghall.wordpress.com.

The keynote speech, "Language and Social Media: Opportunities for the EAL Classroom" was delivered by Dr. Maite Taboada, Professor of Linguistics at SFU. Her research areas are discourse analysis and computational linguistics. The speech started with the question, "Is the internet ruining the English language?", followed by a resounding NO. We were reminded that language is creative and ever-evolving and, also, that understanding and being able to function in different registers is part of language learning and use. For a well-established teaching approach, Dr. Taboada recommended a few resources, with *Discourse in English Language Education*, by John Flowerdew, at the top of the list. She explained that the online registers have developed to reflect the realities of a new form of communication brought about by the online medium, and they often display characteristics from both oral and written language. Interestingly enough, some of the language features they display, and which people often point to as proof of "ruined language", are nothing new. Take alternative spelling, for example. To our

surprise, we learned that OMG was first used by Winston Churchill, in 1917. LOL. In terms of opportunities to include social media in our EAL classrooms, Dr. Taboada believes there are quite a few. Social media can be presented as a tool to communicate or can be used to introduce language activities, such as lower-stakes writing, with an emphasis on intelligibility over accuracy. Students could be asked to rewrite the same content in different media (write a blog post, a tweet, a Facebook status update); or they could practice writing and speaking in different registers by writing a wiki entry or producing a podcast. Another very interesting point was made about the fact that social media users interact differently across various social platforms, leaving many wondering why we are "so nice on Facebook, so nasty on Twitter, and so 'braggy' on Instagram". It seems though that a valid explanation can be provided by using the concept of register as defined by Systemic Functional Linguistics to analyze these inter-actions. The last part of the speech was an introduction to Dr. Taboada's research. We learned how sentiment analysis, which is automatic classification of texts based on subjective content, can help determine if online reviews and comments are positive or negative. One of the goals of the research team is to build a tool that can identify constructive comments and filter out toxic ones, especially hate speech. If interested, you can watch the recorded keynote speech on BC TEAL's Facebook page.

Group discussion in a session

In the publishers' area

Anything that has to do with collocations is of great interest to me, so, attending "Using Online Tools to Improve EAL Students' Written Communication" was a must. The presentation was delivered by Deogratias Nizonkiza, instructor at Douglas College. How many times have we heard our students say, "do a mistake" instead of "make a mistake"? Teaching collocations explicitly could be the answer to this type of problem. If I were to choose just one of the definitions shared by Deo, I would probably go with the one from the Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English, "the way words combine in a language to produce natural-sounding speech and writing". The importance of collocations in EAL contexts is widely accepted, and students trained to focus on

Networking at the coffee break

collocations instead of individual words have a higher chance to fluently produce native-like utterances that are grammatically correct (Nation & Chung 2009). A number of typical language exercises can be used to raise awareness and help students practice collocation use, such as matching (verbs & nouns), under-lining the verb (do/give/make me a favour), or inserting the right collocation to complete the sentence. It is also useful to teach students the most common collocation types, such as, adjective + noun, verb + noun, verb + adverb, etc. However, if we want the students to develop routines in their work with collocations, especially in the case of students with intermediate or advanced knowledge of English, we should probably teach them how to use corpora and online tools. Here are the tools Deo recommended: COCA, Word and phrase, Ozdic, and Lextutor. Some of these tools are rather sophisticated and can only be used by students with advanced knowledge of English. Ozdic, however, was rather enjoyed by my LINC 6 students. In the second part of the presentation, Deo shared the research he conducted at McGill University to investigate to what extent ESL students perceived corpora and online tools as useful for improving their academic vocabulary and for editing texts. The results were positive, which will hopefully encourage more teachers to give the deserved attention to collocations.

The decision to attend the conference came with the full reward of learning new things, having a chance to reflect on my own practices, and connecting with other passionate professionals. I am sure others felt the same; one lucky teacher even went home with the big prize, an IPad!

Augusta Avram is an educator whose interests include the impact of technology on the way we learn, connect, build communities, and view the world. She enjoys volunteering in the EAL community and she has served on the BC TEAL board.

PBLA from the Bottom Up: LINC instructors share the benefits and challenges of portfolios

by Dan Ripley

IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE there was a time when I didn't know what portfolio-based language assessment (PBLA) was. Six years ago, I was a graduate student finishing a degree in TESL who needed to choose a research topic. I had recently worked in a LINC program and heard about a new assessment method that was due to be piloted. I was interested, but to be perfectly honest, my priority was getting a job after graduation. Because I wanted to do something topical, I chose to interview four instructors who were piloting PBLA. Their feedback was mixed. They raised numerous concerns, but they were generally optimistic about PBLA's potential (Ripley, 2012).

Since then, PBLA has become an integral part of the delivery of LINC across Canada and a huge part of my job. It has changed how instructors like myself build curriculum, conduct assessments, and make decisions about student progress. It has also led to the elimination of previous assessment models. Before the introduction of PBLA, the Metro Vancouver LINC program in which I currently teach used standardized tests to measure students' abilities in the four skill areas of reading, writing, listening and speaking. Students took these tests once they had spent a specific number of hours in a LINC level, and they needed to achieve certain scores in order to progress.

In contrast, LINC instructors themselves are now responsible for creating and administering all assessments and skill-using activities, ensuring they are aligned with the appropriate Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) levels, and using them to make decisions about student progress. According to current PBLA guidelines, every student should have a minimum of 8-10 assessments or skill-using activities in each of the four skill areas, for a total of 32-40 assessments, before instructors assign CLB levels and make decisions about progression. The study I am sharing here was motivated by numerous conversations I had with fellow LINC instructors during the past four years as we implemented and adapted to these changes. My goal is to explore PBLA's current benefits and challenges.

Gathering feedback from a large group of teachers
With the help of a PBLA lead teacher at my school, I created a survey and proposed this project to my program manager. After receiving support, the survey was distributed to three Metro Vancouver LINC programs overseen by the same service provider. A total of 44 instructors provided feedback, representing 81% of those teaching in the three programs. Participants were currently teaching in levels ranging from Literacy to CLB 7, and had previously taught in pre-Literacy to CLB 8. The average length of time instructors had been using PBLA was 3.15 years, and the most common response was four years.

Better knowledge of the CLBs and a need for standardized assessments
The survey asked instructors to rate eleven statements about PBLA. (See figure 1, next page.) These responses show that instructors generally see some benefits to PBLA, such as increased knowledge of the CLBs and use of task-based teaching methods. There was lesser agreement with many other statements. However, a strong majority said they could not meet the demands of PBLA within the hours they were paid for and felt they would benefit from having prepared, standardized assessments. Because I wanted to give instructors a chance to express themselves more freely, the survey also featured open-ended prompts. The results are summarized below.

Has PBLA improved your teaching?
Most instructors indicated that PBLA had improved their teaching in some way. They noted increased understanding of assessment criteria and the CLBs, better selection of resources, and more use of formative assessments. Some believed PBLA had helped them become more goal-oriented in their teaching, and others said they were better at creating meaningful tasks. As one instructor stated: "PBLA has increased my instructional focus on teaching task-based language relevant to my students' needs. It has also increased my awareness of the differences between CLB levels." Instructors who felt PBLA had not improved their teaching cited a range of reasons, including an

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. PBLA has increased my knowledge of the Canadian Language Benchmarks.	5%	0%	7%	55%	34%
2. PBLA has increased my use of task-based teaching methods.	5%	2%	20%	41%	32%
3. PBLA gives me a good understanding of student strengths and weaknesses.	7%	7%	39%	43%	5%
4. PBLA gives me a clear indication of student benchmark levels.	5%	7%	33%	49%	7%
5. PBLA improves students' ability to set language learning goals.	0%	9%	40%	44%	7%
6. PBLA leads to more consistency in assessment among instructors.	7%	18%	30%	41%	5%
7. My students use the PBLA language companion resources regularly.	9%	34%	30%	25%	2%
8. In general, students benefit from having PBLA in the classroom.	2%	5%	34%	49%	10%
9. I can meet the current PBLA expectations within the hours I am paid for.	61%	20%	14%	5%	0%
10. PBLA allows me to move students to the next level at a reasonable pace.	16%	18%	39%	27%	0%
11. I would benefit from having prepared, standardized PBLA assessments.	0%	7%	7%	27%	59%

Figure 1: Survey Results

increase in paperwork and less time to focus on instruction.

Has PBLA made anything about teaching more difficult?
The vast majority of instructors said that PBLA had made teaching more difficult. The most frequently cited reason was the time-consuming nature of preparing, assessing and grading student work. Other comments highlighted negative impacts on students. As one instructor said: "If I'm to truly meet student needs, I need to be flexible and organic…If I have to provide the expected number of assessments I can't do that." The student-teacher dynamic had also been affected by PBLA, according to one instructor: "Being the test administrators, there is a change to the student-teacher relationship. There is much pressure put on the teachers when students are unhappy with an assessment result."

Have you been teaching at (LINC provider name) since before the introduction of PBLA?
Over the half of the instructors had been teaching for the LINC provider since before the introduction of PBLA. A quarter of these described positive changes such as improved quality of assessments and emphasis on student responsibility. However, the majority cited negative changes such as increased

workload, more stress, and a loss of fun in the classroom. One instructor commented: "Most of the time is now spent on organizing binders." Another said: "Sometimes I feel there's a disconnect with our purpose of settlement English. I find my students can appear uninterested in (the) assessments required."

Are there particular student groups who may not benefit from PBLA?
Only two instructors thought every student benefits from PBLA, and some were undecided. However, the majority believed that some students may not benefit. These include lower-level students, those with little formal education, students with learning disabilities, seniors, and students with anxiety issues or experiences of trauma. One instructor stated: "For literacy and low-level students, PBLA is overwhelming and goes well beyond their very basic needs." Three instructors also suggested that exceptionally motivated students or those who are capable of rapid progression are held back by PBLA. One commented: "they have to stay longer, not because they need to learn more, only because of PBLA requirements." This feedback suggests current PBLA requirements may hinder the progress of both high-performing students and those facing challenges.

When asked to share additional comments, several instructors said PBLA works well, and one commented on its usefulness in organizing assessments. However, the majority highlighted negative experiences such as: increased pressure on students and teachers; an over-emphasis on assessment; and a general loss of enjoyment in the classroom. Three instructors also raised concerns about the lack of standardization that has resulted from PBLA. As one commented: "I believe it's ironic that a system that is supposed to be consistent across the country is actually not because there are no set teaching materials or, more importantly, assessments."

Where do we go from here? It's up to you.
This study suggests that PBLA has benefitted instructors by increasing their knowledge of the CLBs and their use of task-based teaching methods. However, significant concerns were raised. The rationale behind PBLA's implementation was to address the fact that "assessment in LINC… was ad hoc and inconsistent," (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2017, Rationale for PBLA section). Some responses to this survey suggest the current PBLA model also leads to inconsistency in assessment. The majority of instructors also commented on an increase in workload beyond the hours they were paid for, and many expressed concerns over PBLA's heavy emphasis on testing. One instructor noted: "I think we are trying to implement PBLA from an odd testing mindset…Rather than having a portfolio of student work, we are creating a portfolio of small tests done by students." This raises important questions. What is the purpose of these collections of tests? Do they meet settlement needs? Now that so much class time is being devoted to compiling assessments, what has been lost?

There are several ways to address the challenges identified by this survey, but I will suggest two. One would be to reduce the number of assessments students are expected to compile. Second, providing LINC instructors

across Canada with a bank of reliable standardized assessments that are aligned to the CLBs would greatly reduce teacher workload and minimize inconsistencies in assessment across programs. Teachers could easily supplement these with additional tasks tailored to the individual needs of their students. As one instructor succinctly put it: "A little shift from quantity to quality might work better."

PBLA is now the mandatory method of assessment in LINC programs. This survey and its results were generated by instructors like myself who have experienced the impact of PBLA in their classrooms, so it can be considered "a view from the bottom." This is where the real effects of PBLA are felt: in hundreds of classrooms across Canada, where it has changed how teachers work with students and use their limited time in LINC programs. If we want to see improvement in how PBLA is used, we need to build a strong base of evidence to ignite this change. That is why I strongly encourage other instructors to use this survey as a model, gather feedback within their own LINC programs, and share the results.

Acknowledgments
I would like to say thank you to the LINC program managers who have fostered a culture of open communication through-

out our schools and have always been receptive to feedback from instructors. Thank you to Astrid Van Der Pol for editing the survey, compiling data, and sharing the expertise of a PBLA lead teacher. Thank you to Geoffrey Taylor for providing feedback on this article. Finally, thank you to all of the instructors who took the time to share their experiences with PBLA.

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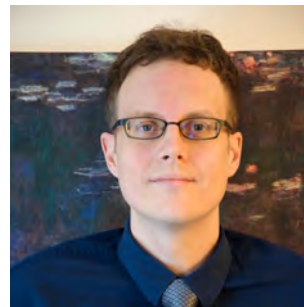
Dan Ripley is a graduate of the TESL MEd program at the University of Alberta, and he has previously taught in Japan and Korea. Since 2012, he has been teaching English and developing curriculum for a large Metro Vancouver LINC program.

Creating & Sharing Knowledge:
A New Issue of the BC TEAL Journal

by Scott Roy Douglas

THE second issue of BC TEAL's free and open access scholarly journal is now fully available online: http://ejournals.ok.ubc.ca/index.php/BCTJ, with much to offer BC TEAL members looking for new research and in-depth examinations of topics related to English as an additional language (EAL) teaching and learning.

The first article in the new issue examines the impact of service learning on EAL students at a university in British Columbia (Wisla, Krauza, & Hu, 2017). The authors find that the EAL students in their study who took English composition right after a service learning experience had higher grade point averages than students who did not. As a result, the authors conclude that service learning is a worthwhile endeavour for EAL students.

Next, Mudzingwa (2017) compares portfolio-based language assessment (PBLA) to the assumptions and principles of andragogy. His analysis maintains that PBLA involves students in planning and evaluating their learning, assesses students on content that is relevant to their lives, and draws on students' life experiences. As such, he suggests that the goals of PBLA and andragogy are consistent with each other, pointing to PBLA's suitability for adult learners.

The third article in this issue is of particular interest to current and prospective graduate students. Burri (2017) provides readers with an autoenthographic exploration of how he made sense of educational theory while he was putting together a theoretical framework for his PhD proposal. Key to this article is a figure outlining the nine steps he took during this process. He ends with implications for supervisors in graduate programs on guiding graduate students during the process of exploring the theory relevant to their proposed research.

The final full article reflects on trauma-informed teaching practice and how it benefits students with refugee experiences (Tweedie, Belanger, Rezazadeh, & Vogel, 2017). Classroom intervention strategies and the effects of trauma on attachment, self-regulation, and developmental competence are considered while discouraging deficit perceptions of these learners who bring so much to their new schools.

New to this issue is a section for book reviews. James (2017) explores García and Wei's (2014) work on translanguaging, and Kang (2017) looks at Medgyes' (2017) work on non-native English speaking teachers.

With the completion of the second issue, work has already begun on the next issue of the BC TEAL Journal. Members can read the articles as soon as they are ready for publication and become involved as peer-reviewers and authors. More information can be found on the journal website provide above. People interested in helping out are encouraged to contact the editor.

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This edition and past issues of TEAL News can be found online at **bcteal.org/publications.**

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

TEAL News

TEAL News *is the platform for BC TEAL members to share their work, ideas, and innovations with the wide readership. The main goal of this publication is to shine a spotlight on work done by and for the teachers of English as an Additional Language in British Columbia. Latest issues are distributed to institutions across the province, online through BC TEAL website, and selected articles are shared through BC TEAL Blog and on social media.*

TEAL News invites submissions for the Summer 2018 issue with the theme *Pushing the Boundaries.* Newsletter articles are usually 800-1000 words in length. The deadline for submissions to the next issue of *TEAL News* is June 1, 2018. Please contact Natalia Balyasnikova, with your submission ideas: editor@bcteal.org.

We're looking for:

- Articles about your research projects or classroom practices
- Anecdotes and stories about your professional experiences
- Book or article reviews, annotated bibliographies that might be useful for your colleagues in the classroom
- Reports and reflections about talks, seminars, or conferences that you've attended

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.*

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. 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
- Supporting adult learners with refugee experiences through English instruction
- Service learning for EAL students