TEAL News

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

Doing Well in Times of Change

Photo by Zackary Drucker at The Gender Spectrum Collection

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Intellectual Well-Being During Challenging Times

by Scott Roy Douglas

DURING A TIME OF LOCKDOWNS, non-essential travel restrictions, and personal bubbles, the Winter 2021 issue of the BC TEAL newsletter is offered as a way to connect us to each other and to lessen our isolation. However, well-being is more than just looking after our social needs. While social connection is important, intellectual well-being and a meaningful engagement with ideas is also part of our overall health and happiness. The articles in this issue contribute to the growing collective knowledge of our field, and they serve to bolster English as an additional language (EAL) teaching and learning in British Columbia. They are nourishment for the life of the mind of BC TEAL's members, and a contribution to the intellectual life of this province.

In this issue, readers will find a wide range of authors and topics. Three of the articles directly relate to the current pandemic, looking at how to find resiliency during times of challenge, how concepts of time and space can shift during online teaching, and how principles of universal design can foster student engagement with online learning. Three more articles explore the experiences of students using EAL, looking at the perceptions of students in first year composition courses, the challenges with social integration for international students, and the potential of culturally responsive social emotional learning for study abroad programs. The last three articles in this issue provide readers with an update from the BC TEAL Board of Directors, an examination of queer inclusion in EAL teaching and learning, and an outline of the skills that help immigrant job seekers.

As editor, I hope that these articles contribute in a small way to the intellectual well-being of BC TEAL members and other folks who read these pages. Although we can't get together in person at this time, through publications such as *TEAL News*, we can still share ideas and enjoy articles by our colleagues in BC TEAL.

Scott Roy Douglas is an associate professor in the University of British Columbia's Okanagan School of Education. His focus is on English as an additional language teaching and learning. He is the BC TEAL Publications chair and the editor of the BC TEAL Journal.

CALLforSUBMISSIONS

TEAL News

TEAL News is the platform for BC TEAL members to share their work, ideas, and innovations with a wide readership. The main goal of this publication is to shine a spotlight on work done by and for EAL teachers in British Columbia. New issues are distributed to institutions across the province and online through **BC TEAL's website**, with selected articles shared through **BC TEAL's blog** and **social media** outlets. *TEAL News* invites submissions for the Spring 2021 issue. Newsletter articles are usually 500–1000 words in length. The deadline for submissions to the next issue of TEAL News is April 1, 2020. Please contact the editor, Scott Douglas, with your submission ideas at **editor@bcteal.org**.

We're looking for articles about your research projects; descriptions of classroom activities; anecdotes and stories about your experiences; book or article reviews; reports about talks, seminars, or conferences that you've attended; reflections on English language learning; and, any other creative work BC TEAL members should know about.

BC TEAL Journal

The *BC TEAL Journal* is your peer-reviewed scholarly publication. The journal exists to promote scholarship related to the teaching and learning of English as an Additional Language (EAL) in British Columbia, with articles reflecting and making connections to the varying contexts and settings of BC TEAL's members. The journal invites the submission of original previously unpublished contributions, such as research articles or theoretical analysis, classroom practice, opinion essays, and book reviews. Manuscripts are accepted on an ongoing basis throughout the year.

For more information about writing an article for the journal, as well as details about the submission process, please visit the journal's website at **https://ojs-o.library.ubc.ca/index.php/BCTJ**.

Greetings Members

by Cindi Jones

Image by Free-Photos from Pixabay

DEAR BC TEAL COMMUNITY,

I hope the arrival of the BC TEAL newsletter finds you well. This issue is packed full of excellent articles to both inspire and inform. My heartfelt thanks to the amazing people who have contributed to this edition, both writing and publishing.

The fifth edition of *the BC TEAL Journal* has also recently published (read it at https://ojs-o.library.ubc.ca/index.php/BCTJ), which includes a review of the major milestones of the past five years. The journal is the work of many and is a huge benefit to the worldwide EAL community. Thank you to all who undertake this labour for your dedication and commitment.

2020 has given us at BC TEAL an opportunity to rethink how we do many things, including professional development. Where once a webinar was considered a convenient option, it is now standard practice. Zoom has become a noun and a verb that we all understand and use. Having guest speakers from other countries is now as easy as arranging a time. Our audience is no longer those in our vicinity or who can easily travel to our location. Our audience is now worldwide. While this has broadened our reach, it has also heightened our need for human connection.

For 2021, our BC TEAL events are aimed at providing you with the high-quality PD you have come to expect from these events. This year, our events will also give you explicit opportunities to participate in Communities of Practice. As defined by Wenger-Treynor and Wegner-Treynor (2015), "Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (p. 1). *Image & Inspiration, the BC TEAL 2021 Virtual Event,* will include communities to help you to create and grow your professional network and continue to learn from each other long after the event has finished.

The BC TEAL community also offers opportunities for volunteer leaders to participate in the growth of the profession. Your Board of Directors are volunteers as are all the many dedicated leaders who work to produce the initiatives and opportunities that our profession benefits from. As many of you have discovered with teaching your online classes, doing things online is not less work. And as BC TEAL offers virtual events, we have definitely learned that there is lots to be done! If you have ever thought about sharing your skills with BC TEAL, now is a great time to do so. Keep tuned to bcteal.org for news and opportunities to participate.

I hope to see many of you, online and eventually face-to-face, over the coming months and get to know you better as we grow this amazing community together.

Still, safely ensconced behind my keyboard,

Cindi

Cindi Jones, President, BC TEAL

Cindi Jones has been in the EAL industry for over two decades. Her career has included teaching EAL students in the public post-secondary, LINC, and private for-profit sectors. She has taught public school teachers in China and Omani nationals in Muscat. Cindi has presented for BC TEAL, ATESL, and TESL Toronto. She has been active in BC TEAL, serving on several committees. Cindi is a yoga enthusiast, curious cook, a beginning golfer, and loves hanging out with her family.

Reference:

Wenger-Trayner, E. & Wenger-Trayner, B. (2015, April 15). Communities of practice: A brief introduction. https://wenger-trayner.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/07-Brief-introduction-to-communities-of-practice.pdf

BCTEAL: Working for You in 2020

by Jenn Peachy

LIKE YOU, the people who dedicated their time to BC TEAL struggled through the uncertainty and anxiety of everything 2020 threw at us. It was a hard year all around! At times, it was a struggle for board and committee members to stay engaged, but we did. We felt our positions were more important than ever because BC TEAL is about keeping us connected: to our friends and colleagues, to our professional development, to our students, and to our jobs or studies. For this reason, and because you may have missed it, we wanted you to know that we are, and will continue to be, working hard for you, the BC TEAL MEMBERS.

The Highlights from 2020

Here's what BC TEAL did, achieved, created or shared in 2020:

- Created and shared a collaborative One-Year plan for a goal-driven approach ;
- Started implementing our very important Respectful Interaction Guidelines;
- Held the Vancouver Island Regional Conference (in person!);
- Hosted Meet-Ups in January and February ;
- Implemented a COVID-19 membership strategy (free for unemployed due to the pandemic until March 1, 2021), find more details here;
- Offered great PD for the age of COVID: *What's Working with Remote Language Training in BC* and *The Emerging Pandemic Intercultural Work Environment;*
- Hosted the Employment Skills Webinar ;
- Held our first on-line AGM;
- Hosted Coffee Times and Happy Hours;
- Hosted the Back to School Boot Camp;

For all your work on BC TEAL committees, Marcela, Rui Dong, Jennifer, Olga, Moses, Azzam, Gahyun, Vera, Astrid, Linda, Karen, Ryan, Linda, Susan, Stephanie, Kate, Gillian, Shawna, Beth, Sara, Laura & Taslim

And as Regional Reps, Dian, Diana, Paul, Julie, Janice, and Josh

the BC TEAL Board of Directors sends a great big Thank you!

2020 Highlights Con't:

- Hosted the LINC Reboot;
- Hosted the Inspiring Speaker Series featuring Laura Baecher (see the video here), Ness Murby (see the video here), and Ismaël Traoré;
- Shared a number of job postings and invitations to participate in research;
- Partnered with AMSSA, SIETAR, and others to bring remote learning to our members;
- Brought in new benefits from Black Bond Books and Learn Your English;
- Implemented surveys to get to know you better;
- Encouraged more members to take on leadership roles by joining committees;
- Developed onboarding for new leaders (committees and regional reps);
- Created and filled the Regional Rep position of Lower Mainland;
- Celebrated EAL Week in October 2020 with some regional events;
- Created Terms of Reference for the various committees;
- Upped our game on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram: featured membership benefits blitz, event announcements, free resources, and more TEAL Charitable Foundation (TCF) promotions;
- Reinvigorated the BC TEAL Blog;
- Created best practices for video sharing;
- Awarded and disbursed thousands of dollars in funding for instructor PD, language projects and materials development, and refugee education through the TEAL Charitable Foundation (TCF)
- Created a Benefits of Membership promotional video for events and TESL programs;
- Supported admin staff with a work-from-home office, and closed the commercial office;
- Started work on streamlining the understructures of the office to make services more efficient;
- Said good-bye to our Administrative Manager Jaimie as she moved on to another adventure and hello to Tanya Tervit, her replacement;
- Said a sad good-bye to Alison Whitmore, a dedicated member of BC TEAL;
- Saw the development of another free resource: Indigenous Peoples and Canada;
- Published Spring 2020 and Fall 2020 newsletters; and
- Saw the publication of the Vol. 5 No 1 (2020) *BC TEAL Journal* .

Moving Forward

Some of the 2020 initiatives happened behind the scenes, so you may not have noticed them. Others we offered for specific sectors of our membership. Regardless, if you participated in, or contributed to any of these achievements, we want to thank you, and hope that you will continue to join in. Some of the projects will continue into 2021, and we will also continue to create new opportunities for you. That's where YOU come in.

BC TEAL needs to know what you would like to see happen in 2021. We can only work toward something if we know it is needed. What do YOU want? And would you be interested in working toward a specific goal as part of a committee? Do you have skills and ideas just waiting for a place to share them? BC TEAL is only as good as the people who dedicate their extra time and energy to make it work. Imagine what BC TEAL can achieve in 2021 if we all work together for our mutual benefits, for our community! Write to admin@bcteal.org to share your ideas and suggestions for 2021.

*All these initiatives were made possible by the hard work of the BC TEAL staff and Board, as well as the committee leaders. A special shout out to Rui Dong, Marcela, Olga, Moses, Azzam, Gahyun, Vera, Kate, Gillian, Shawna, Beth, Sara, and Jennifer for the work they are doing on the various committees; and to our regional reps: Paul, Diana, Julie, Dian, Janice and Josh.

Jenn Peachy retired from her position as Head Instructor, EAP Pathway Advisor, and Global Competence Certificate Facilitator at Global Village Victoria in 2019. After a year of travel and adventure, she is back on Vancouver Island and happily involved with BC TEAL again.

Join BC TEAL, and become a member of BC's EAL professional community.
Visit **bcteal.org/membership** to learn about the many benefits and to join.

Task Time, Clock Time, COVID & the EAL Classroom

by Karin Wiebe

Karen Wiebe, Jody Nelson & Belkis Toredi on Zoom Photo by Karin Wiebe

BRITISH COLUMBIA'S English as an additional language (EAL) instructors have been uniquely situated to continue teaching online, even during the earliest days of COVID isolation. Months later, teachers are constructing new systems to manage and normalize work in the *homesphere*.

> "We had a good class tonight and many of these students are in Iran, Kuwait, Turkey and so I'm thinking of shifting my 7:30 to 8:00pm. Would you be ok with that?"

One system impacted by COVID is time. Looking backward to the industrial revolution, rural farming communities operated on task time as a means of structuring the workday. Workers planned and laboured according to what needed to be done during the season, with longer or shorter daylight hours to guide activity. As populations gravitated towards factory wage-work, employers introduced clock time to coordinate and improve productivity and profits (Ingold, 2000).

In the twenty-first century, urban technology and service driven economies operate on a mixed-clock system. Workers structure *worksphere* tasks according to clock time. Everything that happens outside the home is assigned a timeslot. The *homesphere* uses task time to organize seasonal to-do lists and family priorities.

If you have ever envisioned reintroduction of task time into the work week as a lower stress, easier to manage, more organic system, the reality is something different. Educators have not succeeded in returning to task time, but rather have been obliged to import clock time into the home. Under COVID, students are no longer in the same physical

space, and in the case of EAL education, not even in the same time zone. Teachers are rethinking virtual classrooms to operate outside of traditional Canadian teaching hours in a system that allows "housework" and "work" to be performed in the same timeslots. Part of successfully scheduling a work week according to clock time is keeping work fully separate from the personal life. By combining these two schedules in the *homesphere* according to clock time, it creates an uncomfortable" and stressful feeling.

> The cat hears me speaking with a group of people on Zoom and leaps up on this tall bar table that has become my office. He disturbs nothing as he picks his way over technology, pens, keyboard, coffee and stops directly in front of the camera to gaze at the talking heads. Always late, "Zoom" never misses a meeting. I did not see this coming.

Another system impacted with the shift to virtual teaching is work-focus or concentration. This concept extends from clock time where workplace activities are not in competition with home and family. In a pre-COVID classroom, educators are not presenting or dealing with "personal" issues during the workday. There is no real personal life when you are at work, and this division is not without merit. We maintain our *homesphere* as a balance against the impersonal and pressure of workplace and work relations. Further, we organize our clock time to include uninterrupted focus on producing deliverables.

> "I do my Zooms on my bed if my roommates need the living room for something more important."

I witness (and experience) workplace interruptions daily through Zoom. Observers' reactions range between humour, boredom, and concern depending on the situation. However, the most significant reaction I observe is from the person who is being interrupted. *Homesphere* interruptions into the virtual workplace are unpredictable and powerful events that influence the teacher's ability to focus and connect. Over the past seven months, I have witnessed exasperation, annoyance, and dismay as a result.

Another system impacted with this change is personal space. This space is a shifting boundary in the *homesphere* were teachers work to normalize virtual classrooms. Constructed under emergency circumstances in the spring and summer of 2020, I observed that many teachers had moved, enlarged, re-equipped, and retooled their working space within their homes for the start of the fall semester. In the example of the quote above, the mashup of spheres has literally followed some of us into the bedroom.

This (re)location of public into private has implications on the health and wellbeing of educators. We construct ourselves socially at home with our family and friends in a frame-work that balances our worker-selves. Our *homesphere* releases us from guarding our thoughts and words, affording us a mental rest. Middle-of-the night emails evidence work activity beyond the clock or task boundaries we set for ourselves. When I query this practice with teachers, I am told, "some nights it's just easier to get some of that lesson planning and emailing out of the way to sleep better." But doesn't that make us complicit in allowing employers to benefit from what should be the workers' time to rest and recharge? Are teachers expecting of themselves the ability to produce the same quality and volume of work under COVID and in their *homespheres*, as they did in physical classrooms?

If the first wave of COVID had terminated with a vaccine, these points would have been less a conversation of future planning and more one of "how we coped." Unfortunately, the world waits for a full rollout of a vaccine, and British Columbia's EAL teachers and schools are constructing infrastructure to support education for a minimum of another year, with the possibility of ongoing virtual education components. Now is the time for research and insight into the lived experiences of educators in the *homesphere*, so that we are designing healthy, integrative systems of work that we can take with us like silver lining in a very dark cloud.

Karin Wiebe is pursuing her Master of Arts at UBC's Okanagan School of Education. She is interested in Canadian immigration in second and third tier communities, specifically the intersections of language learning and employment.

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Can the Choir Spread the Sermon?
Next Steps for Queer Inclusion in ELT

by Ashley R. Moore

Photo by Colin Michael on Unsplash

MY EXPERIENCES sharing my work on queer inclusion at two recent language education conferences have given me cause to reflect: Does the work I do—advocating for the critical inclusion of queer lives in the myriad written, spoken, and visual texts we use to teach English and other languages—make any real difference at all?

It's not that the participants in either session were frosty in their responses to the ideas I was sharing. Heads were not shaken. Eyes were not rolled. Quite the opposite, in fact! In a workshop I facilitated at the Canadian Association of Second Language Teacher's conference, queer and ally participants shared their own inspiring and ongoing work to include queer representation in their teaching materials. And among the digital crowd for my presentation at the recent "Race and Queerness in ELT" web carnival, I was delighted to see two materials writers whose ground-breaking work I cited in the talk.

So perhaps I have no cause for concern or self-doubt. But at the same time, I was left with several uncomfortable questions. If the people engaging with my work are already aware of the need for queer inclusion, and doing an excellent job of it in their materials and classroom practices, what's my real contribution? Am I merely preaching to the choir? Why is it so rare for me to field a question from someone who's never considered the relevance of queer people to their work as a

language teacher? In a one-off session, it's difficult to gauge where everyone is at in terms of gender and sexuality literacy, so perhaps they *are* there, quietly taking it all in. However, research shows that most teaching materials and many practices in language education continue to perpetuate hetero- and cis-normativity (e.g., Moore, 2020; Provitola, 2019), so we know not everyone has got the memo on queer inclusion.

My intuition is that, if you read the title and first paragraph of this piece and decided it was relevant to you and worth reading, there's a high chance this is not the first time you've thought seriously about queer inclusion. And that's great! The complex and wonderful diversity that gathers under "queer" means that our learning continues, and a truly critical inclusion of such diverse voices is an ongoing challenge. But there will be some newsletter readers for whom "queer" remains something "niche," "strange," or even "dangerous." They may not have even got past the title. Even English teachers who are self-identified members of the queer community might assume this is beyond their professional concern. Just a few years ago, I bumped into a friend at a large national language teacher conference in Japan and we exchanged 30-second elevator pitches for our sessions. On learning that my session was on queer inclusion in language teaching materials, he declared that this was quite outside his area of interest—which surprised me considering the fact he was both a materials writer and gay himself!

So how *do* we reach those colleagues who have yet to understand that their core competencies should include the ability to actively and respectfully incorporate nonbinary, Two-Spirit, lesbian, bisexual, and other queer people and their language in their teaching?

I am increasingly convinced that more widespread progress will only be made once the choir—those of you who have sought out professional development opportunities to learn more about queer inclusion and are already doing amazing work in

your own classes—become empowered to spread the message and the competencies you've developed among your own professional networks. But leading this kind of professional development can be daunting. Here I offer three concrete ideas for activities that might be integrated into a shared PD event.

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Photo by mego-studio at freepik.com

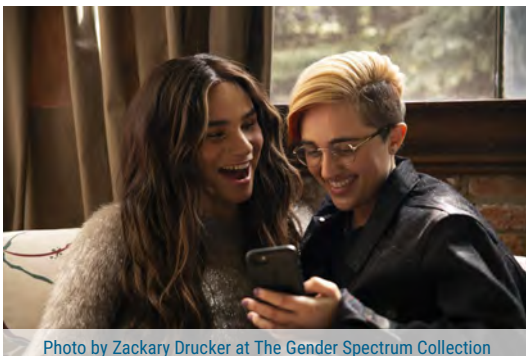Photo by Zackary Drucker at The Gender Spectrum Collection

Photo by Zackary Drucker at The Gender Spectrum Collection

Bilsborough (2018) and Tyson Seburn (2019). Simply reviewing their freely available materials with your colleagues in a discussion session would be a highly productive activity, sure to spark your creative impulses as you see what is possible when we take action.

Book Club. Joshua Paiz's (2020) brand new book, *Queering the English Language Classroom: A Practical Guide for Teachers*, is the perfect tool to facilitate a wider discussion on queer inclusion in English language teaching. Accessibly and engagingly written, it covers issues of representation, but also pedagogical practices and classroom environments. Paiz takes a realistic view on the challenges we might face from some students, parents, and even coworkers when we talk about queerness, offering a range of concrete strategies that we could employ if faced with fearful pushback. Best of all, main chapters conclude with a number of reflexive praxis prompts that any facilitator might use as the basis for various PD activities.

Heteronormativity Spotting. In an online video (Moore, 2021; see also Moore, 2020), I outline five different forms of representational heteronormativity, ranging from the most damaging (explicit heterosexism) to the least damaging (queer inclusion). Teachers could review representations of sexuality found in current teaching materials, and use the taxonomy to identify exactly which kind of heteronormativity is being perpetuated through the materials. The taxonomy can then be a guide as you and your colleagues strategize for the inclusion of more positive representations.

What Does Queer Inclusion Look Like? Because materials produced by commercial publishers are overwhelmingly normative when it comes to gender and sexuality, it can be genuinely difficult to imagine what positive queer representation would even look like. Thankfully, superlative examples have been created by the aforementioned colleagues, Katherine

At the very least, I hope these ideas will inspire you to take your next step forward when it comes to queer inclusion. Whether that's continuing with your own learning, or providing opportunities for your colleagues to further theirs, *all* of your students deserve English classes that reflect the wonderful diversity of human bodies, identities and relationships.

Ashley R. Moore is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Language and Literacy Education, University of British Columbia. He has experience facilitating various types of professional development opportunities in both education and industry around queer inclusion and equity, diversity, and inclusion more widely. He can be reached at ashleyrmoore@alumni.ubc.ca.

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Harnessing Principles of Universal Design to Foster Student Engagement in Online Learning

by Eilidh Singh & Amanda Wallace

The boys in the back. Photo by Sam Balye on Unsplash

2020 WAS A YEAR OF SUPERLATIVES like no other, along with adjectives like "unprecedented," "challenging," and "difficult" making appearances at the top of the frequently-used word list. However, it was also a year of innovation, experimentation, and adoption (with varying and continuing degrees of success). In education, with the pivot to remote online teaching, we've had to act and react quickly, learning as we go, side-by-side with our students. Now, at the start of a new year, we hopefully have a moment to catch our collective breath and reflect on what is an opportunity to shine a light on some of the new and not-so-new practices we've developed, so that we might refine and add them to our teaching and learning tool kits of best practices.

In the pre-Zoom days of teaching from home, all available tools were harnessed to finish the term, and many instructors revisited, perhaps for the first time in many years, the feeling of being a student on a rather steep learning curve. When Zoom became widely available, new words entered the vernacular, and our skill sets grew as we deployed breakout rooms, polls, shared screens, virtual backgrounds, reactions, slides, and co-host duties. We learned how to record, edit, upload, post, schedule, grade, and co-create online. It was, and is, exhausting, but also rewarding, mostly when things went well, but even when they didn't, because there was patience, understanding, and kindness.

A noticeable change occurred, however, this past fall term. We began to see that the shine of the new technological bells and whistles had worn off, and Zoom fatigue had settled in for both instructors and students. Breakout room attrition became predictable, and a sea of disengaged black tiles became the default. What happened? Perhaps we lost sight of the maxim that the pedagogy drives the technology, and not vice versa. In group work done in face-to-face classrooms, students are usually given instructions and the intended outcome, told how much time they have, are perhaps even given a note on the alignment with a learning outcome, and some scaffolded support to ensure success. However, in some Zoom breakout rooms, students and participants were and continue to be put into rooms with (sometimes invisible) strangers, unclear instructions, insufficient time, and vague notions of purpose—conditions unconducive for learning.

Unsurprisingly, by fall, students reported feeling disengaged, lonely, distracted, anxious, and overwhelmed. An earlier, May 2020 BCcampus report noted that asynchronous/blended learning environments are not conducive to building a sense of community and connectedness in part because meaning-making through non-verbal cues such as tone and gestures are absent. In a UBC survey in April 2020, students reported several barriers to their engagement, well-being and learning in the remote online environment. These included:

- a lack of focus;
- poor time management;
- a perceived lack of communication from instructors;
- minimal flexibility with assignments and grading;
- technology issues; and,
- a lack of standardization/consistency in pedagogical practices across courses.

Unsurprisingly, such barriers impact students' engagement in their courses and instructors' perceptions of students'

engagement. Data from emerging studies and anecdotes from students point to the importance of humanizing, personalizing, and individualizing instruction in the online environment (Delahunty, Verenikina and Jones 2014; Harris and Woods 2020). The question we return to again and again is how can online engagement be fostered to avoid such barriers? How do instructors build and nurture an inclusive online environment?

To reduce barriers and increase student engagement, instructors must consider *all* learners' needs. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is an evidence-based framework offering guidelines and suggestions for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for everyone. It allows instructors to be proactive by creating multiple means of engagement (the "why" of learning), representation (the "what"), and action and expression (the "how"). These principles guide the design of learning environments with a deep understanding of and appreciation for individual variability. It's not a "one-size fits all" solution, but rather, a flexible approach that can be customised and adjusted for individual needs. When traditional instructional practices such as lectures and readings are used exclusively, whether face-to-face or online, they do not address the diversity of learners likely to be in that course. However, when curricula are intentionally designed to reduce barriers, all students can engage in rigorous, meaningful learning. This year, more than any other, has taught us the importance of inclusivity in our pedagogy and delivery.

What does that look like in an online environment? A general rule of thumb is that instructors should consider offering options for recruiting interest, sustaining effort and persistence, and self-regulation (CAST, 2018.) For example, rather than using breakout rooms as the sole means of interaction, consider using a JamBoard for those who do not wish to speak, but who still want to contribute thoughts and ideas. Before a scheduled class, share an outline with a brief description of your expectations regarding participation, and to activate prior knowledge and allow time for preparation. These could be the questions you will post on a Jamboard or the breakout rooms' discussion topic. Invite personal reflections on the subject in advance of a synchronous session in the form of discussion posts. Consider assigning rotating roles for breakout rooms such as a note-taker, a time-keeper, a summarizer, and a references-gatherer, among others. Rather than a term paper serving as the sole means of assessment, consider other options such as an oral presentation or a visual representation. Co-creating rubrics with students to assess content knowledge allows them to understand the goals and desired outcomes, and be invested in achieving them. For many instructors, these practices are well-known, particularly in the English as an Additional Language field. This past year has taught us how some traditional pedagogical approaches can be successfully adapted to online delivery if we are mindful of the alignment of outcomes, assessment and delivery of content; in other words, if we remember that pedagogy comes first, that the pedagogy drives the technology.

While we don't know what the future holds for teaching and learning, or what the pandemic's lasting effects will be, we do know that this has been an opportunity to draw on the principles of UDL to promote best practices for online engagement. This can include humanizing your teaching with messages of care, having clear and specific learning goals, flexible response options, and the use of authentic and relevant examples that allow students to connect with the content.

Finally, it's important to keep in mind that the UDL guidelines are not meant to be prescriptive. Instead, they are a set of suggestions that can be applied to reduce barriers and maximize learning opportunities for all learners. Instructors are free to mix and match the guidelines according to their specific contexts. For instructors and students alike, the goal is to reduce anxiety and provide more options, increased agency, more diversity, flexibility and choice in the classroom. To paraphrase Tobin and Behling (2018), by reaching everyone, we can teach everyone, or at least we can try.

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A View on International Students' Social Integration
by Belkis Toredi

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I NEVER FORGET the first day my younger daughter came home from school in Canada saying to me "Mum, I will never have friends here! When my international friends are gone, I will be lonely!" It was a great shock to me! Since she studied at a very outstanding high school in our native country, my husband and I did not want her to seek an international education in another country. School is not just about academics. The other aspects are important too, such as making friends and having social experiences. Though terrified by my daughter's panic, I managed to keep calm trusting that she could soon make friends, which turned out to be true.

To my daughter's advantage, she had a robust English foundation program in Turkey, which enabled her to eliminate the language barrier. Being friendly by nature, she was not discouraged by seeing friends in groups and always did her best to initiate interaction. Since she was comfortable with language and academic demands, and had some experience with Canadian culture in advance, she was able to cope with her only challenge, which was the social one. Although she had a very

smooth transition, she still says she wished there had been activities that aimed to facilitate interaction between the international and domestic students at her school.

From a parent's perspective, I believe we managed the decision-making and pre-arrival stage very well. Having been unwilling for her to leave her outstanding educational experience in Turkey, my husband and I drew quite a vivid picture of her possible challenges, including the social ones. We come from a generally collectivistic society, and we warned her that she might not find the taste of her intimate friendship style that she had become used to in Turkey when she was in Canada. However, it was a deal she was willing to make, and she seemed to be ready to face all the challenges she might come across. She has always done her best to adapt and so far so good!

Coming with different orientations to seek education abroad, international students have some common challenges regarding this endeavour. The language barrier, cultural barrier, and

campus environment are the most significant areas of struggle they may encounter. The transition stage is quite a complex dynamic, and it takes place in intellectual, personal, cultural, and social settings. Institutions typically offer specialized support for international students to support them as they overcome the language barrier and to smooth the academic and cultural transition. As for the struggles in social settings, students are usually left at their own capacity, and there might be a big gap between international students and the local students and community. Currently, the pandemic has pulled all of us apart from one another and has limited our interaction to the virtual world. Without any doubt we will get back to our old days and students will start sharing campus settings again, and the issue of a lack of interaction will prevail if we do not put forward any initiatives to support social interaction.

> We are hardwired to connect with others, it is what gives purpose and meaning to our lives, and without it there is suffering.
>
> —Brené Brown

As teachers of English as an additional language (EAL), all of us do our best to assist and guide our students to realize their goals for their target language acquisition. If we are at an international institution in a host country, we have to keep in mind that we are not only teaching language skills, grammar, and vocabulary, we also have a responsibility and an opportunity to facilitate our students' academic, cultural, and social integration into the community. When structuring our lesson plans we should seek ways of initiating and encouraging our students to connect with the host community. In particular, students who take EAL courses may be subject to language barriers since their level of English does not enable them skip these courses, which also makes them a candidate for cultural and social struggles, which might end up with their dropping out. Bearing in mind the reciprocal relationship between the language and culture, it is a good idea to take advantage of our roles as facilitators in overcoming the students' social challenges.

Another important gap I observe regarding the social transition process of international students is their pre-arrival experience.

It seems like there are not enough effective strategies generated and applied to address this stage with the aim of facilitating their future endeavours in the host culture. One possible solution to this challenge may be found in our virtual experiences during the pandemic, which can be turned into an advantage to come up with virtual connection initiatives that address students' pre-arrival stage.

Reflecting on my own experiences with the international students that I have served as an international recruitment agent, I can confidently say that coaching them before they come to Canada has a facilitating effect in their education journey. I coach them to gain clarity about their strengths and areas of improvement, to set their personal, academic, and social goals for their whole education experience, and to come up with their own coping strategies regarding the possible challenges that they might encounter. As somebody experienced living in Canada, I raise awareness about the possible culture shock they might go through by creating a realistic picture of their experience in Canada, which saves them time and energy to focus on their academic and social goals. Coming with self-agency and having competency for language skills is crowned with social integration in the host community, which makes an international student's experience quite satisfactory and efficient by meeting basic psychological needs.

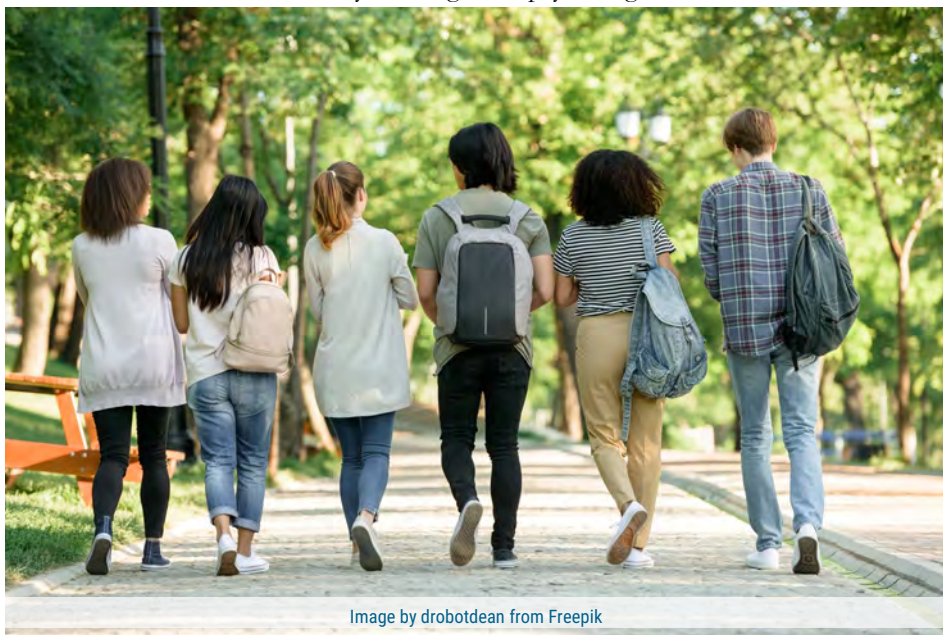Image by drobotdean from Freepik

Belkis Toredi, MA, is an EAL teacher, International Coach Federation (ICF) accredited professional coach, and the founder of an international student recruitment agency. Being passionate about working with international students and facilitating their learning journey, she is enhancing her professional development as an MEd student at UBC's Okanagan School of Education.

Which Wins the "Resiliency Award" Our Situations or Us?

by Jasnoor Grewal Kulaar

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LEARNING AND PERSISTING during the pandemic have come with their own dividends and tests. Some consider this time as a rare opportunity to slow down, evaluate, and act, while others struggle to cope. Whether it be teaching or being taught, the field of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) hasn't been immune to the effects of the variation in teaching and learning worldwide. Here's something to consider as we evolve in these unprecedented times.

We are born with a brain but develop the mind once we start interacting with and become affected by the environment around us—this interaction includes everything one can think of, and far beyond it. Our body and mind send signals via our actions, behaviours, irrupting thoughts, or feelings in many different ways to like, dislike, doubt, trust, need, want, protect, let go, worry, think over, give a second chance, stick back, and hold up in response to stimuli. As much as we may agree to this, we might not always be ready to admit and act accordingly when it's game time—the moments demanding action. If we find it hard to let go of our ego, accept a new truth, and be ready to make the necessary change, then situations get the better of us and certainly take home what I call the "Resiliency Award." I often think what appreciation one may give to oneself for hanging in there, and figure it must have to do with resilience. We usually want to try our best, but there are times when we can't keep up, get tired, are hurt or hurt others with unkind comments, and feel like giving up. At those times, do these situations that challenge us win?

As much as our social, psychological, behavioural, physiological, and anatomical aspects make us look like the most intelligent species on Earth, there could be uncertainty if this is true and whether this is always going to be true. Just because the evidence otherwise hasn't yet been proven, doesn't mean there isn't any. Maybe it's time to show some kindness to every creation on Earth, including ourselves. Put another way, change is a law of nature, and nothing can be written in stone. Taking ourselves, our blessings, and our society for granted, and venting grievances on others may not be the best plan. Keeping a closed mind, for ourselves or others, might hit us hard at some point. We stumble all the time, more than we know. This stumbling, in no sense, means we should not fight for our values or loved ones because this fighting is exactly what one should do, but not at the expense of resilience, rationale, receptiveness, and needless to say, opportunities to improve.

Flexibility is an attribute of a learner, and forgiveness that of the great. Companies pay thousands of dollars to their strategic planners who, among other duties, work to foresee a possible problem or impactfully react if one has already occurred. When such situations arise, these people put in their best reasoning and knowledge to mitigate most risks and handle a situation in ways to reduce as much negative impact as possible. They don't take offence or consider their feelings hurt if they were unable to see something coming with the given information. Instead, they focus their resources on to what could be done next to fix a situation and take notes for the future. If we understand this concept on a professional front, why are we sometimes so hard on others and ourselves?

No one can be perfect or flawless. We tend to forget this. When we do, frustration and anger are usually channelled in ways that bring the least good to any party involved. Often times, we land in a situation comprising someone who could absolutely give us a run for our money. It's hard to tolerate such people, I know, but all they do is let situations take control and keep the reasoning parts of our brains from thinking

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before acting. Most of us regret decisions taken in the heat of the moment to some extent or the other.

So, what can we do? It depends. We can find strategies or thoughts that are worthier than the negative situation in which we might find ourselves. It could be the reasons or people with whom it's best not to invest in conversations that won't go anywhere. It could be as simple as counting to five before reacting, or not reacting at all in the moment. Many people like to increase their levels of tolerance by meditating. Does that mean sitting by a lake and listening to the sounds of nature? Not necessarily. Meditating could be as simple as thinking about something or someone you admire, doing art, cooking, baking, breathing deeply, listening to music, or dancing. Meditation could be any activity that helps us feel and show a positive emotion by increasing the release of the happy hormones in our bodies, namely serotonin, dopamine, and oxytocin. One of my students once said that she would like to invent an easy happy pill that could initiate the release of such hormones instantly. Her thought advocates the fact that we see others' sadness and don't want to hurt them, but sometimes situations, and thus our feelings, could make us do negative things that we may have never wanted to do in the first place. It becomes problematic when the ship sails, and we can't do anything to revert our behaviours.

As humans, we have a "gift" of regret and feeling bad about what we have done after losing to situations that we gave too much power to. No one said life shall be smooth, but we could try training our minds to stay calm and collected. Habits take time to build but once they do, they become our second nature and keep playing roles in the background without us having to make much effort. Let's try making staying calm and thinking before reacting as habits of ours, truly realizing that to err is human, and that forgiveness and change could sometimes be the only ways out. No plan will be foolproof in this quest, but it will sure be worth feeding our souls.

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Meditating could be as simple as thinking about something or someone you admire, doing art, cooking, baking, breathing deeply, listening to music, or dancing.

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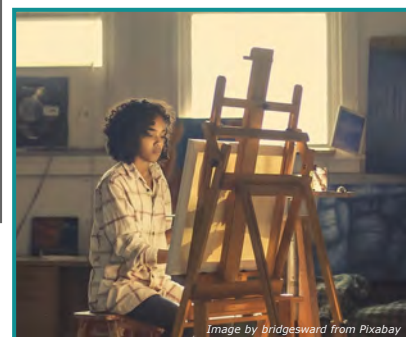
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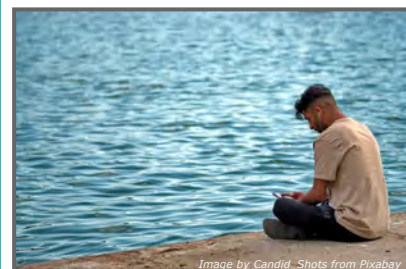
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Surviving through Uncertainties: Perceptions and Experiences of Chinese EAL Learners in First-Year Composition Courses

by Jing Mao

THE FOLLOWING is a short report based on my doctoral project, which explores the perceptions and practices of Chinese English as an additional language (EAL) learners in their first-year composition courses at a west-coast university in Canada. I carried out this study because EAL learners' specific needs and strengths in academic writing are generally not fully recognized nor appropriately supported by mainstream composition faculty, given the increased enrolment and presence of EAL learners in Canadian institutions.

The Academic Writing Challenges of EAL Learners

Since English functions as the dominant language for academic communication and scholarship globally, writing efficiently and appropriately in English is extremely important and often poses challenges for students who learn English as an additional language (EAL) (Hyland, 2013). Among the factors that influence academic studies of EAL learners in Canadian post-secondary institutions, language proficiency, educational and cultural differences, as well as communication with instructors and peers are the most frequently cited factors that impact EAL students' academic performance. For example, Zhang and Zhou's (2010) study involving 76 international Chinese graduate and undergraduate students at a Canadian university has shown students' lack of oral and written communication abilities were factors that contributed to preventing their academic success. Therefore, understanding EAL learners' challenges in academic studies became a research focus.

Although informative, some studies have emphasized EAL learners' perceived or actual deficient language proficiencies and how these deficits can negatively impact their academic success. More recently, a few studies have commented on the drawbacks of focusing exclusively on the writing challenges of EAL learners and, instead, have examined students' holistic experiences from a sociocultural orientation (e.g., Heng, 2018; Morton, Storch, & Thompson, 2015). Aligned with this scholarship, this study argues that EAL learners exhibit learner agency in response to challenges encountered. In accordance with van Lier (2008), this study defines agency as the capacity to act, which is "mediated by social, interactional, cultural, institutional, and other contextual factors" (p. 171). It is important to understand the role of agency played in the process of students' language learning and socialization.

The Study

This study focused on a required course named "academic reading and writing" that nearly every undergraduate completes in their first year. I conducted semi-structured interviews with both student participants and writing faculty, as well as collected related course documents and students' writing assignments (voluntarily submitted) during a four-month period in the 2019 Fall semester. This study focused on two central questions: How do EAL learners navigate their academic writing studies? And, what factors mediate their academic socialization process? After familiarizing myself with the contents of interviews, I then transcribed and coded qualitative data into emerging themes.

Findings

A thematic analysis of my research data (Braun & Clarke, 2006) revealed the important theme of enacting learner agency. Analysis of participants' perceptions and experiences showed that they were not only aware of the various challenges they have encountered, but also exhibited their agency in negotiating the requirements of their writing assignments as well as their interactions with instructors and native English-speaking peers. Their agency plays a crucial role in socializing themselves into the academic writing practices, opportunities, and interactions they need to become first-year novice writers. Since both internal and external factors contribute to their academic socialization process, four salient sub-themes emerged regarding how learner agency manifested:

Aligning awareness and actions in response to challenges. When entering their composition courses, most participants felt overwhelmed and challenged by the prospect of completing their assignments since "everything felt new" to them. When confronted with demanding levels of English language proficiency, complex assigned readings, and writing assignments, this study found that students were not only aware of such challenges but also sought support from their surrounding environment. According to an ecological perspective, once learners recognize learning opportunities, which vary for different learners, they could begin to act on the available resources. For example, when asked about difficulties in her composition course, one participant responded, "I met challenges every day, but I took them as opportunities to learn

from" (First Interview, September 2019). Echoing this response, other participants reported that they too were aware of their challenging situation at an earlier time and developed a proactive attitude towards learning from uncertainty.

Negotiating differences and bridging gaps. A fundamental aspect that contributed to the barriers identified by participants were gaps in terms of their academic preparedness. Since most students who graduated from high schools in China had not taken any composition courses or had limited access to essay writing (such as IELTS preparation), EAL learners struggled with interpreting and completing their written assignments, such as conducting a genre analysis. In order to compensate for such gaps, participants devoted more time and energy to course content, and addressed the differences between prior writing experiences and familiarizing themselves with the local conventions for academic writing.

Seeking resources beyond the first-year composition classrooms. Echoing Anderson's (2016) study on external and internal resources for socialization, which focused on EAL learners at the doctoral level, this study found that students exhibit a strong agentive role in employing sources and resources to develop their academic writing and socialization experiences. Beyond their interactions with composition instructors, other resources included one-on-one tutoring at the writing centre, soliciting peer support, attending workshops, and employing online tools. These types of interactions with external sources resulted in academic socialization that featured a stronger awareness of academic conventions and improved writing practices.

Sense of control in decision making and modification of coping strategies. Students' academic socialization processes are not only mediated by external agents and resources (such as instructors or tutors at the writing centre), but are also internally mediated or self-directed (Anderson, 2017). In the process of self-directed socialization, learner agency of participants in this study was manifested as making informed decisions and modifying coping strategies when navigating their composition studies. For instance, a participant displayed agency by refusing to follow his instructor's advice to withdraw from his course and, instead, decided to stay on and devote his efforts to seeking help beyond the classroom. He took a strong agentive stance by being proactive in his composition studies, which facilitated his socialization process.

Discussion and Recommendations

As discussed above, the learner agency of EAL students is manifested in several ways, which play a critical role in the process of impacting their academic writing practices and socialization. However, the effect of an enactment of learner agency is complex and unpredictable. For composition instructors and administrators, simply acknowledging EAL learners' specific language needs is not enough: it is important for composition faculty to acknowledge EAL learners' resourcefulness and the various ways that students negotiate their writing expectations. This study recommends EAL educators create an agency-building environment by optimizing learning conditions, reforming curriculum options, reflecting on writing tasks design, and respecting students' choices.

Conclusion

Learner agency is an important concept for understanding EAL students' perceptions and experiences in a holistic way. In this study, participants' enactment of learner agency can either facilitate or impede EAL learners' academic writing and their socialization process. Although there are a variety of factors (both individual and contextual) that dynamically impact EAL students' displays of agency, it is worth noting that EAL students experience both challenges and successes in their academic writing trajectories in keeping with their English-as-native-language peers in mainstream composition classrooms.
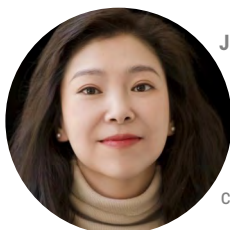
Jing Mao currently is a PhD candidate at the University of Victoria. Her research focuses on academic writing, EAL students, and (second) language socialization. Before immigrating to Canada in 2015, she had taught EAL students for eight years at the post-secondary level in China. She has presented at the BC TEAL conference and holds a TESOL certificate.

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Exploring Culturally Responsive Social Emotional Learning in Study Abroad Programs

by Yukie Ueda

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE social-emotional learning (SEL) could support the development of youth in many situations around the world. From my own experience of being an English as an additional language (EAL) student and from my experience supporting international students, I have noticed how significant it is for students to feel part of the host community by contributing their lived experiences and knowledge to it. After coming to Canada, my partner and I started working to develop a study abroad program that is unique to this beautiful land of British Columbia. Learning the

2019). Used by a growing number of educators, its effects both in promoting students' well-being and improving their learning outcomes are well-demonstrated by many studies. Some aspects of SEL, such as caring for emotions and creating a positive learning environment, resonated with what I found especially impactful in my learning experience as an EAL student. Moreover, while I supported international students studying in Japan, it was a vital part of my practice to create as many opportunities as possible for the students to interact with local people and get involved in the local communities. Therefore,

Photo courtesy of the author.

concept of SEL and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) recently, I am fascinated by their positive impacts on international students' learning. Introducing those concepts, I want to explore the potential applications of integrating those concepts into a study abroad program to create meaningful international student experiences.

ENCOUNTERING SEL

Although I was relatively new to the term SEL, it didn't take long to become fascinated with its concept. SEL is defined as a process through which students understand and manage emotions, feel empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (CASEL,

when I came to know that the SEL framework also appreciates building supportive community partnerships, I was excited to learn further about this approach. I believe SEL will help to comprehensively explain my beliefs in supporting international students and developing a study abroad program.

THE LINK BETWEEN SEL AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY

At the same time, I became interested in how SEL relates to CRP. CRP is defined as "using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" (Gay, 2002,

p. 106). This approach encourages educators to positively view each learner's lived experience and knowledge as a learning resource. Again, as an international student, the positive impact of being accepted for my own cultural identity was undoubted. Moreover, I witnessed many of my student who faced change to be full of confidence and vibrancy in the moment they found that their unique perspectives and experiences were positively perceived by the members of the local community. Therefore, I am interested in learning the link between CRP and SEL, especially how they are translated into practice in educational settings in Canada, where students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds often share the same learning space. I started to delve into the topic around the integration of SEL and CRP by searching past studies. As I went through the scholarly literature, I came across the recognition that early approaches were "oriented around the idea of teaching or fixing children rather than examining the cultural contexts surrounding them" (Donahue-Keegan, 2019, p. 154). However, more recent approaches see the important of understanding the wider context and having a strengths-based mindset (Donahue-Keegan, 2019). Therefore, integrating SEL with CRP to create culturally responsive SEL should help educators develop strength-based mindsets by recognizing and utilizing students' unique backgrounds as their assets in their learning.

EXAMPLES OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SEL

So how is culturally responsive SEL put into practice? Looking into past studies, I learned that various types of culturally responsive SEL have been practiced in different parts of the world and have been proven to improve student wellbeing, boost academic performance, and alleviate externalized issues. For example, a mindfulness program based on Buddhist philosophy for Asian adolescent students effectively decreased students' stress levels and developed critical life skills (Le & Trieu, 2016). An SEL-based substance abuse prevention program that incorporates Latino families' parenting values also demonstrated more substantial effects compared to when the prevention program was implemented by itself (Marsiglia et al., 2016). Throughout my inquiry, I learned of many positive outcomes of the culturally responsive SEL approach.

APPLICATION IN STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS

One application of the culturally responsive SEL to study abroad programs is to create a place where international students can use their knowledge and experience to contribute to the host community. Contributing one's experience and knowledge seems to be significant in promoting one's positive self-perception as it shows students that their knowledge and experience are valued. Moreover, the act of leaving one's culture and ideas in the host community also involves including a part of themselves in the community, which seems to give students a greater sense of community. For example, I learned about a project in which international students from Japan were involved in creating marketing strategies for a local retail/winery during their short-term study abroad program (Douglas, 2020). It did not only promote international students' learning from the hosting community, but also provided the opportunities for them to contribute their knowledge to the host community. This experience helped those students to have authentic interactions with local people, enriching the study-abroad program.

While the pandemic has dramatically changed the nature of study abroad programs this year, I believe that culturally responsive SEL has the potential to facilitate authentic interactions between international students and local people in communities. This winter, I started an online project to connect students at an elementary school in my hometown in Hokkaido, Japan, with people living in Canada. It has just started, but eventually I hope to expand it using a culturally responsive SEL approach where students from both Canada and Japan can reflect on and discover the value of their experiences and perspectives, as well as the assets of the communities in which they are rooted, and exchange with each other. I hope that a culturally responsive SEL will open up new possibilities for study abroad programs.

Yukie Ueda, after graduating from the University of Victoria, spent over four years in Japan and one year in New Zealand helping international students in their adaptation processes and additional language learning. She moved to Canada in 2018 to start a company with her husband to provide language and cultural learning programs for Japanese students.

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Navigating the Local Labour Market: Skills that Help Immigrant Job Seekers
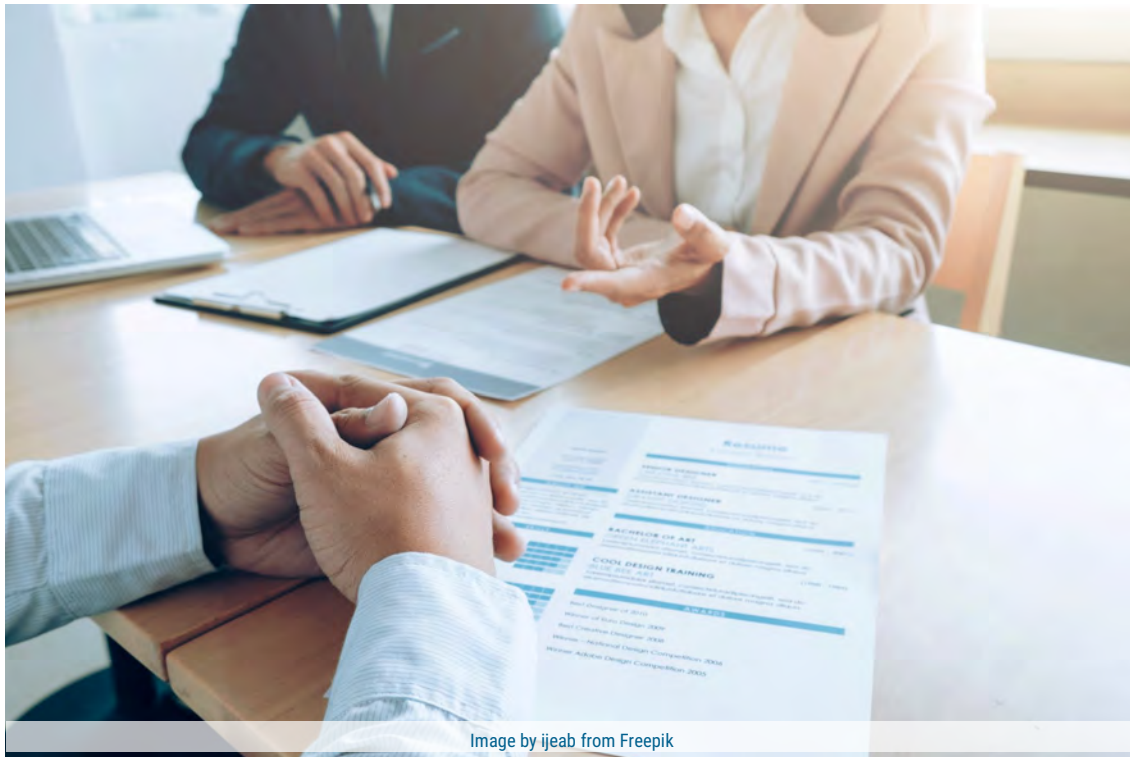
by Ziwei Vera Wu

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TRANSITION OF EMPLOYMENT is one of the most significant transitions in the life of newcomers. They can be a student in a post-secondary institution, a learner in an immigrant language program, or a skilled immigrant worker looking for a job. No matter in what context teachers and other members of the community are supporting immigrants with their transitions, the challenges of underemployment, social barriers, and mismatching of qualifications and skills are shared among individuals who have immigrated and are seeking work in Canada. Thus, being able to support learners in ways accessible within the scopes of practice and level of resource access may help to make learning more meaningful and impactful.

Navigating Local Labour Markets

As a matter of fact, it would be hard to understand the local labour market without spending a couple weeks or even months watching for changes and trends while browsing job postings. It takes time as well as good research skills to know where to look and what to look for. Excellent skills in reading and identifying key information would be a great asset when reviewing labour market reports and job postings to identify patterns. Last but not least, navigating the local labour market is an ongoing learning process, especially with the significant and unpredictable impacts of the pandemic.

Staying Locally Informed

In addition to local labour market research, the various programs, policies, services, and events in the local community would also provide support and insights into potential opportunities. For example, with the impacts of COVID-19 to employment, there are many programs and resources specifically located to support employment of immigrants, including potential training opportunities and supports to search or start a job. Building connections with local people, services, and resources not only benefits the job search of immigrants but also supports them to integrate with the local community.

Identifying and Articulating Transferable Skills

Job applications can vary greatly depending on the industries and local cultures. Instead of having a comprehensive understanding of candidates through their applications, employers typically focus on specifically whether a candidate has the qualifications they're looking for. For many Canadian employers, the skills and qualifications of a candidate are invisible unless they are clearly identified in the resume and cover letter. What makes job applications even more challenging is the lack of recognition of international work experience in Canada. EAL professionals with international

experience may notice similar challenges coming to Canada despite their residency status.

Assuming it's true that a recruiter takes less than 10 seconds to decide whether to toss out a resume (O'Donnell, 2018), employers would not have time to think that a candidate must work well with people in a retail environment if they have taught elementary school students to write before coming to Canada. In this situation, if someone has taught writing, for example, in an elementary school, while applying for a retail job, it is more effective to identify "excellent communication skills with diverse populations" than say "I taught writing." Identifying and articulating only the skills and tasks relevant to the new job would make an application more effective.

Having an Open Mind
Depending on the economies of local communities, some skilled immigrant workers may find similar work to what they used to do while some of them may not be able to find work in their fields and require a significant career change for various reasons, such as lack of opportunity in the local labour market, different education and training requirements, non-transferable certifications, or different ways and systems of operations in the industries.

However, skills and experience can still be transferable; it is a matter or how these skills can transfer to the local context. It is important to assess what is available locally. While sometimes it means to identify and articulate transferable skills, other times it may also mean newcomers temporarily setting aside a fixed professional identity and seeing what they can offer and who can use their amazing skills. There may be other great local opportunities outside of their original professions. It takes an open mind and creativity to come up with realistic employment ideas according to the local labour market needs.

Understanding Career Trajectories
Unfortunately, immigrant workers are more likely to be under-employed (Guerrero & Rothstein, 2012) because they usually have to rebuild their careers again from the most accessible level of jobs. For example, one might be a school teacher and find their qualifications unrecognized in BC. The most accessible jobs, depending on the local economy, may be community support workers, school administrators, or even babysitters. As they accumulate more financial resources, they may acquire local certifications to advance their careers. The good news is that career paths are not linear; one may start as a babysitter and somehow find a different career they are passionate about. Lastly, people shouldn't jump into a job, or over hesitate about an opportunity. While being intentional and planning ahead, it is also scary but important to "put yourself out there" and start the journey.

Supporting Learners who are Newcomers
As EAL teachers, the most accessible way to support immigrant learners would be teaching the necessary language skills. Navigating job markets requires English skills in researching, reading, and gathering information. The intention to improve language skills for navigating local labour markets may motivate learners and help them see the relevance of their learning while supporting their job search indirectly.

Another skill set teachers can aim for is communication skills in learners' specific professional and social contexts. Many newcomers can feel uncomfortable or even awkward in social environments, even when they are proficient in the English language, which may prevent them from staying locally connected and informed. Having good communication skills would boost their confidence, help them perform in job interviews, and feel comfortable to ask for what they need in order to succeed in the workplace.

Regarding writing skills, the job search may make learning more meaningful. For example, letter writing might seem to be irrelevant when many people use social media and texting instead. However, cover letters, which essentially are argumentative letters one writes to try to convince employers of their qualifications, can significantly increase the chance of getting interviews, even for entry level jobs. In many work-places, the ability to write clear and professional emails or messages is also essential.

The experiences of immigrants include many complex layers of transitions, such as social, professional, psychological, and identity transitions. These complex layers require teachers to be kind and support their learners with realistic, relevant goals and expectations in the local context.

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References:

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BCTEAL
TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

One-Year Plan
June 2020 – May 2021

OUR GOAL
To provide professional development opportunities and a supportive community to our membership of EAL professionals and institutions.

PRIORITIES and OBJECTIVES

MEMBERSHIP
Improve our understanding of our members.
Provide opportunities for engagement and volunteering.
Provide excellent networking and development opportunities.
Ensure members see value in their membership.

ENGAGEMENT
Develop and implement an effective communication plan.
Ensure our website is dynamic.
Engage regularly with our members.

POLICY & ADVOCACY
Effectively implement our Respectful Interactions Guidelines.
Assess the needs of people in the EAL field.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Ensure responsiveness to the needs of members, regions, and sectors.
Offer high-value professional development opportunities.
Provide relevant learning opportunities in the settlement language sector.
Generate income through both PD activities and sponsorship.

GOVERNANCE & FINANCES
Ensure effective governance.
Clarify roles and responsibilities.
Streamline operations to cut costs.
Replace lost revenue through online PD activities.

PUBLICATIONS
Support ongoing teacher development through the publication of timely blog posts, interesting newsletter articles, and scholarly journal papers.

COLLABORATION
Demonstrate relevance within our field.
Partner on creative adaptations during COVID-19 and beyond.

OUR VALUES
COMMUNITY | SUPPORT | INCLUSION | COLLABORATION | FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

DESIRED OUTCOMES

MEMBER TEACHERS will feel like valued contributors to community and understand how best to apply their skills during these times of change.

ALL MEMBERS (teachers, administrators, principals, etc.) will find community, positive support, and encouragement; feel valued and free to contribute; grow professionally and pedagogically; and feel a strong sense of professional identity.

THE EAL COMMUNITY will recognize BC TEAL's contribution and support to its members.