



Alberta Teachers of English
as a Second Language

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Ad: ATESL Newsletter Editor

JUNE 2017

www.atesl.ca

President's Report

The warm weather is finally here, and I hope everyone is getting a chance to enjoy the long days and bright sun! Along with the weather, conference planning is heating up! Thanks to all our hard-working team members, it looks like it will be an exciting event. Make sure to get your proposal in and registration booked!

This month, the ATESL board and Advocacy committee hosted its first Town Hall event. The purpose of the Town Hall was to give members an opportunity to help ensure ATESL is representing them by sharing their thoughts on what issues ATESL should be working on and their thoughts on the role of ATESL and its advocacy arm. Thank you to all those who attended. For those of you who could not make it, we will be sending out a summary and there will be other opportunities to attend future Town Halls.

Our Interprovincial Counterpart committee is off and running. We have formed a group on Tutela and meet online 4 times a year with impromptu meetings to discuss issues that impact the field across Canada. Collaborating and communicating with other Provincial TESL Boards is a great way to ensure that we know what is happening in other regions and are sharing opportunities, concerns, and ideas.

Hopefully by now you have all had an opportunity to check out the new website. If you have not had a chance yet, I encourage you to go to <https://www.atesl.ca> to see the new page and our new logo. The website is much easier to navigate and presents a more streamlined look. Thank you, Wendy Chambers and Irene Wood, for leading this project.

I hope everyone has a wonderful summer, and I look forward to seeing you in the fall at the conference.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Rochman

President-elect Report

Zaniness, zest and ZEAL at the 50th Anniversary of BC TEAL

Our neighbours to the west sure know how to throw a conference! That particular verb was intentionally chosen because this iteration of the BC TEAL Conference was definitely not simply *hosted* or *held*; it was a party atmosphere from the opening carnival to the closing cake.

Our friends at BC TEAL offered a complimentary conference registration for one ATESL board member, and I am so glad that I was the lucky one that got to go!



Unfortunately, I missed the pre-conference sessions on Thursday. However, maybe it was a good thing, as it would have been nearly impossible to choose which sessions to attend. All three keynote speakers were presenting alongside an already amazing line-up of presenters, including ATESL's own Yuji Abe, who was invited to introduce ATESL's Intercultural Communicative Competence Project, including the e-book *Enhancing Intercultural Communicative Competence* (available at [atesl.ca](https://www.atesl.ca)).



I arrived in Vancouver in time to catch Jill Hadfield's captivating keynote in the late afternoon, and I stayed on into the night sampling the carnival fare (cotton candy, popcorn, sausage, etc.), carnival games (ring toss, balloon burst, fishing game, etc.), and the delicious craft beer from Strange Fellows Brewing. What a wonderful way to kick off the 50th Anniversary of the BC TEAL Conference!

In addition to all the fun, there was no shortage of quality sessions at BC TEAL! Ironically, the first session I attended ("Digital Citizenship for Adult Newcomers") was given by ATESL's very own Bonnie Nicholas. Actually, I must have an innate radar for ATESL folks because I also ended up attending Amy Abe's session on "An Indigenous Strategy in the ESL Classroom". Both sessions were riveting and very well received! Way to represent ATESL! Of course, I saw many great presentations from BC TEAL members, too. 😊 One of the many highlights was the plenary talk given by Andy Curtis.

Jill Hadfield and Penny Ur also gave wonderfully engaging talks. What a fantastic line-up of invited speakers! The Ed Tech Jam was also amazing - bursting with energy and hungry souls looking for the latest educational technology to bring into their classrooms.

Friday ended with a scrumptious dinner prepared by Tayybeh, a catering business started by a group of Syrian refugees.



During the three-day schedule of top notch sessions, I was able to rub elbows with Joe Dobson, BC TEAL President; James Papple, TESL Ontario President; and Judy Sillito, TESL Canada President.

A huge thank you for the warm hospitality goes to the entire BC TEAL Board with special thanks to Joe Dobson; Michael Galli, BC TEAL Past President; and Nathan Hall, BC TEAL Social Media Chair.

Of course, as a repeat conference co-chair myself, I would be remiss not to thank and congratulate the BC TEAL Conference co-chairs, Shawna Williams and Heather Barclay, on an amazing job! BC TEAL, congratulations on your 50th anniversary, and thank you for putting on such a unique and entertaining conference. ATESL wishes you another 50 successful years! We also look forward to welcoming BC TEAL members to our conference in October.

Respectfully submitted by Chris Wharton

ATESL 2017 Conference Report

Planning for the ATESL 2017 conference is well underway. Thanks to the hard-working conference planning committee, we have plenty of great news and updates to share.

The ATESL 2017 conference will take place October 20th to 21st at the Westin located in downtown Calgary. The conference theme is *Expanding Possibilities: Diversity and Innovation*. We are very pleased to announce the [keynote speakers](#) are Dr. Bonny Norton (University of British Columbia), Dr. Darren Lund (University of Calgary), and Dr. Greg Kessler (Ohio University). Dr. Norton is well known for her research in the area of language and identity, Dr. Lund will be speaking about diversity, and Dr. Kessler will be talking about technology in the ESL classroom. In addition to their keynote talks, each will be conducting workshops. Dr. Norton will present on Friday morning, Dr. Lund on Friday after lunch, and Dr. Kessler on Saturday morning.

The call for presentations remains open until June 19th, so don't delay in submitting your proposal! Plan to share



Alberta Teachers of English
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2016 – 2017

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Dr. Tracey Derwing,

Theresa Wall,

Stacy Norrbom

Advocacy Committee Members

Irene Wood

Business Manager

your teaching ideas, resources, or research with your colleagues at the conference. For more details about the call for presentations, visit <https://www.atesl.ca/conference/welcome/>



Registration for the conference is now open. For conference rates and to access to the online registration system, click [here](#). For the first time in ATESL conference history, we are working on details to accommodate Deaf participants by offering ASL and/or CART services to delegates, as needed. Delegates are asked to indicate their preferred service when registering for the conference.

ATESL has special room rates with the Westin Calgary, the conference venue. Be sure to book early to take advantage of the special rates that are only available until September 29th. To book, modify or cancel a reservation, visit Westin's [online reservation system](#).

In addition to a jam-packed schedule of excellent professional development sessions that ATESL conference delegates have come to know, this year's conference features the [Educational Technology Summit](#). This special event is a collaborative initiative organized by ATESL and BC TEAL. It will take place concurrently with the regular conference sessions on Saturday, October 21st.

Publishers and exhibitors have begun registering for the conference. Those wishing to secure a table are encouraged to register early, as they will have the first opportunity to choose the location of their display. Download the [publisher letter](#) and [registration form](#) here.

For those organizations interested in sponsoring the conference, you can download the [Sponsorship Invitation](#) to see the great opportunities available and to see the benefits your organization will enjoy as a valued sponsor. Please feel free to contact the Sponsorship committee chair at sponsorship@atesl.ca should you have any questions.

The conference planning committee meets again on June 23rd at the Westin Hotel.

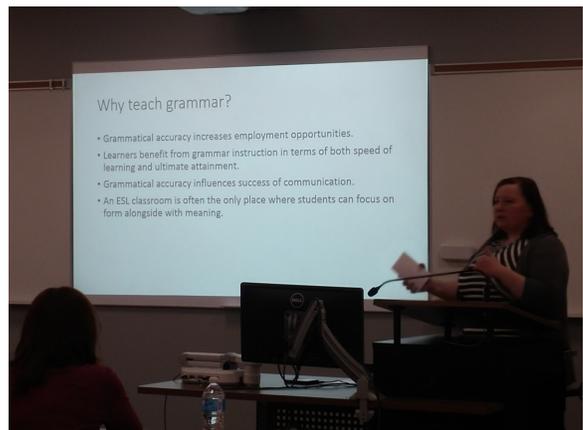
Respectfully submitted by:
Wendy Chambers and Chris Wharton, ATESL 2017
Conference Co-chairs

Edmonton Local

Past Meeting: The Edmonton Local meeting on April 28, 2017 took place at NAIT. Galyna Ozarko presented on The Role of Aptitude in Teaching Grammar. There were 22 attendees from seven different institutions. Attendees entered the draw for a free registration for the upcoming ATESL Edmonton Mini-Conference in May (only applicable for ATESL members). Congratulations to Sunita Gurung from Bredin on winning free registration!

2017 Mini Conference: This year's ATESL mini-conference was held on Saturday, May 27th in Edmonton at NorQuest College. The theme for the mini-conference was "Enhancing Teaching with Technology". With technology becoming more and more prevalent in our lives, it is advantageous to discover the different ways in which technology can be included in our classrooms. In addition, using technology will strengthen not only students' digital skills, but teachers' digital skills as well. The day included four different sessions covering various tech tools that could easily be incorporated into your classroom, such as Google Classroom, Kahoot, Cram, EdPuzzle, Flip Quiz, other online apps, and so much more!

Submitted by Elina Stop and Janet Kwong



Central Alberta Report

The Central Alberta Chapter presented two PD sessions recently, in March and in April. Anna Morgan-Wold presented a fascinating look at memory, and how we acquire and retain information, particularly language. Her presentation generated much discussion and pushed us to look at how our students learn, and our expectations for them, a little differently. In April, Heather Frayjo did a reprise of her 2015 Canada TESL conference session *Creative Connections*. Her premise was that students will learn and retain more if all senses and all learning modalities are engaged. After presenting several examples, she challenged the participants to plan a mock class using her guidelines.

In May we moved away from our usual late afternoon format and experimented with a day-long workshop on May 24. We were excited to welcome Liette Wilson, Theresa Wall, and Esther Karasova to Red Deer, where they presented on literacy learners and their unique requirements. With the influx of refugees to our programs, many of whom are literacy learners, this workshop could not have been more timely.

Submitted by Anna Robertson and Elise Kruithof

Calgary Local Report

The last ICC workshop was conducted by Veena Zarour-Murthy at Mount Royal University in March. There were approximately 20 participants and the workshop proved to be quite engaging.

April's session was held at Centre for Newcomers and featured three different presentations. Tyler Elliott and Shelley McConnell from Bow Valley College spoke about peer mentoring. Chris Wharton and Jyoti Grewal shared a pilot project involving peer-led sessions aimed at increasing learner motivation as learners prepare to head into a main program. The last presenter, Nilay Thomas, looked at facilitating learners (CLB 4+) to make realistic and attainable academic and career goals through project-based learning.

In June, the Calgary ATESL local is looking at conducting two unique sessions. The first one will be an hour-long online session titled *Integrating #Edtech into Language Teaching and Learning*. Bonnie Nicholas from NorQuest

will share some ways to integrate technology into language teaching and learning and will share digital tools to use in the classroom and some resources for learning more about andragogy and ed tech. The second session *Cultural Identity: Icebergs and Ice breakers*, will be facilitated by Edi Casimirri and Andrea Scholes. Edi and Andrea will share a series of activities related to the topic of cultural identity and diversity for all levels of ELL learners. Members will then share their own ideas for cultural get-to-know-you activities, as well.

Submitted by Jyoti Grewal and Nadia Khan

Southern Alberta Report

The Southern Alberta Chapter of ATESL has been very active over the past few months. On March 29, 2017, the first event of the year was held for local teachers at the University of Lethbridge campus. The event, entitled "How can we address changing demographics in ESL classrooms? Insights and strategies for teaching diverse ESL learners," involved a panel discussion of local administrators and teachers working with refugee populations. The event was attended by over twenty educators and administrators from various institutions and school boards. Following the presentations of four panel discussants, there was rich discussion about evolving demographics in ESL classrooms and how this has changed educators' work. The event also provided a great opportunity for local second language educators to network with peers from other institutions.

On May 11, 2017 a second event for the chapter was held in Lethbridge, entitled "Bringing Context to the Classroom: Incorporating Soft Skills (Pragmatics) into ESL Instruction." The workshop, facilitated by South Alberta Rural Routes Regional Advisor, Alana Johnson, introduced the 15 attendees to the concept of pragmatics and how it can be incorporated into instruction in the ESL classroom. In addition to exploring the topic more generally, the workshop also introduced participants to various resources and provided practical exemplars of how pragmatics can be brought to life. Members of the teaching profession in southern Alberta would like to thank Alana Johnson and Rural Routes for providing such an informative, beneficial workshop!

Submitted by Greg Ogilvie

TESL Canada Report

TESL Canada aims to meet the professional needs of ESL educators across Canada.

The following is an update for ATESL members about the activities of TESL Canada since the March 2017 newsletter.

TESL Canada Office in Ottawa

In April 2017, the TESL Canada office moved to Ottawa. The physical office in the nation's capital will assist with national operations as well as build stronger ties with various Federal government departments.

Further Support of ESL Teachers and Program Administrators

To address recent school closures in BC, TESL Canada created a formal policy to address TESL Canada programs that experience a school shutdown / acquisition. For further information, please contact the TESL Canada office.

TESL Canada Innovation Awards

TESL Canada is excited to announce the first annual TESL Canada Innovation Awards to celebrate excellence, innovation and creativity in English language education printed and digital resources in Canada.

Winners of the awards were announced at the TESL Canada Conference Gala and Awards dinner on Friday, June 9th. If you have any questions about the TESL Canada Innovation Awards 2017, please e-mail innovationawards@tesl.ca.

TESL Canada Journal Call for Papers – Special Issue **Call for Papers: 2017 Special Issue of TESL Canada Journal - Formulaic Language in English language acquisition and teaching**

Extended Deadline: July 14, 2017

Please note the TESL Canada Journal is available online (Open Access): www.teslcanadajournal.ca.



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TESL Canada Educational Foundation

The TESL Canadian Educational Foundation is now funding three types of awards:

- Travel Grants valued at \$500 each.
- TESL Certificate Trainee Scholarships valued at \$500 each.
- TESL Teacher Complimentary Registration Awards.

ATESL generously offered to contribute an item to the TCEF Silent Auction to take place at the TESL Canada Conference Gala on June 9. Thank you, ATESL!

Did you know? You can direct your United Way Donation to the TESL Canadian Educational Foundation by indicating our charitable tax number on your donation form.

Development Opportunities

TESL Canada is actively searching for additional funding as a means of providing greater value to the membership. If you are aware of funding opportunities (grants etc.) or have ideas for TESL Canada on revenue generating opportunities, send them to officemanager@tesl.ca.

Professional Development Survey

TESL Canada is committed to providing professional development opportunities to its members. A survey link was emailed to members in April.

Thank you to all those who have provided feedback about your areas of interest and the types of PD opportunities that would benefit you the most.

Respectfully submitted by Kim Dudas, ATESL
Representative to TESL Canada



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Rural Routes Report

Some highlights from Rural Routes:

Rural Routes Online

With only a few sessions left, Rural Routes Online is winding down and will start up again in October. Our fall schedule will be available online in September. To learn more or to download your copy of the schedule, visit

<https://eslruralroutes.norquest.ca/services/online.aspx>.

Our latest workshop topics include:

Prep for Online Learning (Moodle Course)

The Preparation for Online Learning course is designed to equip adult English language learners in the CLB 4-8 range with digital literacy skills, online learning strategies, and associated vocabulary required to access and engage in online courses. This course and its accompanying instructor guide are available to ESL practitioners in Alberta. For more details, visit norquest.ca/online-learning. Rural Routes also has our own version of the Prep Online course. To learn more about it, go to <https://eslruralroutes.norquest.ca/services/workshops.aspx>.

"NEW" Foundations for teaching Pronunciation (4-6 hours)

In this hands-on workshop, participants will identify how and where to produce English vowel and consonant sounds, how to produce correct syllable and sentence stress, and how to plan a productive lesson cycle with effective activities. Participants will experience a variety of teaching techniques and lesson ideas that they can bring back to their own learners.

If you are interested in participating our workshops, connect with your local Regional Advisors: <https://eslruralroutes.norquest.ca/about-us/staff.aspx>. For a full list of available workshops, visit <https://eslruralroutes.norquest.ca/home.aspx>.

Finally, have you had the chance to take SATIE? By design, SATIE generates useful PD planning information for training priorities. It is an automated self-assessment tool for ESL programs and providers. To learn more, visit SATIE.norquest.ca.

Submitted by: Martha Urquhart (Rural Routes Representative) and Barb Hudkins (Manager, Rural Routes Initiative)

Bursary Report

Don't forget to apply for the ATESL Fall 2017 bursary! You may be eligible to receive up to \$500 dollars to support your professional development. For more information, check out the bursaries page of our website at <https://www.atesl.ca/membership/bursaries/>. The application deadline is September 15, 2017.

The ATESL bursary committee approved 3 applications for the maximum \$500 amount in Spring 2017. Two applications were to support conference attendance and one was to support graduate studies. One applicant had a change of life circumstances and kindly withdrew her application for support to attend a conference. A total of two bursaries were distributed. During these times of limited funding for professional development, the ATESL board is pleased to have the opportunity to support our members in their professional growth.

Submitted by Wendy Illott

Intercultural Communicative Competence Project Report

ATESL has completed a number of projects that have addressed intercultural communicative competence (ICC) over the past 5 years. ICC was first introduced as a section in the teaching resource, *ATESL Adult ESL Curriculum Framework* (Chambers, Gnida, Messaros, Illott, & Dawson, 2011). In 2014-2015, ATESL partnered with NorQuest College to undertake the research project, *Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) for TESL Instructors*. In 2016-2017, building from the findings of the research, ATESL, in partnership with Bow Valley College and NorQuest College, completed the development of a set of self-guided professional development materials designed to provide instructors with support to teach intercultural communicative competence in the ESL classroom.

In Fall 2016 and Spring 2017, a set of three 3-hour face-to-face workshops were held in both Edmonton and Calgary. Yuji Abe (NorQuest College) facilitated the Edmonton workshops and Veena Zarour-Murthy (Bow Valley College) facilitated the Calgary workshops. Yuji Abe also facilitated an ICC workshop at the BC TEAL conference in May 2017. If you missed the workshops, another will be held at the ATESL 2017 Conference taking place October 20th to 21st in Calgary.

The online self-guided professional development materials include a set of background readings and guiding questions, two narrated slide casts, and an e-book, *Enhancing Intercultural Communicative Competence: A Resource Based on the ATESL ESL Adult Curriculum Framework*. The background readings and guiding questions provide an orientation to approaches to intercultural communicative competence. The two slide casts were developed to reflect the content offered during the face-to-face workshops offered in Fall 2016 and Spring 2017. These materials provide an overview of the e-book and introduce important ICC issues and concepts. The e-book provides an in-depth look at four of the seven ICC strands introduced in the *ATESL Adult ESL Curriculum Framework*. Four ICC strands are the focus as these were identified in ATESL's previous research project as areas instructors reported not fully integrating into their instructional practice due to limited teaching resources. The e-book includes six chapters. Chapters 2 through 5 include an introduction, a slide cast, a self-assessment checklist, three 90-minute lesson plans, and supporting materials. All professional development materials are available on the ATESL website and are free to download from <https://www.atesl.ca/resources/enhancing-intercultural-communicative-competence/>. Also included online is a feedback survey. Once you have reviewed the professional development materials, please take a few minutes to complete the survey. Thank you in advance!

ATESL wishes to thank the outstanding project team, including Bow Valley College's Hana Taleb Imai and Veena Zarour-Murthy, as well as Yuji Abe and Cheryl Whitelaw from NorQuest College, for contributing their expertise, experience, knowledge, and time to the project. ATESL is also very grateful to the Government of Alberta for funding the project.

Respectfully submitted by Wendy Chambers



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Advocacy Committee Report

The Advocacy Committee met on May 10 to plan for the online Town Hall, which was held on May 17.

Although most of the meeting dealt with issues such as the platform we used (Zoom, which has audio, video and chat and is relatively inexpensive to use), we also discussed the process.

Also on May 10, Wendy Chambers indicated that she would draft a letter to Heritage Canada on behalf of the ATESL Board to ask them to consider using the CLB's as their framework, rather than CEFR. Tracey Derwing offered to assist.

A panel discussion involving directors from a wide range of programming was also discussed, and it was decided that Tracey and Wendy would put together a submission that Lisa would host at the upcoming ATESL conference. Lisa requested input on who is chosen to speak, because we want to ensure a wide range of programs are represented to give a sense of the complexity of the ESL offerings in Alberta.

The members of the Committee examined the new ATESL website and found it to be very useable and attractive.

The online Town Hall was held on May 17. All members of the Advocacy Committee were in attendance. Irene Wood managed the call and took minutes. The platform worked very well and is recommended for future meetings of this type. Not many members attended (fewer than had RSVP'd). Overall, seven members attended in addition to the Advocacy Committee and Irene. Lisa hosted the meeting, and after going over some ground rules, she invited people to raise issues of concern to them.

The primary issues were these:

- **CLB 4 and Citizenship.** One member brought up the problem for low proficiency, limited literacy learners, who are unlikely to ever attain citizenship under the new rules. Some individuals will never be able to achieve a level 4 and pass the citizenship test. Tracey indicated that in the past, people who had limited language skills were obliged to write and fail the citizenship test, but then they were accorded an oral interview with a judge or officer of the court. If the individual was perceived as having made an effort, he or she was granted citizenship. A return to this approach would at least allow everyone to have the opportunity to become citizens. Currently about a quarter of all people applying for citizenship fail the exam.
- **Where is the CCLB in Representing our Concerns?** A member asked about the CCLB, who she felt are not very visible these days. Wendy indicated that she is on the board of the CCLB and offered to respond on behalf of the CCLB if members need specific issues addressed.
- **Concerns about the Refugee Transportation Loan.** Lisa explained that ATESL initiated a letter writing campaign in the spring of 2016, and encouraged its membership and the membership of other provincial organizations to sign a formal petition, doing away with the transportation loan in early 2017. She indicated that ATESL will continue to work on this issue.
- **Awards/Charitable Foundation/Other.** It was suggested that the Advocacy Committee look into activities of other TESL organizations to see if there are ideas worth borrowing.
- **TESL Canada Communication over Certification.** A member asked if ATESL could mediate an issue she is having with TESL Canada. Lisa invited the individual to write offline with details so that the situation could be assessed.

The Advocacy Committee will meet on June 15 to discuss the issues raised at the Town Hall, and to plan further action.

Respectfully Submitted,
Tracey Derwing
Chair, Advocacy Committee

Perspectives on the Profession

Perspectives on the Profession is a column featuring articles contributed by ATESL past presidents and leading professionals in the field of English language teaching and learning. In this issue, Marian Rossiter offers a wealth of ideas for building our skills, knowledge, and expertise through a wide range of professional development opportunities.

Perspectives on the Profession

By Marian Rossiter



Since I began teaching adult ESL almost 40 years ago, the field has evolved significantly. I completed my TESL Diploma in England, where I was living at the time, as few courses were available in Alberta. There was little published research on teaching ESL available back then and, at what is now NorQuest College, we offered only a few ESL classes, which were relatively small in size.

We now have dozens of journals in our field reporting developments in second language research and pedagogy, and a variety of TESL education programs and professional associations, such as ATESL, to support our work. Large numbers of classes, from LINC to English for Specific Purposes, are available at a myriad of adult ESL programs in the province, many catering to ever-increasing numbers of students. We are welcoming more newcomers to Canada, some with very complex needs, and we are also dealing with increasing administrative, funding, and accountability pressures. Our profession has expanded rapidly and become far more demanding over the years.

The plethora of knowledge that is now available puts a greater onus on ESL instructors to stay current with advances in the field. There are so many issues and developments to keep up with that it sometimes seems quite overwhelming. So how can teachers manage their professional development, as well as their daily responsibilities in and beyond the classroom? We know that it can't be done all at once - and we need to make time to reflect on our own needs and interests as professionals. What is it that *you've* wanted to learn more about, to enhance your teaching or pursue a career goal? Brainstorm your thoughts, then choose a starting point and write it down. You might even discuss your ideas with a few colleagues, choose a topic of mutual interest, and decide how you'd like to explore it together. Here are some suggestions to get you started:

Networking. Sometimes it seems as if ESL instructors are continually re-inventing the wheel, as ESL textbooks often don't address the needs, interests, and contexts of particular groups of students. Get together with fellow instructors to share ideas and materials. This will not only save you time and reduce your workload, but it will likely also provide you with additional inspiration and encouragement. Or join a discussion or special interest group online (e.g., tutela.ca) and explore relevant research-based resources on TESL websites.

Learning. Do you want or need to know more about a particular topic to enhance your teaching or understanding of your learners? ATESL conferences are a good place to start. Presentations can serve as jumping-off points for your own further investigation – or you (and your colleagues) can design a workshop to share your knowledge and experience with others. Consider writing an article as a follow-up to share your ideas with others. The *TESL Canada Journal* accepts full-length research, “In the Classroom”, and Perspectives articles, as well as reviews of research-based books published within the past two years.

Other sources of learning include:

- workshops at ATESL local meetings;
- online self-study or face-to-face evidence-based TESL courses;
- TESL-related webinars, with follow-up application to classroom practice;
- newsletter articles (e.g., the *Focus on Research* column in this newsletter; TESL Ontario's *CONTACT* magazine);
- websites of well-known TESL authors (e.g., Paul Nation, Zoltán Dörnyei), where they may post their presentations, publications, and/or resources;
- Open Access journals (such as the *TESL Canada Journal* – www.teslcanadajournal.ca);
- other published articles (from Google Scholar, institutional databases, journals).

Join or form a professional reading group in your ESL program. Choose a reading for each month from one of the above sources. Then meet in a relaxed setting to discuss the content and how it can be applied to your teaching context.

Do you have a colleague who is using a teaching technique that you would like to become more familiar with (e.g., Jazz chants, jigsaw reading, debates, technology)? Can you arrange a peer observation and transfer the learning to your own ESL classroom?

Accreditation schemes often require recognized practitioners in a large range of fields to complete a set number of hours of professional development a year, as do some ESL programs. Get ahead of the game by making this part of your regular routine. Collaborating with colleagues will make it even more enjoyable. And keep a list of the professional development activities that you engage in - you might be surprised (and your supervisor impressed) by all that you've accomplished by the end of the year!

Advocacy. Many instructors find advocacy rewarding. For example, my association with Amnesty International (www.amnesty.ca) informs my knowledge of some of the global conditions that have forced refugees to flee their home countries. My volunteer work with the Canadian Council for Refugees (ccrweb.ca) and as a refugee co-sponsor gives me further insights into the settlement experiences of refugees in Canada.

Short of time? Check out the House of Commons e-Petitions (<https://petitions.parl.gc.ca/en/Home/Index>), many of which deal with immigration or international relations. Some of you may have signed the e-petition for the elimination of the Refugee Transportation Loan that was circulated by ATESL earlier this year.

Peruse the Alberta Government (<http://www.albertaparks.ca/consult>) and Government of Canada (<https://www1.canada.ca/consultingcanadians/currentconsultationsbycalendar>) lists of Current Consultations. Perhaps you or your class responded to the Canada's Food Guide consultation shared by ATESL last November, in which Health Canada sought public input to revise its Food Guide to address the needs of low literacy learners, ESL learners, and low income individuals. There are many ways in which we can take action to enhance our learners' lives and expand our knowledge of issues in the wider community.

Self-care. TESL is a very demanding field, so self-care is important to avoid compassion fatigue or burnout. Complete the online Professional Quality of Life Scale (http://www.proqol.org/uploads/ProQOL_5_English_Self-Score_3-2012.pdf) from time to time to monitor your compassion satisfaction.

As TESL professionals, we have a responsibility to provide the most efficient means of helping our learners acquire English, to support them in their settlement process, and to assist them in achieving their goals in the social, employment, and academic communities to which they aspire. By keeping current with developments in the field and by sharing our knowledge, experience, and talents with colleagues, we can ensure that we achieve these goals and optimize our professional engagement. What professional development options would *you* like to explore in the coming year?

Marian Rossiter is Associate Professor in the Teaching English as a Second Language program in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Alberta. She is Editor of the *TESL Canada Journal* and a Past President of ATESL.

We hope that this column has increased your understanding of evidence-based teaching practices and assisted you in implementing new ideas in your classes. In this last *Focus on Research* column, Sabine Ricioppo reviews key principles of effective assessment and provides guidelines and rationale for implementing these practices in an exemplar CLB 4 writing outcome task.

Portfolio-Based Language Assessment: Practical Tips for Developing Productive Skill Assessment Tasks for the Classroom

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC, formerly Citizenship and Immigration Canada, CIC), has mandated the implementation of Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA) in Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) programs nationwide (CCLB, 2017). One of the benefits of using PBLA is that it allows students to document and collect evidence of their language learning progression over time. The flip-side is that instructors are tasked with locating or creating an array of suitable English language proficiency assessments for all four skill areas - listening, speaking, reading, and writing. While the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB) has been working on the Milestones test since 2011 (CCLB, 2017), at present, there are no standardized assessments students take in Alberta to determine whether they are ready to progress to the next level. It is therefore up to teachers to decide whether students meet the necessary criteria to be issued a progress report and LINC certificate that verify the students' language proficiency levels. For citizenship application purposes, one of the requirements is to meet the minimum language proficiency level - a CLB 4 in listening and speaking. While stakeholders generally appreciate that classroom-based assessments cannot be compared to high-quality standardized assessment tools, a lot hinges on teachers having the necessary skill-set to properly evaluate their students. The purpose of this article is to outline some of the key principles to consider when designing classroom-based PBLA assessments for the productive skills, speaking and writing. (What is involved in creating standardized-assessment tools is beyond the scope of this article.) I will mainly focus on writing, but the principles outlined below apply to both productive skills. The following description assumes some prior understanding of the terminology used in the *Canadian Language Benchmarks: English as a Second Language for Adults* (CCLB, 2012; from now on referred to as the CLB 2012); it is defined on pages XVI and XVII of the document.

The Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) framework is based on a model of "communicative language ability, which relates to the ability to understand and communicate messages effectively and appropriately in a particular social situation" (CCLB, 2012, p. VI). In the case of speaking or writing, the purpose of an assessment task is therefore to collect evidence of a learner's ability to do just that: '*understand and communicate messages effectively and appropriately*' given a specific context. Since the possibilities of real world tasks and contexts are endless, it is up to instructors to create (or find) suitable assessments for the tasks they teach. The wording of the prompt, however, can influence how the student responds to a task (Weir, 2005). Teachers are more likely to be able to accurately assess their students' language ability levels when providing students with a sound assessment task.

In *Examining Writing: Research and practice in assessing second language writing*, Shaw and Weir (2007) discuss several characteristics that may affect a learner's performance on a test including "the particular performance conditions, the setting under which [the task] is to be performed (such as purpose of the task, time available, length, specified addressee, known marking criteria as well as the linguistic demands inherent in the successful performance of the task" (pp. 5-6). The CLB 2012 outlines many of these characteristics for the respective benchmark levels as well as additional features pertaining to the CLB context. Teachers should carefully consider these characteristics when designing tasks and teach students the necessary skills to be able to identify and address both implicit and explicit requirements mentioned to successfully complete a task. For example, when given the context of a task and the name of the person a letter should be addressed to, a test taker should be able to assess the level of formality required for that particular situation. This example illustrates how important it is to include a context as part of the task description.

How do we put this information into practice? The first step is to choose one or more competency areas (i.e., Interacting with Others, Reproducing Information/Giving Instructions, Getting Things Done, or Sharing Information) to assess. Depending on the task, it is possible to focus on a couple of competency areas if the competency statements are compatible with one another. Carefully matching the task with the competency statement is key for ensuring that a task is benchmark-level appropriate (CCLB, 2012). In fact, the competency statements are what mainly distinguish each adjacent CLB level from one another. Next, the features of communication determine what can be expected of the learners at different benchmark levels with regards to the competency statements provided. Other important criteria are listed underneath the features of communication. As much as possible, the sample indicators of ability should be directly built in to the assessment task so the learners know what indicates successful task completion. Additional information regarding the appropriate delivery is provided under “When the communication is.” Here, the CLB 2012 document outlines the degree of linguistic complexity test takers can be expected to handle at each benchmark level. At CLB level 4, for example, a writing assessment task needs to be “grammatically and lexically simple, intended for a familiar reader, short, [and] non-demanding” (CCLB, 2012, p. 118). Keeping these linguistic features in mind when creating or reviewing assessment materials can inform the process of developing or modifying test items to ensure that linguistic complexity does not negatively affect student performance (see Abedi, 2015 for a discussion of variety of linguistic features that may impact student comprehension of test items).

Let us turn a real-world task into an outcome assessment task. At CLB 4, one of the sample tasks provided in the CLB 2012 is “Write an invitation to a family function, such as a housewarming, graduation, or birthday party” (CCLB, 2012, p. 118). An assessment could take many different forms depending on the teacher and the elements he or she believes are important for the completion of the task. Here is an example of what the outcome assessment task for this real-world task might look like:

Student Name: _____

Date: _____

CLB 4: Interacting with Others

- **Convey short, personal, informal social messages on topics related to familiar everyday situations (such as invitations).**

Your child is celebrating an important milestone.

Write a short paragraph to invite one of your family members. Include

- The reason you are celebrating.
- Where and when you are celebrating.
- Why you hope the person will attend.

Write at least five sentences. You have 20 minutes to complete this task.

References

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ATESL is seeking an enthusiastic, detail-oriented, part-time volunteer to fill the position of newsletter editor for a two-year term. The ideal candidate will be familiar with ATESL, including its mission, vision, and strategic plan, as well as the organization of the board and its committees.

The ATESL Newsletter is published quarterly in March, June, September, and December and is disseminated to over 700 members via e-mail, as well as posted on atesl.ca. The newsletter currently includes board reports and two columns, “Perspectives on the Profession” and “Focus on Research”. Previous newsletter editions are available at <https://www.atesl.ca/membership/newsletters/>.

Responsibilities

The editor is responsible for coordinating, reviewing, and editing all newsletter content.

- Two to three weeks prior to the publication date, e-mail the ATESL board members requesting their reports. Set a due date for report submissions and communicate in a professional and respectful manner.
- If advertisements or special events are submitted for publication in the newsletter, approval from the ATESL Executive is required.
- Organize the content that may include reports, special articles, graphics, and images into a professional-looking newsletter format. The editor is responsible for creating a consistent and appealing format using Microsoft Word, MS Publisher, or other suitable desktop publishing program.
- Edit articles to ensure there are no spelling or grammar errors in the newsletter content. Consult with an article contributor in a professional manner should changes to the content be required. Proofread the final draft of the newsletter.
- Send the final copy of the newsletter as a PDF to the ATESL Business Manager on the first day of the month (i.e., March, June, September, December). The Business Manager will distribute the newsletter to the membership and post on the ATESL website.

Requirements

- Approximately 4 hours of time each quarter
- Strong writing, editing, and proofreading skills
- Experience with MS Word, MS Publisher, and/or other publishing software
- Excellent written skills in English
- Detail-oriented
- Proven record of meeting deadlines



To apply for the position of the newsletter editor, send a current resume or CV together with a letter of introduction that outlines:

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