



The ATESL  
Newsletter  
<http://www.atesl.ca>

October 2008

## ATESL 29th Annual Conference



**October 17th and 18th, 2008**

**Keynote  
Speakers**

**Merelle Rodrigo**  
Celebrating Diversity  
in Education

**Murray Munro**  
The Gap Between  
Research and Practice



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**President's Message**

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I hope that this has been the start of another exciting year for all of you. As we reflect on our many successes, we also acknowledge our continuing challenges and the need for innovative means of addressing them. With the arrival of increasing numbers of temporary foreign workers, immigrants, refugees, and their families, we face growing demands for new and expanding ESL programs to meet their general and specific needs in both urban and rural areas of the province.

ATESL is continuing to explore ways of providing increased support for the dedicated work that you do. One of these has been the development of *special interest listservs*. We are hoping that these will promote a sharing of useful ideas and experiences in the coming year, and we look forward to your participation in future online discussions. The *ATESL Resources webpage* is also designed to support ESL teaching and learning; if you have suggestions to contribute, please forward them to us. The *TESL Canada Journal* will be available online, beginning with the Fall 2008 issue. We hope that this will improve access to articles of relevance to your teaching and that you and your colleagues will consider contributing to the journal, as well.

Over my past year as President, I have been continually impressed by the breadth and depth of your experience and by your commitment to the field. Thanks to the Calgary, Central Alberta, and Edmonton committees for their work in providing quality workshops at the local level, and to the Provincial Board for their support and guidance. I am very grateful to the ATESL 2008 conference co-chairs and committees who have volunteered their time and expertise to put together a stimulating conference, and I look forward to collaborating with the co-chairs and committees who will be organizing the TESL Canada 2009 conference in Banff. I also wish to express appreciation for the strong support for ESL learners, instructors, and assessors in our province from Citizenship and Immigration Canada and from Alberta Employment and Immigration. I look forward to seeing many of you at the conference this fall and to working more closely with all of you in the coming year.

Sincerely,  
Marian Rossiter  
ATESL President

**TESL Canada Learners' Conference – Essay**

**About my Immigration Experience**

Arnaldo J. Perez Garcia

CCI

Advanced class

My experience as an immigrant started three hours and fifteen minutes after I'd left Havana airport. I already had some idea about what changes I would face. However, the reality now shows me that my perception was incomplete and in some ways wrong.

I had been in other countries similar to Canada, but always as an academic. This time was very different: I was an immigrant, and I didn't know what would happen to me and my family. I could not return to Cuba for a long time, and I would have to adapt to a new culture. In such circumstances, my first decision was to look and walk ahead.

The first advice I received came from a Cuban woman who told me "You should forget what you were before, because this country is not for you, it is for your daughter." Then I wondered whether or not I should be here, and I told myself that I had no choice.

One day, I went to the library and borrowed a documentary about Terry Fox. I wanted to know about him, but I'd never imagined that in his words "everything is possible if you try" I also would find the attitude that I would have to assume from then on. Before I knew Terry Fox's words, I felt Canada was on top of me. When I read them I put Canada in front me, so that now, six months later, I am on top of my situation in Canada.

This country offers two good conditions for immigrants: a support infrastructure and friendly people. Both are important, but it is not enough. To the settlement process a proactive attitude from immigrants is indispensable. Canada always fulfils its part, but the latter requirement depends on us entirely. Every day before I sleep I ask myself if I have fulfilled my part. If my answer is yes, I can sleep well.

**TESL Canada Learners' Conference Report**

**Report on Moncton Learners' Conference**

Arnaldo Perez

I can use many adjectives, but I prefer to describe the recent learners' conference in Moncton like something really amazing. I found many unexpected things in only one day and a half. It felt like family with the conference's staff. They were very nice, helpful and were attentive to every detail. Their sense of humor and skills to facilitate the sessions impress me a lot.

## The ATESL Newsletter

The way used to reflect on relevant issues for newcomers was effective. Sharing experiences is always more useful than the typical situation where someone tells the other the best way to do something.

The issues chosen to be discussed was another point in favour of the conference. I think that all of them are relevant in the social integration process of emigrants. We talked about networking, owning a business, portfolios, the job market, benchmarks, information etc. The comments about networking had a special importance to us, because most of the time the networks are the ways that match people and opportunities or people and available resources.

Two people gave testimonies about their settlement process in Canada and this impacted me in many senses. After I heard them, I realized that there is no easy way to get what most of us aspire when we arrive in this country. As one of them told us, “Canada offers many opportunities, but only for those who work hard, well and every day.” For the rest, Canada can become an unreachable dream.

These testimonies showed me that we have the principal responsibility for our future in Canada. The success depends on us more than any other factor.

I guess the principal value of Moncton’s conference was precisely; who is responsible for the success of immigrants and what are the most important things they should take into account.

### In Conversation With ...

## ATESL LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP AWARD RECIPIENT 2008

### **Carolyn Dieleman**

Manager, Language Training  
Alberta Employment and Immigration

By Tracey Derwing,  
Professor, Educational Psychology/Co-Director, Prairie Metropolis Centre  
University of Alberta

As nearly everyone in the Alberta ESL community knows, Carolyn Dieleman has had a huge impact on the delivery of programs in this province. In fact, there is probably no one in Alberta who knows as much about all the offerings as Carolyn – she makes it a point to visit ESL providers regularly. We all know that she devotes a tremendous part of her life to her work – hers is not a 9:00 – 5:00 job. Where did she come from, what influenced her, what are her primary accomplishments within ESL and what are her goals for the future? These are questions I asked Carolyn over a quick lunch before we headed off to a meeting.

## The ATESL Newsletter

Carolyn is the daughter of Dutch immigrants who moved to southern Ontario to farm. After completing high school, Carolyn went to university in Michigan, and then, in 1974, she served as an intern in the US government in Washington DC. This was the time of Watergate – for months Washington was abuzz with rumours of Nixon’s resignation – which didn’t come until August. Carolyn eventually moved back home, where she worked temporarily at a brand new Ramada Inn. She learned some valuable lessons there about customer service – and also about human behaviour. After her brief stint in the hospitality business, Carolyn was drawn once more to government – from 1976-1981 she worked for MP Bruce Halliday, the chair of the House of Commons standing committee on human rights, who always assumed that his constituents wanted to learn. In a time before computers, his office sent out 30 – 100 pieces of mail a day. Although she thoroughly enjoyed her time with the federal government, Carolyn wanted to come west – having experienced living in two nations’ capitals, she felt that government towns have a false sense of reality. So, in 1981, she moved to Alberta, and was hired by Advanced Education and Manpower in the area of Career Development, where one of her key responsibilities was to be the Executive Secretary for a committee of 32 government departments and agencies – all delivering different services to Aboriginal peoples. While several other provinces were creating policies, this committee was creating initiatives. Partnerships and commitments developed that were lasting and strong. This period was a time when Carolyn saw the power of bringing stakeholders together to get the big picture.

Around this time, Carolyn also started to work in the area of adult literacy. She undertook a review of the old Alberta Vocational Training Program that had been in place since the end of World War Two. Her report brought her in touch with national initiatives, workplace literacy movements and essential skills development. She then started working with business, labour, and government to develop workplace literacy in Alberta – Syncrude in 1988 was one of the first projects in this area. While she was working in Adult Literacy, John Fisher, who was responsible for adult ESL in Advanced Education, decided that Carolyn would be the ideal person to become the manager of language training. One of the first events she faced when she took the job was ATESL’s rally at the Legislature, to demand that threatened ESL cuts in both the adult and K-12 systems be stopped. An exciting and challenging time for her, indeed! Carolyn started going to meetings and conferences to get a sense of what was going on at the ground level. She attended an Edmonton Continuing Adult Learning Council ESL subcommittee meeting at which Jim Critchley presented a comparison of the terminology different schools used to represent English proficiency levels. It was clear that there was no consensus across programs, and Carolyn wondered how on earth a learner could figure out where he/she was if the field used terms interchangeably for very different meanings. This meeting sowed the seeds for her later involvement in the Benchmarks.

Although the Canadian Language Benchmarks were initially a federal initiative, Carolyn has worked hard to see that they were implemented. The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, and the numerous projects that have been funded by the Government of Alberta and/or a shared arrangement with Alberta and other jurisdictions speak to the influence Carolyn has had in this domain.

On another front, Carolyn contracted ATESL to carry out the Best Practices study, which resulted in both a document outlining Best Practices for ESL Programs, and a checklist for a self-assessment. This was an extremely inclusive project, which set the stage for improved delivery of programs across the province.

Another key element in improving offerings and in making information available to all interested providers in Calgary and Edmonton was the introduction of Advisory Committees for ILVARC and LARCC. These committees bring together committed individuals who work collectively with provincial and federal funders – and Carolyn is at nearly every meeting, with a stack of handouts and information for everyone.

Carolyn also introduced the public reporting of funded projects – summary reports now appear on ATESL’s website. This allows other programs to see the outcomes of innovative projects, and informs them of what has been tried, what has worked and what hasn’t.

The Language Training Programs (LTP) have been the mainstay of Carolyn’s division for some time, but with the advent of Enhanced Language Training (ELT) nearly five years ago, the province pushed even further into the forefront in the Canadian ESL scene. From the day the federal government announced that it would support ELT programs with partners, Alberta offered to be that partner in this province. This commitment on the part of the province is in no small way due to Carolyn’s commitment – not only the commitment that we see from her in the field, but the commitment she brings back to her department in fighting for resources for ESL learners. Her long experience working with employers and ESL programs was a perfect match for English in the Workplace programs, and for ELT.

Currently, Carolyn’s passion is support for rural delivery of ESL. Until recently, there were few adult immigrants in smaller centres, but with the increase in immigration to places such as Fort McMurray and Brooks, there is now a need. Carolyn is also still interested in seeing more progress in the area of ESL literacy. These are both domains where we can expect to feel her nudge (not always subtle) in the next few years. We now have a relatively coherent system of ESL support in Alberta, due in no small part to Carolyn’s efforts, but she feels we need more access points for immigrants who want to develop their English to a greater extent – particularly those who don’t typically take classes. Technology may be a factor in encouraging this. Carolyn suggests that our ESL system needs to be more responsive – we have a healthy infrastructure, and we have committed individuals, and we in Alberta should continue to lead the way. As she says, “Immigrants don’t come in the same box – training can’t stay the same either.”

When I asked Carolyn what the greatest rewards are in her job, she said without hesitating that it is seeing ESL students graduate. Nothing else gives her the same level of energy (and her levels are prodigious) as much as hearing the students’ pride in their own accomplishments. Those moments make her realize all over again that “Language is the key.”

ATESL Feature Article

## Developing Learner Autonomy in the ESL Classroom

Rozita Amini

Perhaps the most appropriate and accessible definition of autonomy that can be used in the ESL classroom is one which emphasizes the participation of the learner in meeting his/her needs, while acknowledging the differences that exist amongst learners due to their own beliefs about language teaching and learning. Cotterall (1995) has provided this in her definition of autonomy as *the extent to which learners demonstrate the ability to use a set of tactics for taking control of their learning* (p. 195) - setting goals, choosing materials and tasks, planning practice opportunities, and monitoring and evaluating their progress.

Fostering autonomy in the language classroom is both desirable and important. As learners become more autonomous, they increase their awareness of the language learning process, acquire strategies (including ways to better manage their time and resources), and become more efficient and successful language learners. In fact, proponents of independent learning believe that facilitating autonomy in any educational context will allow learners to transfer these skills to other relevant areas of their lives.

The first step in promoting any form of autonomous learning in an ESL classroom, however, is understanding the language learning beliefs and practices of the learners, as these will differ with the social, political, cultural, and educational values of each individual learner (Sinclair, 1997). Given the multicultural nature of most Canadian ESL classrooms, it is important to investigate these beliefs in order to better understand learner expectations of both *teaching* and *learning* in the language classroom. For example, what are the learners' expectations of the teacher? What responsibilities do they believe learners have? Is it important for them to see the progress they're making? Do they ask the teacher for help in class when they need it? Do they try to find ways to use their English outside of class? If so, how? The learning activities that students choose (e.g., talking to co-workers/students, watching TV or listening to talk radio, reading newspapers) and the manner and frequency with which they engage in these activities have an impact on learner autonomy.

My study (Amini, 2008) focused on learners' beliefs about language learning and the language learning activities that they regularly used outside of the classroom. The results showed that learners exhibited many of the behaviours thought to be important in autonomous language learning (e.g., setting clear goals for improving their English, asking the teacher for help when they needed it, noticing their own mistakes and using that information to help them). However, their responses also showed that they lacked knowledge of (a) the range of strategies available to them, (b) the effects these strategies have on language learning, and (c) effective ways of monitoring their progress (e.g., testing themselves, keeping a log or journal). Furthermore, learners lacked confidence in selecting and implementing the appropriate strategies for particular tasks. This suggests that ESL instructors need to devote

class time to (a) raising awareness of these strategies, (b) discussing the benefits of feedback, monitoring, and evaluation, and (c) giving learners time to practise these skills.

The analysis of the literature and the results of my study have several implications for those teachers interested in fostering learner autonomy in the ESL classroom. Below are a few suggestions (for a more detailed list see Amini, 2008).

- Become familiar with the second language acquisition literature in order to gain a broad understanding of the issues that it encompasses, including the influences of cultural diversity and the learning context.
- Devise simple surveys (see, for example, Amini, 2008) at the beginning of the course to gain a better understanding of learners' beliefs about learning and the learning strategies they use. This raises awareness of differences in students' beliefs about language learning and helps to focus future strategy instruction. Follow the link to find Oxford's (1990) Learning Strategy Inventory for Language Learners. This will provide a starting point for discussions of learner strategies (memory, cognitive, compensatory, metacognitive, affective, and social).  
[http://ell.phil.tu-chemnitz.de/cing/frontend/questionnaires/oxford\\_quest.php](http://ell.phil.tu-chemnitz.de/cing/frontend/questionnaires/oxford_quest.php)
- Raise learners' awareness of language learning by presenting a basic model of the process (Cotterall's [2000] language learning model, for example, shows the relationships between needs, goals, motivation, language awareness, language knowledge, input, practice, output, feedback, and reflection). Providing such a visual facilitates discussions of how the components of the language learning process affect one another and how various activities contribute to the overall process. It also gives students and teachers a common language for discussions about language learning.
- At the outset of the course, take the time to discuss individual learners' short and long-term goals; set learning goals; choose the resources and the strategies needed to reach these goals; and show learners how to measure their own progress. Teach learning strategies to expand learners' strategy repertoire. Harmer (2007, p. 409) lists various resources for learner practice. Lee (1998) provides guidelines for devising self-directed learner contracts (giving individuals responsibility for setting their learning objectives, selecting resources, and deciding how much time to devote to particular activities).

Encouraging autonomy in the language classroom allows instructors to not only teach students *what* they need to learn, but also *how* to learn it. The skills and habits that learners acquire will enhance their language development and enable them to take charge of their general learning needs.

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## The ATESL Newsletter

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### Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks



Centre for  
Canadian Language  
Benchmarks

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### ***UPDATE on CCLB Activities - October 2008***

The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB) has been working on a number of activities to support the use of the national standard, the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB), in Alberta.

#### **Project Updates**

##### ***National Consultation:***

The CCLB has embarked on a national consultation on the CLB/NCLC. It will take two years to complete and aims to be a comprehensive scan of organizations, programs, groups and individuals who use the CLB/NCLC. Stakeholder groups in Alberta will be asked to express needs, gaps and desired next steps in terms of content, materials, tools and uses of the CLB/NCLC. They may also provide additional supports such as advice, consultation venues and partnerships. The overarching purpose of the consultation is to review the CLB 2000 and the NCLC 2006. In addition, the consultation will determine appropriate planning and action for the CCLB. This will enable the organization to pursue its leadership role in responding to the information and directions gleaned from this process. Regular communications will be circulated and posted on the CCLB website ([www.language.ca](http://www.language.ca)) to inform stakeholders about information and consultation sessions, different means of participating (web surveys and discussion forums) and results. CCLB wants to hear from Albertans!

##### ***Training on CLB 5-10 Exit Assessment Tasks:***

The CCLB has recently developed a training workshop for teachers on using the CLB 5-10 Exit Tasks. Pilots of the training session will be held in Edmonton and Calgary through mid October. The workshop will introduce ESL instructors to the new CCLB resource - *Canadian Language Benchmarks 5-10 Exit Assessment Tasks*. Participants will get an overview of

## The ATESL Newsletter

the materials along with practice in using the scoring tools to get accurate CLB reports of adult learners' speaking and writing proficiency. The resource covers all four skills and is suited to use in both general and specialized language training programs. Training workshops will take place throughout Alberta beginning in November for teachers currently teaching in CLB 5 – 10 in ESL, LINC and ELT programs. The workshops are being funded by Alberta Employment and Immigration. For more information on training opportunities, please contact [jmckay@language.ca](mailto:jmckay@language.ca).

Citizenship and Immigration Canada funded the distribution of copies of the tool to all LINC and ELT programs across Canada. Provincially-funded ESL programs in Alberta have been sent copies as well, with funding from Alberta Employment and Immigration.

### ***Essential Skills Initiative:***

A project is underway that is funded by the Essential Skills Initiative, OLES, HRSDC. The project will support the development of three resources and tools that will provide various professionals with a better understanding of working with Essential Skills and CLB with adult newcomers. The first resource is a guidebook and a workshop for job analysts who create and work with national standards like Essential Skills Profiles and National Occupational Standards. The second resource is a guidebook and workshop for trainers who work with newcomers but who do not necessarily have ESL or ESL literacy training. The third resource is a guidebook, workshop and set of lesson plans for ESL practitioners. It is a starting point for building a foundation for Essential Skills, especially for lower CLB learners, with an additional focus on transferability of skills for learners with a number of occupational goals. This will include a classroom diagnostic for teachers and twenty-five new sample lesson plans. For more information on this project and to find out where workshops will be held, contact [cpepin@language.ca](mailto:cpepin@language.ca) or [mkayed@language.ca](mailto:mkayed@language.ca).

For further information about these projects and other available resources, please visit the CCLB website at [www.language.ca](http://www.language.ca) or contact the CCLB at (613) 230-7729 or [info@language.ca](mailto:info@language.ca).

### **ATESL Provincial Executive 2007-2008**

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### **THE ATESL NEWSLETTER Published Quarterly**

**Deadlines: Feb. 15, May 15, Aug. 15, Nov. 15**  
Announcements, workshop dates, book reviews,  
teaching ideas, and articles relevant to the field

**Editor: Thomas Jiry**  
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*The Alberta Teachers of English as a Second Language (ATESL) is a professional organization which promotes the highest standards of teaching and English language program provision for all learners in Alberta whose first language is other than English.*