



President's Message

www.atesl.ca

By Patti Lefebvre

It is my pleasure to greet you all on behalf of the new 2012 ATESL Board members. Our board met recently on February 11th for a full day of agenda discussion items. ATESL will be busy this year moving ahead with a number of projects and initiatives. These projects include putting the ATESL Adult ESL Curriculum Framework and the ATESL Best Practices document into easy to use on-line formats; we will continue to work on updating our website, making it more user-friendly and accessible for our membership. Finally, the ATESL Board continues to work on moving the accreditation issues toward a solution. Stay tuned for updates about these items throughout the year. We sincerely appreciate the time and energy put forth by our board members in the efforts of sustaining our professional association standards.

Supporting our board are three wonderful individuals who ensure the work of ATESL is managed well and kept up to date. These three individuals are Ivan Sundal, Business Manager; Irene Wood, Administrator, and Doug Elves, Webmaster Consultant. As our organization grows and changes, so do our people. With that thought in mind, I would like to announce that Ivan has decided to retire from ATESL and will put his energies into other passions. We are most grateful for Ivan's past work and his many, many contributions, so we send him off with our very best and warmest wishes on April 30th. To help us through this year of transition, Irene Wood has agreed to step up to a combined role of Business Manager with administrative responsibilities as well. Irene will work with the ATESL Board in reviewing this role throughout the year and making future recommendations to support ATESL's ongoing needs. We welcome Irene's enthusiasm to help ensure the business of ATESL continues to run smoothly.

The ATESL 2011 conference co-chairs, Maureen Stewart and Allie Dennis, finalized their report and we wish to send our sincere congratulations and appreciation to them, and the over 70+ volunteers who supported the co-chairs. The conference demonstrated a huge success for ATESL in leading colleagues through learning opportunities in the field of language acquisition as our

In this issue:

President's Message

by Patti Lefebvre

Bursary Report:

ATESL Conference 2011

by Miranda Bestman

ATESL Recognizes Marian Rossiter's Contributions to ESL in Alberta

by Liz Karra

Spotlight on Alberta: Formal, Non-formal, and Informal Learning in ESL

by Sarah Elaine Eaton, Ph.D.

Learner contribution

by Su Rin (Irene) Jung, tied second-prize winner of the spring 2011 ATESL student writing contest



Mark your calendar!
November 16-17, 2012
ATESL 2012 Conference
Crowne Plaza Chateau Lacombe,
Edmonton, Alberta



Professional Development Bursaries
Apply for an ATESL professional
development bursary.
Deadline Sept 15
[http://www.atesl.ca/](http://www.atesl.ca/cms/membership/bursaries/)
[cms/membership/bursaries/](http://www.atesl.ca/cms/membership/bursaries/)



conference theme set out to do. The final conference registration number was 433.

As we celebrate the success of one conference coming to a close, the next conference seems not too far down the road. Plans are now well underway for the ATESL 2012 Conference on November 16-17 in Edmonton. Conference co-chairs, Murray Smith and Kent Lee have been very busy with initial calls for volunteers and setting up their committees. We look forward to bringing our colleagues together again.

On behalf of the ATESL Board, we wish you continued success in the wonderful jobs you do each day that support our mandate and passion for language and integration of all newcomers to Alberta.

Provincial Executive

2012 - 2013

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ATESL Mission Statement

The Alberta Teachers of English as a Second Language (ATESL) is a professional organization that promotes the highest standards of teaching and English language program provision for all learners in Alberta whose first language is other than English. We do this by:

- encouraging and providing professional development opportunities that are consistent with generally accepted principles of adult learning and with currently understood principles of second language learning and teaching;
- liaising with other organizations, local, provincial, national, and international, engaged in education;
- creating awareness about immigration, settlement of immigrants, and English language learning by communicating with government, business, and the general public;
- encouraging awareness of issues of accountability and program standards by communicating with English language program providers and learners;
- encouraging the highest standards of teacher preparation and performance by administering an ESL teacher accreditation process;
- working collaboratively with government to develop policies and procedures which govern the provision of English language programs and related services for immigrants to Canada;
- encouraging and supporting the participation of learners in the decision-making processes that determine their educational choices.



Bursary Report

Each year in its annual budget the ATESL Board dedicates \$2000 to be awarded in bursaries that year. Up to \$1000 of this is awarded following the March 15th deadline and the remainder is awarded following the September 15th deadline. The bursary committee may award up to \$500 per bursary and any remaining funds are carried forward. If you would like to apply for a bursary for a professional development activity, please consult the ATESL website.

In this newsletter, we are pleased to provide you with the report of a recent bursary winner, Miranda Bestman.

ATESL Conference 2011

Submitted by Miranda Bestman

On October 21 and 22, I attended the ATESL conference in Calgary. I benefitted from this conference in a number of ways. First, I gained knowledge about the importance of second-language vocabulary acquisition for EAL students. Dr Norbert Schmitt explained that there are three levels of vocabulary that students should be aware of: high frequency, mid frequency and low frequency vocabulary. The high frequency words are the most important. Therefore these words must be taught by whatever means necessary, for example using word lists and graded readers especially those that have high frequency word families. Dr. Norbert said that there are far more word families for written discourse than spoken discourse. However in speaking, only eighty-nine words families cover 75%. He mentioned that the best way to learn the word families is to know the meaning of words, not just recognize them. So, new words need to be taught in context.

Secondly, I benefitted from this conference by learning about different ideas from the various workshops I attended. In the workshop, Teaching Grammar Techniques, the presenters emphasized that the “old” way of teaching grammar - fill in the blanks, use of charts - is no longer effective. Instead teach grammar by putting blanks in paragraphs so students have a context to work with. Teachers can have students notice grammar in reading and listening texts. Diamond dictation is one way to do this. Students listen to a text, then the teacher replaces the grammar words with a diamond shape and students fill in the missing words when listening a second time.

Another idea is to use a question activity. The teacher puts scrambled question words on different papers around the room. Students walk around the room and speak the question out by themselves. The questions are connected to a reading so they are in context. After this a comprehension sheet with the questions is given.

Other workshops were also very helpful and gave me ideas that I can use on topics such as stress in pronunciation, teaching reading strategies, and learning with Wikis. Stephen Lewis’ powerful presentation on education and the importance of literacy was very inspiring for me. Also, I was able to connect with other teachers to share various ideas that could be used in the classroom. In these different ways the conference was very beneficial and as stated above specific ideas were learned that I can use in teaching.

ATESL Recognizes Marian Rossiter's Contributions to ESL in Alberta

Spring 2012 page 4

by Liz Karra

In October, 2011 at the Alberta Teachers of English as a Second Language (ATESL) Provincial Conference, Dr. Marian Rossiter received the ATESL Lifetime Membership Award. Marian has been an active participant in Alberta's ESL community for many years. She is currently an Associate Professor and Coordinator of the TESL Program in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Alberta.

Marian's varied career began as a high school French teacher in England (1971-1974). She then went on to complete a Masters in French at the University of Alberta and a Diploma in TEFL at the Royal Society of Arts in England. In the years that followed, she taught ESL in Continuing Education at Alberta Vocational College in Edmonton (now known as NorQuest College). She also served as their Assistant Coordinator for most of that time. In 1985, Marian moved over to the Faculty of Extension at the University of Alberta, where she took on the role of Academic Assistant for the English Language Program from 1992-1996. From 1996-1997, she was their Academic Coordinator. When she left Extension, Marian decided to do her Doctorate in TESL through the Department of Educational Psychology. Her thesis was titled *The effects of strategy training on L2 learners*. She then moved on to Simon Fraser University in Vancouver to do post doctoral research in their Department of Linguistics. Fortunately for us, she returned to Edmonton to the University's TESL program as an assistant professor in 2002; and in 2006, moved up to the position of Associate Professor. For the past nine years, she has been the TESL program coordinator. During this time, she has been instrumental in having the program accredited by TESL Canada.

Apart from her professional affiliations with a number of organizations, including ATESL, TESOL, and TESL Canada, to mention a few, Marian has also volunteered for a number of ESL related positions and/or activities. In 1993-94 and again in 2003-2004, she co-chaired the Edmonton local chapter of ATESL. She also served on the Provincial accreditation committee for 5 years (1995-2000) and was a board member for many more years. From 2006-2009, she was on the executive of ATESL. As president, she successfully oversaw a number of government contracts which had been awarded to ATESL. In addition to her work with ATESL, Marian has also served on the TESL Canada Board in a number of capacities: Chair, TESL Canada Journal Advisory Committee; Member, Standards Committee; and Member, Professional Development Committee. More recently, she took on the position of Associate Editor of the Journal (2010- 2011) and has now become the Editor. Her goal is to make the Journal more relevant to the readership by expanding TESL Canada Journal content related to ESL or TESL education; by increasing submissions from ESL instructors, graduate students, and researchers in Canada; and by enhancing access to teacher-friendly research.

Aside from her second language acquisition research, Marian has ventured into the community at large and written on a number of related topics. Some examples of these are Mail order brides in Canada, Immigrant youth and the justice system, and Immigrant youth and crime. These are but a few of the numerous articles she has published. She has always had a practical focus and is closely tied to the ESL and immigrant communities.

continued on page 8

Spotlight on Alberta: Formal, Non-formal, and Informal Learning in ESL

by Sarah Elaine Eaton, Ph.D.

Formal classroom instruction alone is unlikely to result in fluency in a second language. It is important to integrate formal, non-formal, and informal learning in the learning process. In particular, ESL students in Alberta need all three types of learning to become fluent in English.

Introduction

What do the phrases "formal learning", "non-formal learning", and "informal learning" mean and how are they relevant to the Alberta ESL contexts? These terms are used by the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), as well as researchers and practitioners around the globe.

Formal Learning

Formal learning is almost always organized and structured, and it takes place within a system of formal education. It is guided by a curriculum that leads to a formally recognized credential, such as a high school completion diploma or a degree. Examples of formal ESL learning include:

- K-12 system
- post-secondary education systems (college and university)

In formal learning, the programs of study or curricula are often guided and recognized by government at some level. Links to Alberta's program of study and other official documents relating to ESL can be found here: <http://www.education.alberta.ca/teachers/program/esl.aspx>

Formal education is a hierarchical system: If a student wants to advance to a higher level, usually he or she needs a pre-requisite designation from a lower level. For example, a student wanting to enter university will normally need a high school diploma. Though that has changed somewhat in the past few decades, it is the expected route that the majority of students will take.

Within a formal education system, teachers are usually trained as professionals, and in many cases they are required to have credentials such as a teaching license, a degree, or a certificate before they are eligible to teach. Formal education often incorporates standardized assessment tools; is associated with the highest levels of prestige and respect in most societies, including Canada.

Non-formal Learning

Non-formal learning (also called non-credit learning) is also organized, even if only loosely. It may or may not be guided by a formal curriculum, and though it does not result in a formal degree or diploma, non-formal education builds an individual's skills and capacities. While participants may earn certificates, these are not often recognized by governments or by formal learning institutions. Getting them recognized involves long processing times and jumping through many administrative hoops. Examples of non-formal language learning include:

- Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) programs
- Non-credit adult or continuing education courses
- Classes organized by churches and other faith-based organizations

continued on page 6

- Summer language camps
- Intensive immersion programs, such as the “Explore” program, which offers Francophone Canadians the opportunity to learn English in a 5-week immersion program.
- Intensive ESL immersion programs for foreigners.

Those in a non-formal teaching role may or may not have formal credentials depending on the specific requirements of their job, but they are almost always passionate about sharing their knowledge with learners. They almost always have a deep understanding of their area of expertise and deeply committed to creating a positive learning experience.

Non-formal learning is often considered more engaging than formal learning, as lessons are often less prescriptive and there is more flexibility in the programming; the learning process is not always driven by a formal curriculum. For people who dislike the idea of school, non-formal learning can represent an opportunity to learn with fewer restrictions and enjoy the experience more.

Informal Learning

This kind of learning involves no formal curriculum and no prescribed way of doing things. No credits are earned. The teacher is simply someone with more experience, such as a parent, a grandparent, or a friend. Examples of informal learning include:

- A parent teaching his or her child the alphabet
- A volunteer ESL tutor working with a new Canadian
- Conversation clubs
- Experiential learning such as going to the grocery store with a native speaker.

Informal learning is typically considered the most spontaneous and flexible. Learners are often highly engaged in the learning process because there is an unspoken and shared desire between the learner and the teacher to take part in the learning experience together.

What This Means for Alberta’s ESL Learners

Formal classroom training alone is unlikely to produce highly fluent language learners who are as competent in speaking and listening as they are in grammar, writing, and reading. Research shows that all three types of learning are important to achieve fluency in a second language.

In 2007, Archibald et al. conducted a study that identified some key features of language learning in Alberta. They found that students enrolled in second language programs in Alberta schools spend approximately 95 hours per year learning an additional language. Perhaps more importantly, they found that 95 hours per year is insufficient to achieve proficiency.

Learners who only study ESL in a formal school setting may never become proficient if they do not speak English outside the classroom. If they supplement their schooling with non-formal and informal learning experiences, their chances of becoming proficient are much greater. Informal language learning can result in improved conversation skills, a deeper understanding of authentic language and an increase in practical and everyday vocabulary words. In other words, a combination of formal, non-formal and informal learning produces high levels of proficiency.

Conclusions

If a language learner adds non-formal and informal learning to their formal education overall approach, they are much more likely to achieve fluency, if for no other reason than they are exposed to the language for longer periods of time. As Archibald et al. pointed out, the amount of time someone spends engaged in the language learning process, the more they are likely to build their skills. (I expanded on his research here.)

Recommendations for instructors

1. Recognize the value of all types of learning. Practitioners who work in one sector can be susceptible to undervaluing or dismissing other types of learning. On one hand, those who work in non-formal and informal settings sometimes view formal learning as restrictive or oppressive. On the other hand, those who have spent their teaching career in institutions have been known to attach less value to learning that happens outside formal contexts. It is critical to recognize that learners benefit from all three types of learning, and combining the three methods helps them achieve their goals of fluency and competence much faster.
2. Encourage learners to actively engage in formal, non-formal, and informal learning. Make your students aware of different learning opportunities and encourage them to become self-directed learners who incorporate all three types of "education" into their lifelong learning journey. If a learner is reluctant to engage in a certain type of learning, find out why and help them understand the importance of learning both inside and outside the classroom.
3. Actively pursue professional development that includes your own formal, non-formal, and informal learning. Lifelong learning is not reserved for our students. As professionals, it is important that we lead by example and continue to develop professionally not only through formal classes. Educators should take advantage of non-formal professional development events, such as ATESL's annual conference, as well as informal opportunities for professional development such as personal and professional learning networks (PLNs) on Twitter and other self-driven PD.

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Sarah Elaine Eaton holds a PhD in Educational Leadership from the University of Calgary. She is a researcher, author and speaker, specializing in professional development for language and literacy professionals. Check out her blog "Literacy, Languages and Leadership" <http://www.drsaraheaton.wordpress.com>

Marian Rossiter continued

Marian leads by example. She does not expect anything from anyone that she would not be willing to do herself. She believes in life-long learning and helping others. She has a truly generous soul and has spent immeasurable time helping out sponsored refugees in her spare time. She believes in and encourages giving back to the profession by being active members of the Association as well as sharing our knowledge and experiences with others by presenting at conferences and publishing. She is highly respected by colleagues and students for her fairness and impartiality.

Student Contribution

Educational Experience that Changed the View of the World

by Su Rin (Irene) Jung

There are several things in my life that changed my perspective toward the world; one experience in particular became a turning point in changing the way I viewed the world. Since Korea was formerly colonized by Japan, the negative stereotypes toward Japan are still prevalent throughout Korea, even with the advent of globalization. I was no exception to the majority of people in Korea; however, I was fortunate enough to have my perception challenged.

I was eleven years old when I first experienced independence from my parents and went to Japan as an exchange student. I was scheduled to live with a host family while I was there. At the beginning, I was burdened by the prejudice of Japanese that had been ingrained within me for my whole life. This limited thinking and the reality of a new culture hindered me from fully integrating into my new environment, and made me feel very alienated. However, the Japanese did not possess any negative perceptions of Koreans, and were generally kind to me. They tried to understand me, and were even curious about the subtle nuances between our cultures. Their kindness helped me to successfully adapt to life in Nagoya and opened my eyes to how prejudice impedes progress.

This experience eventually turned into the fuel that pushes me forward and gives me strength every time I feel the fear of sudden change. Since I became cognizant of the significance of individuals' point of view, I always try to approach life without preconceived notions. I also make decisions that will be more suitable for a globalized world. I am eager to experience as much as I can, and I do not want anything preventing me from doing so, especially if it is something as petty as archaic prejudices.