



Alberta Teachers of English
as a Second Language

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President's Message

September 2015

www.atesl.ca

Happy September, ATESL Members!

I hope you've all enjoyed a wonderful summer and are settling into the new fall term. The summer was busy for ATESL and the fall promises to be the same. The ATESL Board met recently to plan for the upcoming months and to discuss various items in the works. We have another Board meeting scheduled for September 29. Much of the ATESL Board is involved in the planning of the upcoming TESL Canada 2015 Conference hosted in Lake Louise. Conference Co-Chairs Glen Cochrane and Chris Wharton and their hard-working conference committee kept very busy over the summer with securing sponsorship, finalizing the program, liaising with exhibitors, coordinating the graduate symposium, and planning the conference gala. If you haven't registered for the conference already, there is still time. It will be an excellent conference and I hope to see you there. In the spring, the Edmonton Local hosted a well-received mini-conference. Thank you very much to the Edmonton Co-Chairs and their committee for organizing and hosting this event.

As you will see in the report from President Elect Wendy Chambers, ATESL was pleased to host past presidents and the current board as part of a strategic planning meeting in the spring. It was a very productive and thought-provoking day. I would like to thank all those who participated in the day and also those who contributed their thoughts via email to the direction in which ATESL will take in the next few years. The ATESL Strategic Planning Committee will continue to work on the strategic plan for ATESL over the next few months.

We have confirmed the next ATESL conference will be in Edmonton in October 2016. We have booked the Fantasyland Hotel as the conference venue and are currently looking for Conference Co-Chairs. If you are interested, please email or call me. My information is below.

As various terms on the Board come to an end, we are also looking for positions of Co-Chair in Southern, Co-Chairs in Central Alberta, and a TESL Canada Representative. Again, if you are interested in these positions, or in learning more about them, please don't hesitate to contact me.

As ATESL President, I was asked to participate in a Special Advisory Committee for TESL Canada this summer to help shape the direction the organization will take in the coming years. Thank you to TESL Canada for the opportunity to participate. The discussion has been interesting and I look forward to seeing the results of the conversations at the TESL Canada Conference. ATESL also continues to work closely with our partners in the provinces and I continue to have great conversations and learn a lot about their organizations from them.



Alberta Teachers of English
as a Second Language

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2014 – 2015

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President's Message (cont'd.)

The call for Language Training Program from the Alberta Government and also the Call for Proposals from CIC came out this summer. Thank you to everyone who helped me and the ATESL Board work on these proposals.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Board for their continued hard work for ATESL and our members, and also would like to extend thanks to Irene Wood, our Business Manager, who works tirelessly to keep us on track, organized, and responsive.

If you have any questions regarding this report or ATESL in general, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully,
Maureen Stewart

President Elect Report

Over the past year, the ad hoc Strategic Planning committee has formed and has met regularly to identify and examine issues, opportunities, and challenges facing ATESL now and into the future. The goal of our effort is to build on what ATESL has done well in the past, to refine current practices to better serve the membership, and to envision and define a strong future. Following from a series of productive meetings and discussions among committee and board members, an earnest outline for the strategic plan has begun to take shape. To further build on the plan, the Strategic Planning committee invited past ATESL presidents to participate in a facilitated strategic planning session. On June 13th, together with the ATESL board, Liz Karra, Marian Rossiter, and Sheri Rhodes spent the afternoon engaged in a focused examination of crucial issues, opportunities, and challenges that impact English language teaching and learning in Alberta and what ATESL can do to support and promote the "highest standards of teaching and provision of English language programs for learners" (ATESL Mission Statement). Following from the June session, the discussion notes were compiled and an online survey was developed to follow up with participants. An invitation to complete the survey was sent out to all past presidents and the current board for the purpose of eliciting additional feedback. The survey was open from July 3rd to July 31st. The Strategic Planning committee met again on September 14th to review the results of the survey, to consider our next steps for developing the strategic plan, and to determine the most appropriate approach for involving ATESL members in the process.

Respectfully submitted,
Wendy Chambers



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TESL Canada Report to ATESL

TESL Canada is continuing its efforts to make the organization more transparent and more relevant to its members. Since May 2015, it has hired several consultants to study and make recommendations regarding different facets of TESL Canada, such as financial operations and the mission of the organization. The consultants' work should be completed by the end of September, and their reports will be presented at the TESL Canada AGM at Lake Louise in October. Please make sure you attend the AGM to hear about the positive changes taking place in the organization. Speaking from personal experience with the Finance Committee, the consulting process was valuable in tightening up procedures and making sure that everything is clearly written down.

As part of the consultation, TESL Canada conducted a SWOT analysis by asking as many stakeholders from across Canada as possible for their input into the organization. The ATESL board worked on one in the board meeting at the end of August, and Maureen and Sheri Rhodes, as chair of TESL Canada's Outreach committee, gave more of Alberta's perspective in their own responses.

Talks are continuing with BC TEAL and TESL Ontario; however, it's clear that neither provincial organization wants to continue sharing joint memberships with TESL Canada. BC TEAL will cease being a member in September 2015, and TESL Ontario will leave in November. It is worth noting that TESL that Canada will still have representation from both provinces at our board level; it just won't be through these two organizations. TESL Canada will still offer membership to BC and Ontario residents directly through its website. These changes needed to be reflected in the by-laws of the organization, so there was a Special General Meeting both online and in person at Bow Valley College on Friday, September 11, to officially approve the necessary changes. All the amendments to the by-laws were passed.

It's definitely a time of change for this cross-Canada organization but there's always an opportunity for positive change. I encourage the ATESL board and members to help make TESL Canada a clear and relevant voice for English language teaching and learning nationally.

Respectfully submitted by Celia Logan,
TESL Canada Representative for ATESL

TESL Canada 2015 Conference Update

With a little over a month to go before the conference, planning activities have definitely ramped up. The conference schedule has been finalized (revisions excluded) and is available at:

<http://teslcanadapresentations.com/>

In addition to the online schedule and a small paper program, this year we will have a conference app supported by crowdcompass.com.

The conference co-chairs, along with the publicity committee, have been conducting brief pre-conference interviews with presenters, including the keynotes and featured speakers. The first few videos have been released on ATESL's [YouTube page](#).

The registration numbers are great at this point - the Thursday symposia will be well attended, and the conference registration is already approaching 700. The hotel is filling up, and the attendance at the Friday Gala will exceed 100. The Gala planning committee is close to finalizing the details, and we hope to publicize the Gala specifics next week.

The previous conference planning meeting took place at SAIT on August 31, 2015. It was an important meeting to make sure we had everything dotted and crossed. We had 20 people in attendance with representatives from each committee. The next meeting will be in early/mid-October.

Again, we would like to take this opportunity to thank the conference planning committee for all their hard work. It will be a great conference because of them.

Respectfully submitted by:

Chris Wharton and Glen Cochrane

TESL Canada 2015 Conference, Co-chairs

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Newsletter Information

The ATESL Newsletter is published quarterly.

Deadlines: February 15, May 15, August 15, November 15

Announcements, workshop dates, book reviews, teaching ideas, and articles relevant to the field.

Contact: Irene Wood at services@atesl.ca

More information and archives at www.atesl.ca/newslettersArchive

Professional Development Bursaries

Apply for an ATESL Professional Development Bursary

Deadline: **March 15, 2016**

<http://www.atesl.ca/bursary>

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.



ATESL Edmonton Local Report

Being part of a Board that works hard to offer its membership a variety of professional development opportunities is truly rewarding. ATESL would like to thank all of the outgoing volunteers for their commitment. Evelyn Neame has been on the Board for the past two years and her contributions went above and beyond those of a Local Co-Chair.

ATESL will miss her valuable insights at Board meetings and her dedication to the Edmonton Local events. We are lucky to have Patricia Watson continue as Treasurer and Lynn Sawyer as Secretary. Janet Kwong has been nominated as our incoming co-chair. She recently graduated from the TESL Master's Program at the University of Alberta and comes highly recommended: not only does she have extensive teaching experience, both in the public school system and in an ESL context, but she was also the TESL Program's Student Group President.

The Edmonton Local Board offered a one-day mini-conference at NorQuest College at the end of June. Lisa Herrera and Claire Pinkett from ISSofBC (Vancouver) presented two workshops (Demystifying CLB Lesson Planning & Creating and Understanding CLB Assessments). Sixty-one participants attended the conference and their feedback was overwhelmingly positive. This workshop would not have been possible without Sabine Ricioppo's vision, hard work, and dedication, and we thank her for her commitment to professional development.

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on September 25, 2015. We will vote/agree on a new slate of volunteers for the Edmonton Board. If you would like to join the Board, we are still looking for a Communication Director and Hospitality Committee members.

We also will draw a name for a free registration for the TESL Canada Lake Louise Conference. The ATESL member has to be in attendance at the September meeting to win and will receive either a free code to register or a reimbursement if already registered.

The Faculty of Extension and the ATESL Board are proud to sponsor a presentation by Jane Willis on *Appropriate Strategies for Teaching Grammar*. The workshop will be held on November 3, 2015 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Faculty of Extension, Enterprise Square (Bay/Enterprise Square LRT station). Teaching grammar in an ESL classroom can be challenging because English grammar is too complex to be reduced to a few guidelines, and even when students learn grammatical rules, they have difficulty applying them correctly. In this presentation, Jane Willis explores common grammatical problems and the strategies to effectively deal with them. Please take advantage of this opportunity to hear Jane Willis, an award-winning writer, speaker, and English language teaching consultant from the UK, who is in Edmonton for the first time. Space is limited, so register soon at <http://goo.gl/forms/AXmSU7Xr1E>

Last, but not least, the members of the Edmonton Local Board would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to everyone who provided professional development at our meetings this past academic year. Dr. Leila Ranta and Justine Light presented on *Exploring Edmonton's Linguistic Landscape*; Dr. Wendy Chambers talked about *Building Community with Online Discussion Boards*; ESL directors and practitioners from MacEwan, One World One Center, CCI-LEX, EMCN, EPL, NAIT, NorQuest, Solomon College, and the U of A presented at the Director's Forum; and six U of A Master's students gave presentations on their capping projects: Ridha Atioui described *Fluency-Enhancing Activities in EFL Textbooks*, Achsah Lionel spoke about *Teaching Culture in the Academic English Class*, Maria Rombalskaya explored *Teaching Comprehension of Implied Meaning*, Agnieszka Ansel explained how to *Integrate Grammar into a CLB Lesson*; Janet Kwong taught how to *Use Video to Teach Pragmatics in ESL Classes*, and Huong Nguyen discussed *Alternatives to the Product-Oriented Approach to L2 Listening Instruction*. We thank you all for inspiring us with your insights.

Respectfully submitted by Sabine Ricioppo and Evelyn Neame



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Calgary Local ATESL Report

On September 30, a fresh academic year full of professional development kicks off with a tour and presentation at the central branch of the Calgary Public Library. Library staff will introduce us to the wide range of resources and programming ELLs and their teachers can access. Many of us know that the library offers conversation classes, but did you know there are also programs such as "Buying Your First Home in Canada", "Finding a Job in a Store" and "Dual Language Storytime: Punjabi"? That same evening, we'll also be drawing for a free TESL Canada conference registration. Bring your PDPP (Professional Development Passport); your name will be entered into the draw once for every stamp you have on your passport! And yes, you need to be present to win.

On November 2, Jane Willis, keynote speaker for the TESL Canada 2015 Conference, will facilitate an evening workshop on providing effective feedback to learners after the performance of a task. How do we effectively move from meaning to form? This three-hour session, to be held at SAIT, is open to all and free of charge. Don't miss this extraordinary chance for hands-on work with Jane Willis!

Silvia Rossi

Focus on Research

Marian Rossiter & Marilyn Abbott

This month, our column focuses on a very useful technique, *shadowing*, that can be used to improve learners' pronunciation, as well as other aspects of their production, self-confidence, and listening comprehension. We're delighted that Jennifer Foote accepted our invitation to provide an article based on her research interests, which include pronunciation instruction, second language speech perception, and computer assisted language learning.

Many of you will have met Jenn when she was in the TESL Master's program at the University of Alberta. She has also been a frequent presenter at ATESL conferences.

Jenn recently completed her PhD at Concordia University in Montreal and has just returned home to Alberta to take a position as Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Extension at the University of Alberta. We're very pleased to welcome her back by highlighting insights from her teaching and research in this month's *Focus on Research* column. We're sure that her practical suggestions will enhance both the teaching and learning of English as a second language, particularly for those students whose goals include improved pronunciation.



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Shadowing: an evidence-based technique to help learners improve their pronunciation

Jennifer A. Foote

Pronunciation can be difficult to address in the ESL classroom. In fact, it was my own struggle to help learners with pronunciation that inspired me to pursue much of my current research. There are two major challenges that instructors face when deciding how to approach pronunciation in their classes. First, some learners will likely not need any help with pronunciation while others may need a lot. It is possible for speakers to have an excellent overall grasp of a second language, but still have difficulties being understood due to their pronunciation; at the same time, some learners have few issues with pronunciation even at lower levels of proficiency. As a result, even in classes where learners are considered to be at the same level, there will likely be a wide spread in terms of their pronunciation needs. The second challenge is that for learners who do need help with pronunciation, it is unlikely that they will need help with exactly the same things. For example, one learner may struggle with the distinction between /p/ and /b/, while another has difficulties with word stress. This makes it very difficult to decide what to focus on when teaching pronunciation.

These challenges have led me on a search for a pronunciation activity that:

- a) can be done outside of class for learners who need extra help, while also being appropriate for in-class use, and
- b) will allow different learners to focus on different aspects of pronunciation while doing the same activity.

In this article I will discuss an activity called ‘shadowing’, which satisfies both of these requirements and which numerous research studies have found to be effective technique for improving pronunciation.

Defining Shadowing

Shadowing is an activity wherein a learner listens to a speech model, and tries to copy that model “as closely and quickly as possible” (Luo, Shimomura, Minematsu, Yamauchi, & Hirose, 2008, p. 4). It is different from a ‘listen and repeat’ activity, because the student speaks at the same time as the recording, rather than waiting for it to finish before speaking. Mimicry is also an important part of shadowing. The learners should not simply repeat the words they hear; they should also try to copy the pronunciation as closely as possible. Different researchers and instructors implement shadowing in different ways. For example, some encourage a slightly longer delay between listening and speaking, some have learners record and listen to their own voices, and some allow learners to read as well as listen. Numerous studies have found that shadowing helps learners improve their pronunciation regardless of minor differences in how the shadowing was carried out (e.g., Bovee & Stewart, 2009; Hsieh, Dong & Wang, 2013; Rongna & Hayashi, 2012). Shadowing has also been found to help with overall speaking skills (Li-Chi, 2009) and listening comprehension (e.g., Bovee & Stewart, 2009), which means that even learners who don’t need to improve their pronunciation may benefit from classroom shadowing in other ways. Another major benefit of shadowing is that it is easy to set up and use with learners. While there is not one set way to implement shadowing, I am going to offer suggestions based on findings from my own research with language learners.

Choosing a speech model

The type of speech model that will work best in a particular situation will vary, based on the needs of a particular learner or class. In both my research and my language classes, I have always chosen fairly short speech samples because they allow students to become ‘experts’ at those particular models without needing to practice for hours. If learners are able to practice the same short audio clips repeatedly, they will have a chance to automatize words and phrases for later use. I have found one-minute speech clips to be a good length for intermediate and upper intermediate learners. If the shadowing is being done in class, it may be more engaging to use a dialogue than a monologue and to have learners work in pairs. For my most recent research project, I used short dialogues from popular TV sitcoms. These were entertaining for the students, and, while not completely authentic, they were closer to authentic speech than recordings made specifically for language learners. Many of the participants liked these clips because they contained language and humour not typically found in textbooks, so the participants felt

like they were gaining new vocabulary and expressions, as well as improved pronunciation. However, it is also possible to use portions of listening activities from textbooks to reinforce what is being learned in class or even to have students find their own speech models based on their interests and learning goals.

Using recordings

In order for learners to improve in their second language, they need to notice how their speech differs from that of their target language (Schmidt, 2001). This idea of *noticing the gap* is as important for pronunciation development as it is for other aspects of language development, such as grammar and vocabulary. Having learners listen to their own recorded speech is a simple way to give them an opportunity to notice these ‘gaps’ without requiring the instructor to analyze and point out errors to each individual learner – which can be a daunting and time-consuming task! While, even a few years ago, having a whole class of students record themselves could be difficult to organize, thanks to smart phones, most students now have the technology required for recording in their pockets! There are many apps that can be used for recording, but I have found one free app called *Multi Track Song Recorder*ⁱ which, when used with earbuds, allows learners to listen to the speech clips and record their voices simultaneously; they are then able to choose whether to listen to their own voices in isolation or over top of the recording. The app also allows learners to save or email their recordings, making it easy for instructors to assign shadowing as homework and to check whether the students are completing their assignments.

Using shadowing outside of class

I suspect many instructors have received this question: “What can I do to improve my pronunciation outside of class?” Shadowing is one concrete suggestion that instructors can give. However, in order to show improvement, learners need to commit to regular practice. While more research needs to be done to determine just how much practice is needed for shadowing to lead to noticeable changes, I have found that learners have success when they practice frequently, even if the individual practice sessions are short, and when they continue practice sessions for a sustained period of time. For example, rather than practicing for 1 hour once a week, I suggest practicing several times per week for a shorter period of time. When practicing four times per week for 8 weeks, I found that learners became easier to understand and more fluent, even though they were only required to practice for 15 minutes at each session.

Using shadowing in class

In class, shadowing can be used in a variety of ways. I would often assign shadowing as homework and then have students present shadowing dialogues to the class in pairs, without the script. By working in small groups or dyads, learners can offer feedback to each other, either by listening to each other shadow, or by listening to each other’s shadowing recordings. Shadowing can also be done as a whole class activity, with everyone listening to one recording together, and shadowing as a group. This can work especially well with lower level learners, and as an introduction to shadowing for learners who haven’t done it before.

Learners’ opinions about shadowing

One of the fears instructors may have when implementing shadowing is that its form-focused and often repetitive nature will mean that students find it boring or ineffective. Fortunately, this seems not to be the case the majority of the time. While studies that have investigated learners’ opinions of shadowing (e.g., Bovee & Stewart, 2009; Li-Chi, 2009) have found that some learners found it to be tedious and/or difficult, overall reactions were positive, and learners saw shadowing as beneficial both in terms of improved speaking and increased confidence. My own research has had similar findings, with learners having a very positive overall view of shadowing. After 8 weeks of shadowing, all of the participants indicated that they would recommend the technique to a friend who was looking to improve his or her pronunciation.

Conclusion

Shadowing is certainly not a ‘miracle cure’ for learners who need help with pronunciation. However, while a lot of pronunciation activities are based largely on intuition, a number of research studies have found shadowing to be effective. It also offers one partial solution to the challenge of addressing pronunciation in classes with very diverse needs. If you haven’t already tried shadowing with your students, it is well worth considering.

References

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ⁱ This has a pro version, but the light version is free and can be found at <https://itunes.apple.com/ca/app/multi-track-song-recorder/id390599090?mt=8>



Learning English with CBC

CBC offers content that is current, local and relevant to the lives of Albertans. Since it is necessary to provide accessible language supports and resources for new Canadians, **Learning English with CBC** was conceived as a joint project with the Government of Alberta – to bridge the gap and make content accessible to immigrants and their families through re-recorded podcasts at a slower pace and language activities that can be used by learners independently or by ESL instructors in the classroom.

This project offers an accessible pathway to the English as a second language (ESL) community – for both individual self-directed learners and instructors of ESL, to achieve increased language levels through authentic radio broadcast content that is purposefully selected and accompanied with materials that support a range of language levels (i.e., Canadian Language Benchmarks 4 to 6).

Learning English with CBC aims to provide a self-study tool for intermediate ESL learners as well as an ESL classroom resource:

- to provide access to current newscasts regarding the Alberta labour market, economy, community events, and incidents at a pace that intermediate ESL learners can follow;
- to increase knowledge of current news stories;
- to increase learners' listening skills and to present varied techniques to improve listening skills;
- to increase learners' vocabulary and to provide tasks that increase the understanding and use of vocabulary;
- to highlight grammatical items in the newscasts and to provide supplementary tasks to increase learners' understanding of grammatical items, where applicable;
- to encourage discussion of news stories in English outside of lessons and/or in class with peers.

Every Monday you'll find a new weekly newscast aimed at students who have reached Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) 4, and at the start of every month there are also thematic stories – these lessons are longer and are suitable for students who have reached Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) 6+.

The stories are localized for Calgary and Edmonton listeners, and you can find them here:

- cbc.ca/Calgary/learning-english
- cbc.ca/Edmonton/learning-english

Contact person:

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Senior Communications Officer

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