

# Spotlight — Lorenzo Sclocco

**You are an advocate for professional development—how do you maintain professional development with a busy schedule and how would you encourage others to get involved and develop their skills?**

Teachers are life-long learners, so I always try to develop and hone my skills. Most of the opportunities I hear about come from LinkedIn: It's thanks to LinkedIn that during the pandemic I had come in closer contact with the instructional design world and the content development field. In the last three years, I came to the realization that teachers have so many transferrable skills: research, project and time management, critical thinking, creativity, leadership (yes, leadership too!). This is the advice I would give my other colleagues—it might be an unconventional one: Create or polish your profile on LinkedIn where you can start your networking. I was surprised to see that a very small number of ESL teachers had a LinkedIn profile at that time. By networking with people, I have come across quite a few opportunities for professional development. And professional development doesn't have to be done through webinars only. I find myself reading a few magazines during the year. I sometimes post some of my lessons that I would like to share with the rest of the teacher community because I believe that by sharing we can all improve.

As my dear friend and colleague Julie Reid says, "if I go away from a workshop or a webinar with only one valuable piece of information, I'm happy".

**You are currently working as a teacher trainer for TEFL Horizons. How did you get involved and what has it been like working with others in that capacity?**

I had started to attend the webinars held by Shannon Felt, the founder of TEFL Horizons, during the pandemic. What drew me to her webinars was that she was able to identify the pain points of teaching online: how to teach a skill or a systems-based lesson online. After that, I was also invited to her podcast where I shared my experience in curriculum and syllabus development. After this episode, she invited me to join TEFL Horizons as a teacher trainer. It was my first time to officially train ESL teachers. The whole experience has been mind-blowing. We observe the teachers teaching a live class and then we give detailed and actionable feedback on the class, plus consultation on the upcoming class. One



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of the benefits is being able to hone my skills when giving constructive feedback. For example, "Next time, you could..." instead of "you shouldn't have done this" or "What made you choose that?" instead of "Why did you choose that?" Also, the questions that trainees have during the eight-month practicum always keep me on my toes because you have to be able to give advice and to explain the rationale behind every task.

**You contributed to Café New Canadians (Immigrants' journey to success: We speak with the LGBTQ+ community). How does your work as an Education Specialist and Curriculum Developer connect with this?**

Besides working in the education field, I also work as an Online Programming Coordinator and Content Developer for a non-profit organization named North York Community House (Toronto). In this capacity, I have been able to closely

work with settlement workers who serve newcomers. This means that I have become more and more acquainted with the issues and barriers people face when moving to Canada. The first concept that comes to mind when I think of the connection between my educational work and the non-profit sector is intersectionality: the layers of racial identity, gender identity, ability, mental health, to name a few. And this is something I try to bring into the classroom because to me it is important to represent the cultural diversity and the gender identity of my students, and that they feel comfortable enough to express who they are.

Café New Canadians is a great platform where newcomers, especially international students and internationally educated professional can gain a deeper insight into the Canadian workplace and lifestyle.

A fun fact: I came across Café New Canadians when I was developing the syllabus for Business English for George Brown College as I incorporated some of the videos into the material for the curriculum. I also contacted the executive producer, Gerard Keledjian, and we've been in touch ever since!

**What takeaways have you learned with your professional experiences and what's your advice for teachers or ELT professionals just getting started in the industry?**

I would say my top takeaway has been: not being afraid of the challenge and being confident in myself. Many times, we say “no” to opportunities because we think we don't have enough knowledge or experience. But how can we gain more knowledge or experience if we are holding ourselves back? One thing that used to hold me back was my perfectionism: We can't allow this to stop us from evolving.

Of course, there is always something new ahead of us, and we will never be able to keep up with the new teaching techniques, but at least we can try to welcome any opportunity that comes our way.

That's why a piece of advice for people who are just getting started in the industry would be: Put yourself out there. You can start by offering private classes (this is how I had started years ago) or, better, you can take a certificate (there are many institutions that offer teaching courses) where you can learn what the lesson frameworks are and how you can scaffold a lesson by using one of those lesson frameworks.

**Going forward, where is the industry taking you and do you have any special projects coming up?**

Right now, I am juggling different jobs: teaching, content developing and programming, and teacher training. Teaching has always been my passion since my university years in Germany, but teacher training is something I am becoming closer and closer to. I feel that these three jobs have one factor in common: the opportunity to be creative and develop material.

I'm always open to new challenges, not thinking whether I am good enough. If I don't try, I will never know. I didn't know if I had the skills to train teachers or the skills to publish a few lesson plans for the Swiss Journal *ETAS*.

Currently I am working on a duoethnography research study with Rebecca Schmor (PhD candidate at OISE). By contrasting our lived experiences and respective teaching beliefs, we are investigating the different plurilingual and target-language approaches we implement inside the classroom. Stay tuned!

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***Thank you once again for your contribution, Lorenzo!***

