The Conference Issue

Developing a cross-cultural framework to teach academic writing in the L2 classroom **PLUS** Developing targeted technology standards for Avenue language instructors, programs, and learners **AND MORE...**

TESL Ontario

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Editor's Note

Hello and welcome to the first issue of *Contact* for 2024. Our March issue includes some articles from presenters from TESL Ontario's annual conference that took place in November 2023 and other informative pieces from ELT professionals from around the world - including the USA, the UK, and Iran. Not only that, but we have articles that talk about how language affects other aspects of life and courses students are taking.

In the Spotlight for March 2023 is Rabia Khokhar. Rabia was a presenter at the 2023 annual conference; among some of her work is her dedication for picture books and how they build identity affirming learning spaces. Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts, ideas, and passions, Rabia! I think your work will inspire many.

The first article of the issue is written by Andrés Chinchín Talavera and provides insight into the role that writing plays in the creation of identities and ideologies. Following that, John Allan, Deborah Healey, Phil Hubbard, Greg Kessler, Rob McBride, Sharon Rajabi, and Matthias Sturm, provide an overview of the new platform released in 2020 for adult newcomer language instruction by New Language Solutions (NLS) on Avenue.ca and the need for standards to support effective use of Avenue and technology-enhanced language learning (TELL) in online and blended classes. Marcela Danowski looks at the key elements for reshaping assessment. Rebecca Schmor and Nisa Akdemir report on findings from a TESL Ontario membership survey and synchronous dialogue session regarding challenges and opportunities related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

(DEI). Mohsen Jazeb and Sepideh Sharafi explore the crucial role and success of professional development for language teachers. Maira Klyshbekova presents her reflections on the use of pedagogical translanguaging at a language center for newly arrived adult refugees and asylum seekers in the United Kingdom. And finally, Maria Zaman, Ryan Summers, and Sarah Boese-Noreen look at effective strategies for teaching subjects like science, to English language learners.

To all the contributors, I appreciate your work and for sharing it with our readership!

Thank you for reading. Take care.

-Nicola Carozza
editor@teslontario.org

CONTACT

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Spotlight — Rabia Khokhar

Rabia Khokhar is a teacher in Toronto, an equity consultant, and a doctoral student. Her research interests include equitable education, children's literature, and professional development. Rabia is passionate about bringing theory to practice and enjoys sharing her learning on her social media platforms. She is the recipient of the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario's 2021 Anti-Racist and Equity Activism Award, the 2022 Professional Learning and Curriculum Development Award, and the 2022 Angela Thacker Excellence in Teacher-Librarianship Memorial Award.

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) presented you with the 2021 Anti-Racist and Equity Activism Award. Talk to us about this special moment in your life.

This was such an incredible and humbling moment in my life! I have always been incredibly passionate about equitable education and to receive this award from ETFO; fellow educators was really affirming. I have always been interested in bringing equity theory to practice in tangible, relevant,

contextual and accessible ways for students, educators, families and other stakeholders and so to be recognized for doing this work and some of its impact was really exciting and an honour.

One of the things this award recognized was the newsletter I had created around equity topics and book recommendations. It was really cool to know that there were subscribers like educators, librarians, community workers, families, administrators, professors, publishers, authors etc.). The interest in this newsletter showed me the importance of ensuring that our equity work is accessible and practical for all of our community members. This award also reaffirmed my own commitment to making equity or anti-racist theory/ practices accessible and relevant and to sort of demystify them.

It also reminded me of the purpose of this work which for me is to strive to "build longer tables not higher walls" (Jose Andres). This award reignited my responsibility to do this work with humility and to always remember that we play a small role in a bigger picture of creating equity, justice and fairness within our spheres of influence.

Professional development is something important to you. How does it fit into your daily work and profession?

Professional development and ongoing learning is really important for me personally. I believe that as educators, we need to be reflective practitioners and so it's important that we stay committed to learning, growing and evolving within our roles and our practices so we can meet the needs

of those we are serving. I also believe that there are many ways and methods of engaging in professional development and learning.

Currently, professional development is a central part of my work. As an education and equity consultant at Rabia Teaches, I offer professional development to various stakeholders around making equity topics accessible such as workshops for educators and students. As well, as a Teacher-Educator , I am part of the practicum team at a Toronto Teachers College program. My role is to mentor, support and observe student teachers in their placements. This also involves providing workshops. As well, as a doctoral student, my upcoming research study (hopefully) will be focused on bringing together a group of elementary educators to engage in a professional learning community around anti-Islamophobia education through picture books.

Professional development is a central part of my work and I believe that workshops and tangible resources are just one way to work towards equitable conditions for all.

You contributed to the 2023 TESL Ontario Conference. How did you get involved and what was your takeaway?

I was very excited to see the TESL flyer calling for workshop facilitators for the conference. I think I came across it on social media. My workshop topic focused on how we can use picture books to build identity affirming learning spaces. The topic really arose from my own experiences as a former English as a Second teacher in Toronto schools.

Most of my students were newcomers to Canada and spoke many beautiful languages. I wanted students to feel a sense of welcome and belonging as this classroom was one of the first ones in their new country. One of the ways I strived to do this was by having picture books that represented their identities and I hoped that as they transitioned into their new spaces they could see aspects of things that were important to them. Picture books became a central way for me to strive to build equitable learning spaces for my students that affirmed and expanded their identities and experiences.

Also, my passion for using picture books to build equitable learning spaces in English as a second language classrooms arose from my own lived experiences. I came to Canada when I was 6 years old and the programs I was part of felt like I had to remove or hide parts of myself to 'fit' into the classroom and school space. The focus was mostly on learning the technical aspects of the English language and not on building identity affirming learning spaces that saw or valued the multilingual aspects of our identities. Therefore, I knew that if I was ever to teach such a program, I would strive to build a space that recognized and built upon the identities of my students. The classroom would focus more on a holistic approach that would center students and build upon what they already knew.

Being part of this conference was an incredible experience! Everything was very organized and I felt very supported throughout. In the session, people were respectful, kind and brought their experiences to share with others. My key takeaway was that there are many people working to create equitable changes in their learning spaces. It was also exciting to connect with others who are using picture books in different learning spaces and with students of all ages! Overall, it felt powerful to be part of this amazing community!

On your website, you posted about a reading challenge – Centering Muslim Characters. How did you come up with this and how can it be expanded to all classrooms?

I have always been passionate about intentionally using stories and picture books as tools for different communities to tell and share their own stories authentically. I also feel that stories are a tangible way to build bridges of understanding, connection, empathy and community. As a Muslim person, I know that there are many stereotypes about our identities that play out in various settings. This reading challenge arose from my need to take a small step within my circles to bring forward and center the intersectional stories of Mulsims.

I was working on curating this resource that sort of moved beyond just sharing stories that could be seen that could seem tokenistic in nature. I wanted to really intentionally bring forward Muslim authors, illustrations and stories that were writing stories that worked to show the dynamic and diverse experiences of Muslims. I wanted to focus on stories that provided common entry points for students such as themes around friendship, family, teamwork, community.

I had been working on this resource for a while but what prompted me to finish it was when the attack happened to the Muslim family in London. As someone in the community who was also hurting; I wanted stories to be a way we could come together and heal. I was honoured to know that people shared this reading challenge in their classroom, homes and in their communities.

I think that the root of the reading challenge is the idea that intentionally curating and centering stories about communities we want to support is an important and tangible way we can work towards equity. Furthermore, it is important that we are learning about and amplifying the stories that the community wants to share. For me that means looking for authors and illustrators from the community who are telling their own stories.

I think this reading challenge and others like it can be expanded to all learning spaces because I wholeheartedly believe in the power and role of stories. Stories can help us learn new information, consider actions we can take to create change, foster empathy and joy. I believe all of these elements are needed as we work to build strong communities.

When we look at the field of education, regardless of what we teach, what are your dreams and aspirations for the field when you reflect on the upcoming 10, 20 years?

I really appreciate this question so much because it is so hopeful! This question reminds me of an assignment that I had to do many years ago in teacher's college. We had to come up with a slogan/caption of the change we wanted to see within the education space in 2030. Even though I graduated in 2014, at the time 2030 seemed so far away! The slogan I wrote was "I'm ensuring social equity doesn't slip between the cracks in our education system. My classroom is a positive space where students are represented and have a voice. This is my time…"

As I reflect on my slogan and this question, I feel like my dreams and aspirations for the education field are generally still similar. At the time, when I wrote the slogan, I did not necessarily know all of the 'language' of equity and social justice education. Of course, I feel that I am still learning and figuring out what equity means in practice in different contexts.

However, I think my commitments and visions for this field focus on working to create equitable conditions for all. I want us to continue working to dismantle unfair systematic

structures, for students of all identities to find a sense of belonging in their learning spaces, to bring forward authentic representation of people's stories and histories. I want people doing and leading equity work to continue to be supported. I see this equity work being multidimensional and diverse so many different people will engage in it in different ways to make an impact. I sort of see it like the picture below, many ways to work towards a central goal. I would encourage people to consider their own special gifts and how they can use those to impact a cause they care about.

Photo taken by Rabia Khokhar

Thank you so much for the opportunity to share through this interview!

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If you would like to know more, please visit Rabia's website.

Thank you once again for your contribution, Rabia!

Developing a cross-cultural framework to teach academic writing in the L2 classroom

By Andrés Esteban Chinchín Talavera, Canada

Introduction

It is through interaction with other individuals that people know and understand who they are and their roles and limitations within society (Connell & Wellborn, 1991). Different societies have different values and beliefs that shape their world views from the macro level of ideological structures to the micro level of social activity (The Douglas Fir Group, 2016). For this reason, it is imperative that any individual who desires to write well in each language be able to understand the ideological structures of the chosen culture to communicate appropriately. This article provides an insight into the role that writing plays in the creation of identities and ideologies, and presents a theoretical framework developed by Jim McKinley (2015) to allow learners to develop a cross-cultural writer identity and critical thinking through the combination of socio-cultural theory, identity construction theory, and critical argument theory.

Writing enacts and creates identities and ideologies

Ideologies are ideas and beliefs which constitute a worldview by which people make sense of reality. Humanities theories and researchers have stated that there is "no ideology-free observation or thought" (Scott, 2015, p. 48). Language does not exist outside the realm of culture and ideology, so writing, being a language activity, is ideological in nature.

For educators who seek to develop a writing program, the question "what sort of social group do I intend to apprentice the learner into?" (Gee, 2008, p. 48, as cited in Scott, 2015, p. 48) is a pivotal one since it acknowledges that literacy has the task of negotiating identities and ideologies in specific social situations. It is part of what creates and distinguishes social groups. Literacy can never be a neutral and isolated discipline, but rather one that is socially situated and focused on social involvements and consequences (Scott, 2015). Since writing is always tied to power struggles, the contestation of identities, and perpetuation of belief

systems, Villanueva (2015) provides two simple questions that can begin to uncover the power dynamics in any type of writing, "what's being said? and what's left unsaid?" (p. 58).

Writers cannot be disassociated from their writing, and it takes time for them to adapt to new situations. In fact, it is through writing that a person is shaped into new environments and adapts to the values and beliefs of new social contexts (Scott, 2015). When students in an academic writing class can meet the research and writing requirements, one may say that they "enact an identity in response to social expectations for who they are and what they should be doing" (Scott, 2015, p. 49).

Thus, the main purpose of writing is not to develop a set of skills but rather become a certain kind of person (Roozen, 2015, p. 51). One may conclude that the difficulty that people may have with writing may not be due to the lack of intelligence or poor level of literacy, but rather the inability to see himself as part of a particular community. According to Estrem (2015), identity formation requires "conventions, practices, habits, and approaches of their discipline" (p. 56). Once attained, however, identities are never clearly delineated, and individuals may choose to emphasize one over another "depending, on the context, audience, and rhetorical task" (Villanueva, 2015, p. 57).

Writing is never private; it is always part of an ongoing conversation, and it is shaped by previous experiences and interactions that the writer has had with communities and read materials. Even when the writer engages in a private exercise, this practice draws knowledge from prior social exposures. Finally, writing instructors must be aware that previous experiences have the potential of either raising or diminishing the learners' feelings towards writing. Also, positive experiences are not always helpful, since what worked in one context is not always helpful in another (Lunsford, 2015).

Learning conventions and cultural framework

After having delved a general ideological significance of writing, now it is important to consider that L2 writing education has been pragmatic, whereas L1 writing education has been ideological (Santos, 1992). In this regard, L1 learners have the possibility to critically examine the power structures and political dynamics that influence their lives, while L2 learners obtain the ability to suffice for their immediate needs such as understanding assignments and completing academic essays (McKinley, 2015).

Additionally, one must consider that the ideologies which L2 writers bring into the classroom are not always in complete alignment with North American worldviews and values. For this reason, McKinley (2015) has worked on a cultural theoretical framework for EFL academic writing using three learning theories: (1) Social cultural theory, (2) Identity construction theory, and (3) Critical argument theory. Also, he has mediated the interrelationship between them using academic discourse.

Sociocultural theory

This learning theory focuses on "the sociocultural convention of academic discourse" (McKinley, 2015, p. 187). In a constructivist approach, this convention studies the way writers develop an authorial self. This is done through the critical examination of sources, citing evidence, stating claims, and creating and addressing counter arguments. Barton (1995) claims that "through the use of contrastive connectives such as however, writers are constructing a cultural identity by taking an interpersonal approach" (McKinley, 2015, p. 188).

Identity construction theory

This theory encompasses the writer's development of a cultural and academic identity. According to McKinley (2015) social interactions are the way in which "individuals develop an understanding of their position in relationship to others within the same community" (p. 186). This means that writers will develop their academic and cultural identity through written discourse as they attempt to persuade readers through their word choice in a specific social and cultural settings (Ivanicˇ, 1998, as cited in McKinley, 2015, p. 186).

Critical argument theory

The traditional and systematic patterns of teaching reading and writing are essential. However, it is not here where critical thinking takes place, but rather in the interactions where students are required to work collaboratively with their peers and with academic text to construct knowledge and resolve conflict, which is achieved through extensive critical reading (McKinley, 2015). Students, however, may use different ways to develop an argument. These ways may be inductive or deductive, as well as drawing from the writers' own schemata or extensive reading on the topic (McKinley, 2015).

The combination of these three theories can allow researchers to develop a theoretical framework which will aid in the construction of cross-cultural writer identity and critical argument.

Theoretical Framework

Through the combination of these three theories, McKinley (2015) has developed a theoretical framework which is presented into a visual (Figure 1), which shows the construction of critical thinking and argumentation in L2 writing. The square in the middle represents the social context in which the individual will create their argument. At the bottom of the chart is the social interaction, which is based on the constructivist theory, systemic function linguistics, and literacy process. It is through social interactions that the individual becomes aware of these theories (McKinley, 2015, p. 202). After that, through group dynamics, the learner will advance to the next stage—Learner.

Figure 1 - Theoretical framework of general concepts
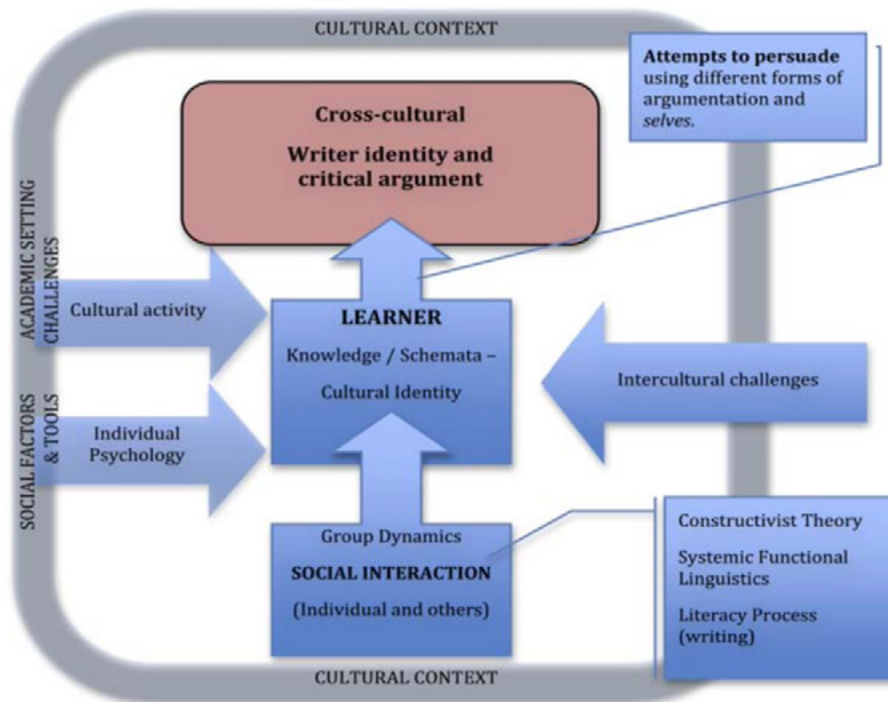
Note: Theoretical framework of general concepts. From Critical argument and writer identity: Social constructivism as a theoretical framework for EFL academic writing by Jim McKinley, 2015.

At the Learner's stage, students will use their schemata and knowledge to address the intercultural challenges, which will be scaffolded by social factor tools—individual psychology—, and academic setting challenges created by the instructor to develop a new self that will allow the individual to bridge the intercultural gap in his attempt to provide a persuasive and critical intercultural argument, while yielding space for the creation of a cross-cultural self as a by-product.

This framework is dependent on social constructivist theories, which assert that learning takes place in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), as defined by Vygotsky (1978) "[ZPD refers to] the distance between the [individual] developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the higher level of potential development as determined through problem solving under...guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (as cited in Mirzaei & Eslami, 2015, p. 6). In other words, it is the place where the learner reaches an appropriate level of self-awareness of his/her skills and strives to achieve his/her potential through the interaction and assistance of more skillful peers (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

Also, the social cultural theory understands that human mental activity is rooted in community discursive practices. However, it is important to mention that not all social encounters will provide affordances for

self-development, but only those that happen within the ZPD in a context where assistance is scaffolded and mediated through a semiotic tool—language being the main semiotic tool of mediation (De Guerrero, & Villamil, 2000).

Finally, in this exercise, it is crucial for learners and assistants to achieve and maintain intersubjectivity in their interaction; this means, "an intermental point where individual minds come to share common perspectives and an equal degree of commitment to the task" (Rommetveit, 1985, as cited in De Guerrero & Villamil, 2000, p. 53). Given the nature of social constructivism, this will be an unnegotiable condition for success within the ZPD.

Conclusion

As it has been observed in this article, writing is not only about skill development, but the formation of a new self (Roozen, 2015, p. 51). This does not mean to be able to communicate ideas, but to actively and efficiently participate within a given society and community. Hence, the proposed theoretical framework has the potential to revolutionize writing instructions and facilitate the creation of methods and teaching practices that will use social constructivism and work within the Zone of Proximal Development to elicit the creation of a new self, which will also be a capable and responsible member of the chosen society.

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Author Bios

Andrés Chinchín Talavera is an Academic Writing Professor at University of Canada West in Vancouver, British Columbia. He has 8 years of experience working with emigrants and international students at various settings, from high school to university, and is expecting to begin his PhD in Language, Culture and Literacy in September 2024.

Developing targeted technology standards for Avenue language instructors, programs, and learners: An initiative of New Language Solutions

By John Allan, Deborah Healey, Phil Hubbard, Greg Kessler, Rob McBride, Sharon Rajabi, & Matthias Sturm, Canada & USA

Abstract

In August 2020 a new platform for adult newcomer language instruction was released by New Language Solutions (NLS) on Avenue.ca. NLS recognized the need for standards to support effective use of Avenue and technology-enhanced language learning (TELL) in online and blended classes. Concluding that existing technology standards from ISTE and TESOL were too broad for their purposes, NLS initiated a project to develop their own technology standards for Avenue stakeholders including instructors, programs, and learners. These would not be performance evaluation tools but rather best used for self-assessment and for guiding local innovation. Here we report on that initiative, which was introduced at TESL Ontario 2023, focusing on the instructor standards as they are currently the most fully developed.

Background

Since 2010, New Language Solutions (NLS) has provided a learning management solution (LMS) to front line settlement language training providers funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). The federal government contracts about 230 community colleges, school boards, and community organizations to improve the official language skills of newcomers and provide them orientation to life in Canada: Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) for English learners and Cours de langue

pour les immigrants au Canada (CLIC) for French. Newcomers are eligible for full or part-time LINC or CLIC instruction before they achieve Canadian citizenship.

The original LMS solution was hosted at EduLINC.org and built on the Moodle open-source and license-free platform. In August 2020, an enhanced solution was released as Avenue.ca. Currently almost half of the LINC and CLIC programs implement Avenue in their programs. In any 30-day period, Avenue has about 20,000 active users and hosts almost 2,000 teacher's courses across Canada (except Quebec). In September 2023, the Ontario government's newcomer language training programs gained access to Avenue after agreement with IRCC, doubling the potential Avenue user base.

The IRCC-funded sector is aligned with the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLBs) language skills taxonomy. Task-based learning is mandated by the funders, and portfolio-based language assessment (PBLA) is the standardized approach to classroom assessment and learner progression. Avenue.ca provides an e-portfolio alternative to physical binders. Avenue supports a full range of learning modalities: blended/hybrid, HyFlex or online remote. Instructors are trained to adapt the course to their local context, and have control over the features, functions, and e-curriculum available to learners.

The COVID-19 crisis and the emergency remote teaching it spawned made it clear that language teachers need to be better prepared in understanding and using technology than many were. However, this realization was not new: A number of papers have argued that such preparation is needed (e.g., Nozawa, 2019), and organizations such as TESOL have had standards in place for years to address that need (Healey et al., 2011; TESOL, 2008). Yet despite the recognition of the value of such standards (Sun, 2022), they have failed to gain widespread traction. One reason is that standards like those of TESOL designed to be applicable to any language learning environment are not an ideal fit when used in their entirety for specific contexts (Hubbard, 2021). Here, we report on an initiative of New Language Solutions (NLS) to develop a set of targeted technology standards aimed at instructors in the Canadian settlement language sector. This article expands on our talk at TESL Ontario 2023. We also describe ongoing actions for sector consultation, dissemination, and adoption.

The plan is for the instructor technology standards being developed for this sector to be threaded into NLS's four stages of expertly mentored online teacher training. As well, the standards are already being integrated into Avenue Leadership Training for administrators and lead teachers. Importantly, these instructor standards will be complemented by sets of technology standards for programs and learners, described briefly later in the paper.

The development process

In February 2023, the team recruited by NLS for this project began their work. The team included three members of the task force that developed the TESOL Technology Standards (TESOL, 2008)—Phil Hubbard, Deborah Healey, and Greg Kessler)—along with Canadian colleague Sharon Rajabi. Others centrally involved in the discussions were Rob McBride, John Allan, and Matthias Sturm from NLS.

The process of developing the instructor standards was fully online and yet highly collaborative. Beginning in February 2023, the team met on Zoom every week or two for 90 minutes or more, more than 30 times by the end of 2023. Although we worked offline on specific individual assignments as well, the online collaborative meetings represented the great majority of the total development time on the project.

Early on, we decided that our goal should be a set of reasonable, achievable standards relevant to the sector. We first revisited the TESOL standards and those of the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) as well as other relevant sources. Individually, we generated and shared an initial list of principles, aiming for a compact set that teachers would find manageable. After discussing these and reconciling differences, we used the results to draft an initial set of eight standards, which we later reduced to seven (vs. 14 for TESOL).

We strove to make the language of the standards and performance indicators (PIs) as direct and clear as possible. For example, the initial Standard 2 was "Teachers are able to use technology to identify and meet current and future needs of learners and to reflect critically on this practice." This was later rewritten directly and precisely: "Understand and use a basic set of relevant technology resources and tools for language teaching and continue to update and expand this set regularly." It is worth noting that we deliberately use terms such as basic and relevant without fully defining them. Even within the community of Avenue users and the settlement language sector at large, the interpretation of basic and relevant may differ depending on the context.

PIs went through similar shifts. For instance, the general indicator, Supporting learners' plurilinguistic and pluricultural selves,' was originally under Standard 2, which is about using tools and digital resources. It was ultimately reconceptualized into a more direct form: Model equitable practices by incorporating learners' wealth of linguistic and cultural resources in technology use. It was then moved under Standard 4, covering areas of digital literacy and digital citizenship.

This is just a small sample of the collaborative process we used to develop the current versions of the standards and PIs as well as the other elements (text expansions, vignettes, and can-do statements). We

worked through shared online documents in Microsoft Teams, and many of the revisions occurred in real time during our many online meetings.

Overview of the instructor standards

Here is an abbreviated overview of the instructor standards. Readers can find a link to the full set of standards and support materials in the conclusion.

There are seven standards targeting the specific needs of the settlement language sector in Canada. Each standard is introduced with a short description as follows:

Standard 1 is about using devices and systems skillfully.

Standard 2 is about tools and digital resources.

Standard 3 is about technology-enhanced pedagogy.

Standard 4 is about digital literacy and digital citizenship for yourself and your learners.

Standard 5 is about using technology to help all learners thrive.

Standard 6 is about communicating with learners and observing their progress.

Standard 7 is about establishing and maintaining professional connections online.

Below is Standard 4 with its seven performance indicators (PIs). Each PI has an explanatory text, a reflection question, and a set of "can-do" statements for self-evaluation. We have included these for the first PI.

Standard 4 is about digital literacy and digital citizenship for yourself and your learners.

Be aware of and model the use of technology in safe, legal, ethical, and equitable ways.

PI 4.1. Guide learners to make positive and socially responsible contributions online.

In a blended, hybrid, or fully online class, learners are often expected to attend a synchronous session, engage in pair or group work, ask questions, or present to their peers. This may be a frustrating experience if your learners do not participate as planned. You may be compensating by doing the speaking most of the time. To create a welcoming class, acknowledge early on that the dynamics in a Big Blue Button or Zoom session are different than in-person sessions. This can help address learner anxiety and inhibitions. For example, you could dedicate the first session to an orientation about how and why the dynamics in an online class are different. Encourage your learners to ask questions. Introduce guidelines around active participation, group or pair work, turn-taking, and agreeing or disagreeing with peers respectfully in synchronous and asynchronous sessions. Incorporate in your daily plans multiple and varied opportunities for learners to ask questions and provide feedback.

Reflection: Think of strategies and practices that you incorporate in your online sessions. What works and what doesn't work? What would you do differently next time?

___ I help learners understand how to be respectful and collaborative in synchronous or asynchronous online sessions.

___ I encourage my learners—especially those who are quiet—to actively participate online.

___ I revisit recurring issues that my learners experience to ensure that an online interaction feels as comfortable as an in-person one.

PI 4.2. Know how to access and select safe resources online and share this knowledge with learners.

PI 4.3. Acknowledge learners' ownership of their online work.

PI 4.4. Learn about ethical use of technology and follow local, provincial, and national online privacy, copyright, and fair dealing regulations.

PI 4.5 Stay abreast of legal and ethical issues related to the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools.

PI 4.6 Model equitable practices by incorporating learners' wealth of linguistic and cultural resources in technology use.

PI 4.7. Model online behaviors that show respect for diversity in opinion, identity, and cultural practices.

To bring the standards to life, they are accompanied by a set of vignettes showing in detail how exemplary instructors have interpreted the standards in their courses. For example, a vignette from Jennifer Chow (Appendix A) describes how she has connected her Think-Aloud method in writing classes to elements of three of the technology standards: Standard 2 (tools and digital resources), Standard 3 (technology-enhanced pedagogy) and Standard 6 (communicating with learners and observing their progress).

Evaluation and implementation

Once we had a draft of the instructor standards in place that the team found satisfactory, we sent it to a Canadian university colleague who provided his feedback along with that of other faculty in applied linguistics and language teacher education. A number of their suggestions are reflected in the current form. Their responses also led us to add notes to teacher educators and program administrators clarifying the purpose of the standards.

Dissemination of the Avenue Standards for TELL focuses on the publication and distribution of the standards and their integration into Canadian language teaching sectors and key Avenue training initiatives. This dissemination plan is designed to weave the standards seamlessly into the fabric of teacher training, ensuring that educators are aware and trained with these standards throughout Avenue professional development. Avenue teacher training includes four stages of training that require up to eighty-five hours to complete. Only two of these training stages are mandatory.

Additionally, the Avenue leadership microcredentials integrate the technology standards throughout, including the teacher, student, and service provider individual microcredentials. The leadership microcredentials, which culminate in a capstone assignment, require participants to devise either a personal or an organizational plan aimed at enhancing the adoption of learning technologies, a critical step in advancing educational methodologies.

Taking those plans a step further, an Avenue course template is being developed to provide a local venue option for all the professionals in a service provider to innovate together and take their personal and shared practice to another level of standards implementation.

The emphasis is on the integration of these standards into all Avenue training, ensuring a consistent and thorough understanding of these guidelines among educators and leaders. A specialized course will be available for Service Provider Organization (SPOs), tailored to facilitate local integration of the standards. To make these standards more accessible, they will be made available in dual digital formats, including PDF and flipbook versions, which can be printed if required. Significant revisions are also planned for the LearnIT2teach Leadership Guide, incorporating chapters that specifically address these new standards. The Canadian language teaching community has been and will continue to be informed of the progress and continued integration of the technology standards through project communications including conference presentation, local workshop, webinars, social media posts, consultations, and professional articles. These initiatives will collectively endeavor to embed the standards deeply into educational practices, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and technological advancement in learning environments.

As a part of the sector-wide dissemination of the Avenue Standards for TELL and their integration in the instructor training and leadership course, a narrower stakeholder consultation of selected SPOs will generate data to evaluate the impact of operationalizing the standards. In this consultation, LINC clients, instructors and program administrators provide feedback. Clients follow a lesson plan developed to orient them to the learner standards and use a self-assessment tool. Instructors engage in reflective practice by self-evaluating how they are meeting the instructor standards or working towards them and the impact their adoption has on their teaching. Program administrators review the program standards to self-assess which standards their programs already meet or are on track to meet and which standards are priorities for continuous improvement, including making available instructor professional development and in-service supports.

The dissemination and consultation of the Avenue Standards for TELL will ensure that SPOs and instructors have access to formal and informal professional development and in-service supports to operationalize them. An impact analysis of the efforts of selected agencies will provide insights that will be reported on

to IRCC and to sector stakeholders at TESL conferences and in forums with instructors, Lead Instructors, and PBLA leads. Our aim is to build a community of practice, serving as a source for guidance for better practices and for TESL community presentations on the use of the standards in instructional practice and program-wide implementation.

Brief overview of program and learner standards

The Avenue Technology Standards for Language Programs assist administrators at all levels when making and implementing decisions about technology use. Collaboration is encouraged; programs are best served when stakeholders are well-informed, planning ahead, and working together to improve learner outcomes. The five standards may be implemented in different ways, depending on resources available, but they should guide decision-making and requests for funding. A checklist is included for self-assessment.

The Avenue Learning Technology Standards for Language Learners are designed to give instructors and administrators a framework for providing lessons and course offerings that build learner competence with technology, primarily for language learning and use. The aim is to enable learners to use digital tools to be more autonomous towards achieving their language goals. These standards are meant to work in concert with the instructor standards and the program standards.

As in instructor and program standards, learner standards include a guiding philosophy for the standards, followed by four standards with performance indicators and sub-indicators. Descriptive text is added where needed for clarification. Reflection questions are included for administrators and instructors, along with related tasks for learners. We anticipate including checklists and self-assessment tools that help instructors and learners chart learner readiness.

Conclusion

We have described the motivation, process, and product for technology standards targeting language instructors who use Avenue. We believe this project has value not only for that constituency, but also for the settlement language sector as a whole. Indeed, it offers a model of why and how to develop targeted technology standards for other specific contexts rather than relying exclusively on generic ones such as those of TESOL and ISTE.

The Avenue standards are not intended to assess professional practice on a pass or fail basis. They are not minimal standards, nor are they simply aspirational. Instead, they are designed to guide personal reflection and encourage uptake of better practices in teaching and learning by individual professionals, learners, or whole language training programs.

Over the next months and years, the standards will be disseminated in English and versioned into French. They are already influencing new National LINC/CLIC Curriculum Guidelines. In the next few years, the Canadian Language Benchmarks will be modernized. We anticipate that the standards will not only inform but also be informed by national frameworks as the sector evolves. Moreover, because technology and associated practices constantly evolve, the standards will be reviewed regularly and updated as needed.

The Avenue standards for instructors, programs, and learners with their support materials will be released under a Creative Commons license so that others may freely use and adapt them for non-commercial purposes (with attribution). NLS and the development team hope that the Avenue standards will guide development of learning technology standards beyond Canadian settlement language training. It is worth noting that NLS has articulated standards for itself as well. These are presented as a Mission, Vision, Values statement at https://avenue.ca.

Current versions of the standards and supporting documents can be found at https://avenue.ca/.

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Appendix A: Sample vignette

Jennifer Chow
The "Think Aloud" method:
Technology-assisted language skills enhancement
By Ken Desson

Précis

The idea

When Jennifer Chow began teaching English as Another Language (EAL) at Vancouver Community College (VCC) in 2007, giving students effective feedback on self-paced spoken assignments was a challenge. When students learn to write, the mistakes they make are recorded on paper, making it easy to point out errors and assign remedial practice. Not so with speaking. If there is no way to record self-paced spoken exercises, errors are gone as soon as they are spoken. The search for a solution led Jennifer on a quest for a technology-assisted way to record, review, annotate, and help students reflect on spoken assignments. After trying several potential solutions over the years, she now uses a Think Aloud method—a software-based multimodal feedback-reflection loop to improve speaking skills.

The learners

Jennifer's most recent blended learning class of 24 CLB-4/5 students ranged in age from 20 to 55, with the majority between 35 and 50. Class composition was diverse, with students from Ukraine, Turkey, Japan, Korea, Syria, Azerbaijan, Morocco, Afghanistan, and China. Coming from across the greater Vancouver area, the majority of daytime learners are female. Evening classes have a larger proportion of men. Unlike LINC, the VCC's Pathways EAL program is open to Canadian citizens as well as newcomers. In the class of 24, three learners were citizens who had been in Canada for more than five years.

The approach

The Pathways program for CLB 5-8 learners is divided into two courses – Speaking and Listening and Reading and Writing. About 70% of students take both courses at the same time, devoting 3 hours in the morning to one course and 3 hours in the afternoon to the other. During a 13-week course, students attend face-to-face classes two days a week. On the remaining three days, learning is asynchronous.

In the Think Aloud method, which is used mainly in the Speaking and Listening course, students record a speaking assignment as either a voice or video file, then upload it to Kaltura Media Assignment in their own protected folder on VCC's Moodle-based learning management system. Kaltura automatically creates captions of what the student said. Jennifer then listens to the assignment and adds notations to the video using screen casting technology. Students listen to the feedback and make their own notes, enabling Jennifer to see what they have understood from the feedback. Students use their notes to devise a plan for improvement, perhaps committing to several self-paced homework sessions to improve their use of, for instance, verb tenses.

Interested in learning more?

Instructor Profile

After graduating with an undergraduate degree in English from Simon Fraser University, Jennifer Chow enrolled in the university's Professional Development Program, where she earned her B.C. Ministry of Education certificate to teach in the province's K-12 system. Beginning as a Grade 1 teacher, Jennifer soon progressed to teaching high school where, in addition to teaching English and Social Studies, she helped newly immigrated students improve their English skills. The experience was so positive that she decided to make English as Another Language (EAL) teaching a full-time job. In 2007 she began her second career as an EAL instructor for adult learners at Vancouver Community College (VCC). Today, Jennifer teaches in the provincially-funded Pathways EAL program at VCC's Broadway Campus.

Context

When Jennifer first started teaching at VCC, cassette tapes had just been introduced as a way to record student in-class speaking practice. That meant carrying a bag of cassettes home each evening to assess each student's progress. There had to be a better way! So, Jennifer—who had no previous experience in Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL)—searched out and experimented with then-emerging applications that students could use to record speaking assignments, and she could use to provide feedback. The idea carried over to writing assignments. To replace the time-consuming process of providing written comments, Jennifer experimented with screencasting technology that enabled her to record verbal

comments on what a student had written. That way, students could hear her talk about what they did well and how to correct mistakes. The technology enhanced both teaching and learning.

In Jennifer's own words

When students are learning to write, any mistakes they make are recorded on paper. That makes it easy for an instructor to see the mistakes and point them out to the student. Things are different with speaking. If you are doing self-paced work and don't have a way to capture speech, it's gone as soon as it's spoken. So, students aren't aware of what they need to work on. For example, students sometimes think they're fluent because they speak quickly—when it might be difficult to understand what they are saying because they aren't using any intonation. You need to capture what is said in order to point out areas for improvement.

Portable recorders and cassette tapes were a break-through when they appeared. Digital recorders were even better. But both limited the ways in which feedback could be provided. I had no way to insert my comments into a student's audio file, so the recording and my feedback weren't linked directly. I really felt the need for something better.

Eventually, it arrived—online audio recording software such as Vocaroo, Audio Recorder, Audacity, Voicecoach, and others. When I assigned an in-class exercise or homework, students could use the software to record and upload it to a file for my review. Later, during COVID, we adopted Moodle as a learning platform and Zoom as our conferencing software. Zoom not only enabled me and other instructors to deliver online classes but could be used by learners to record speaking assignments. That enabled us to observe how students were forming words with their mouths and lips.

At first, students needed a lot of help getting acquainted with the software. Before using Zoom, I would deliver in-classroom instruction on how to record sessions. But, as it proved difficult for CLB-4 students to follow the instructions in real time, I prepared an instructional video to clarify the procedures. That worked quite well.

When we went back to blended classes, our use of Zoom dropped off. Instead, students would video-record speaking exercises using their phones or laptops, then upload them to Kaltura Media Assignment in their own protected folder in Moodle. Kaltura automatically creates a text file of what the student said. To provide feedback, I use ScreenPal (formerly called Screencast-O-Matic) to capture the video, highlight where a problem occurred, and record an audio/video comment. The student can see at a glance where feedback has been provided and can relate it directly to the captured text and video. This was the beginning of the Think Aloud feedback-reflection method now used to improve both speaking and writing skills, while reducing demands on instructor time.

To help students make use of new software, I have come to rely more and more on instructional videos. For every app, I make an instructional video using ScreenPal. I also use H5P to create interactive HTML5 content which allows students to pause an instructional video in order to try out a software feature themselves. For most students, the video or H5P tutorial is enough, but I check during synchronous classes to make sure they fully understand.

Even with these approaches, I still find myself spending a lot of time at the beginning of the term front-loading technology instruction so that we can then focus on language learning. My twice-weekly Zoom drop-in sessions really help. Students can share their screen and show me where they're having trouble so I can help them directly.

The think aloud method

At the beginning of a new intake of students, it's mainly me using the Think Aloud method to provide audio and video comments as I review student exercises. However, as the term progresses, I want students to use the same method to do their self-assessments and to comment on other students' work when asked to do so.

The Think Aloud method is also used when students do an experiential task. We have six speaking assessments throughout the term. Students unable to complete one of the assessments can choose to do an experiential task as a make-up assignment. For example, the assessment task might have been to record an 8-1-1 role play in which a nurse and a caller interact. For a student who does not successfully complete the assessment task, the make-up experiential task might be to seek information from a professional (for instance, a pharmacist, an exercise coach, or a nurse) record the conversation (optional), and add a self-reflection commentary using the Think Aloud method: "I made a mistake here. I was a bit nervous when I asked this question. I didn't use the auxiliary verb here. I didn't ask for clarification often enough."

The student was also required to record a reflection based on this experiential task. In their reflection, they would comment on how they planned the task, when and how they conducted the conversation, and how it went. Typically, the experiential tasks are about 9-10 minutes in length.

On the whole, I have found that students really like the two-way Think Aloud approach because it helps them see where they have made a mistake and learn what they need to do to correct it. It allows us to have an interactive asynchronous conversation about their strengths, weaknesses, and progression of skills.

I love being in the classroom. I love meeting students and seeing them gain confidence in what they're doing. I always say I have the best job in the world. What other job allows you to meet people from many different countries all in one place? Each has a unique story about how they came to Canada and how they've overcome the barriers and challenges they've faced. I have such respect for what they've gone through and

what resilience they have. During breaks, you hear many different languages being spoken. It's beautiful music. All these things make coming to work each day a pleasure.

Technology standards and performance indicators

Here are some key ways in which Jennifer's Think Aloud method demonstrates how NSL's standards for technology-enhanced language teaching and learning can be incorporated into EAL instruction.

Standard 2: Tools and digital resources

Understand and use a basic set of relevant technology resources and tools for language teaching and continue to update and expand this set regularly.

- As most students have had only limited exposure to online technology, Jennifer makes extensive use of instructional videos—created using ScreenPal—to walk learners through hardware and software functions step by step.

- Jennifer also uses H5P to create and share interactive HTML5 content which allows students to pause instructional videos while they try out a software feature themselves.

- For the Think Aloud method to work, students must learn to record voice and video files on their personal Smartphones or laptops using an app of their choice (e.g., Vocaroo, Audio Recorder, Audacity, Voicecoach, etc.). Jennifer recommends suitable software, provides self-paced video tutorials, and gives students one-on-one help, as needed.

Standard 3: Technology-enhanced pedagogy

Thoughtfully integrate technology in your teaching, informed by exemplary practice and relevant theory and research.

- To keep up on new ideas and technology solutions as they emerge, Jennifer relies on online collaboration with other teachers. Twitter has been the main platform used to share ideas, resources, tips, and discoveries.

- Although Think Aloud feedback is a signature element of Jennifer's approach, her classes incorporate a variety of approaches that respond to individual student needs. In her blended learning classroom, face-to-face instruction, help from tutors in VCC's Learning Center, self-paced tutorials, and support from classmates are all part of the learning environment.

Standard 6: Communicating with learners and observing their progress

Use technology to support, monitor, and assess learner progress.

• The essence of the Think Aloud method is to provide feedback on student spoken assignments that highlights and comments on issues at the moments where they occur but also noting successes and improvements since the last assignment. In contrast to more generalized written comments, this gives students a better sense of where progress is being made and improvements are needed.

• Student self-improvement plans are part of the Think Aloud post-assignment assessment process. After students listen to the specific spoken feedback they receive on an assignment (for instance, about ending consonant sounds), they might work out a plan to make additional recordings, and use the captions generated in Kaltura Media Assignment to identify any ending consonant sounds that they missed. Alternatively, they might plan to meet with a VCC Learning Center tutor to work on the pronunciation of ending consonant sounds. When it comes time for their next assessment, they can report on whether or not they carried out their plan as intended.

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Transforming assessment for today's classrooms: A guide to empowering teachers and students

By Marcela Cecilia Danowski, Argentina

Introduction

Assessment serves as the compass guiding educators and students through their academic journey. Beyond mere grading, assessment is a tool that fosters growth and understanding. In this article, tailored for classroom teachers, we will delve into four key elements reshaping the assessment landscape in education: rubrics, e-portfolios, differentiated activities, and metacognitive activities.

The power of rubrics in the classroom

Rubrics, structured scoring guides, offer a unique ability to bring objectivity and clarity to assessment within the classroom setting. They not only provide educators with a standardized approach to evaluate student work but also offer transparency to students regarding the criteria for success.

Consider a writing assignment, where a rubric might assess grammar, organization, and creativity. This approach allows students and educators to identify areas for improvement clearly. Moreover, rubrics can be adapted to cater to various learning levels and abilities, making them a versatile tool for differentiation within the classroom.

E-portfolios: Nurturing reflection and assessment

E-portfolios, electronic collections of student work, emerge as invaluable resources in education, serving both as a repository of student work and a medium for reflection and self-assessment. These portfolios enable students to showcase their best work, track their growth, and reflect on their learning journey.

For educators, e-portfolios offer a real-time view of student progress, not just in the final product but also in the development of critical skills. In the digital age, e-portfolios provide dynamic insights into student learning, fostering a collaborative relationship between teachers and students.

Differentiated activities and assessments for diverse learners

Acknowledging the uniqueness of each student, differentiated instruction and assessment become essential strategies in the classroom. Tailoring teaching methods and evaluation tools to cater to diverse learner profiles ensures that every student has an opportunity to succeed, regardless of their learning style or background.

For example, in a science class, students might choose between conducting a traditional experiment or creating a multimedia presentation. This approach promotes inclusivity and personalization in the learning process, creating a supportive environment for all students.

Metacognitive activities: Fostering understanding and reflection

Metacognition, or thinking about thinking, becomes a powerful tool for assessment. Metacognitive activities, such as thinking routines, encourage students to reflect on their learning process, prompting questions like "What did I learn today?" and "How did I learn it?" These activities foster self-awareness and a deeper understanding of the learning journey.

Benefits extend to both students and teachers. Students gain insight into their learning strategies, while educators gain a deeper understanding of student comprehension and internalization of concepts. Integrating metacognitive activities into assessment creates a culture of reflection and self-awareness in the classroom.

Putting it all together: A holistic approach to learning

Incorporating these innovative assessment strategies can revolutionize the learning experience in today's classrooms. Rubrics offer clarity and objectivity, e-portfolios empower students to reflect on their growth, differentiated activities ensure inclusivity, and metacognitive activities deepen understanding. Together, they pave the way for holistic learning, and nurturing active, reflective, and engaged learners.

Conclusion: Shaping the future of education through transformative assessment

As education evolves, assessment must adapt to meet the diverse needs of learners. Strategies such as rubrics, e-portfolios, differentiated activities, and metacognitive activities offer a pathway to educational excellence, assessing not only student performance but also enhancing the learning process itself. By embracing these transformative approaches, educators can empower students, fostering a brighter future for education.

Author Bio

Marcela Cecilia Danowski is a graduate Teacher of English. She holds a Diploma in English Phonetics and Phonology and Educational Management. She is currently completing a postgraduate degree in English Language. With over 20 years of experience, Marcela has taught General and Business English in various private institutions and has held coordination roles. Additionally, she has presented talks at local, regional, and international conferences as a freelancer and has published articles in academic journals.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion: Dialoguing with TESL Ontario members

By Rebecca Schmor & Nisa Akdemir, Canada

Abstract

This article reports and comments on findings from a TESL Ontario membership survey and synchronous dialogue session inquiring about challenges and opportunities related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in English Language Teaching classrooms and workplaces. The findings reveal that TESL Ontario members have most frequently experienced ageism and ethnic and cultural discrimination in their interactions with colleagues and students. Member suggestions for enacting DEI principles and practices at work and in class included engaging in self-directed learning activities, linguistically inclusive teaching practices, and formal professional development opportunities.

Introduction

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) have become buzzwords within and beyond the field of language education, reflecting the ongoing need for social change, justice, and belonging. However, for DEI to move beyond a token buzzword or performative gesture, there needs to be continual engagement with and commitment to shared principles and actions in a given community. For this reason, the TESL Ontario community was asked to participate in a survey and dialogue session to shed light on DEI issues and insights. The survey was distributed to TESL Ontario members for a two-week period in April, 2023 and focused on the challenges and opportunities most frequently encountered by TESL Ontario members at work and in class. The dialogue session, which took place on May 9, 2023, invited members to discuss the survey results in relation to their workplace and classroom experiences. This article outlines the key findings from the survey and dialogue session, followed by a summary of TESL Ontario members' experiences, perspectives, and desired directions in relation to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the field of English Language Teaching. A glossary of key terms is included at the end of this article.

DEI survey

In April, 2023, a survey was sent to TESL Ontario members to inquire about their experiences related to DEI at work and in class. Over the course of two weeks, 269 members responded to five survey questions which included a combination of closed and open-ended responses and focused on forms of discrimination experienced and DEI initiatives desired. The respondents shared valuable insights that shed light on common experiences of discrimination to be addressed in the field of English Language Teaching.

Q1: What are the diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) issues and challenges that you have encountered most frequently in the language learning workplace? Please select all that apply.
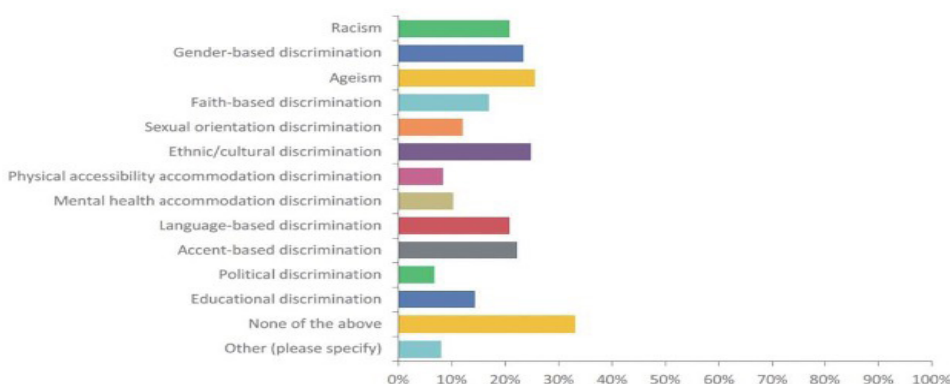
Answered: 266 Skipped: 3

Figure 1: Results from Survey Question 1

Q2: What are the diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) issues and challenges that you have encountered most frequently in the language learning classroom? Please select all that apply.
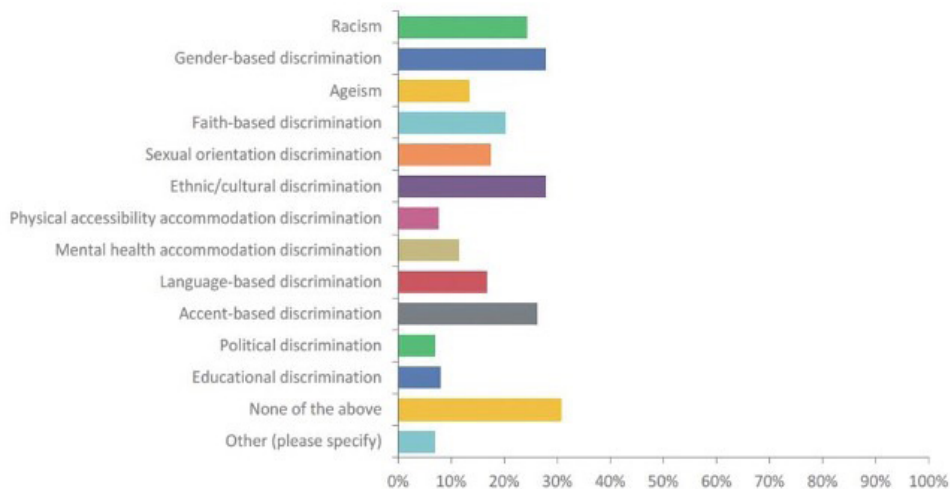
Answered: 263 Skipped: 6

Figure 2: Results from Survey Question 2

As seen in Figure 1, 33% of the members chose the option "None of the above" for question 1, and 31% chose the same option for question number 2. Across both questions, frequent answers included ageism, ethnic and cultural discrimination, gender-based discrimination, accent-based discrimination and racism. Several members commented on the survey that, even though they have not experienced any of these forms of discrimination themselves, they have witnessed their colleagues experiencing it. Another comment provided insight into experiences of ethnic and cultural discrimination at work. One member mentioned that their home-country experiences and qualifications were minimized by the assumption that Canadian experience and qualifications were the only valid ones. Furthermore, in commenting on experiences of language-based discrimination in class, another member shared that their workplace cultivated an "English-only ideology" by excluding and punishing the use of any other languages.

There were recurring themes suggested by the TESL Ontario members for questions 3 and 4: "What DEI initiatives are you aware of that you think would be relevant to the TESL Ontario membership?" and "What DEI initiatives could be implemented or addressed by TESL Ontario and its DEI committee that would be most valuable to you?" Among these, the need for training and professional development was suggested through multiple answers submitted by the members. One of the members noted the need for more "talks, chats, workshops on topics such as microaggression, mental health, and intercultural competence". Another recurring theme was the lack of awareness of different cultural and religious holidays and their celebrations. One member commented, "education is most important e.g., observing DEI-related Holidays, Remembrances, etc.". The resistance to using correct pronouns as a form of microaggression was also among the themes that TESL Ontario members wish to address more in the future. Another member added that initiatives of "avoiding instances of non-inclusive language, and using the proper pronouns that people select for themselves" needed more attention.

DEI dialogue session

Following the survey, an online dialogue session was organized by TESL Ontario's DEI Committee and took place on Zoom on May 7th, 2023, from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm. The dialogue was hosted by Dr. Laureta Valva and facilitated by Committee subject matter experts, Rebecca Schmor, PhD candidate and Dr. Mario Guerrero. 41 members attended.

The dialogue session started with a guide of definitions of key DEI terms and was followed by a presentation of the survey results and discussion thereof in breakout rooms. During the discussion session, our subject matter experts and participants warmed up with a question about how we can address feelings of discrimination among learners as educators who hold a perceived position of power. Dr. Guerrero

emphasized the important role of instructors in modeling vulnerability and transparency, especially in engaging with emotion and mental health in the classroom, as these are key factors in DEI experiences.

Once in the breakout groups, participants were asked to discuss the key findings of the most recent DEI survey and were encouraged to share their takes on the results. Several participants expressed their surprise at the fact that most members chose the option "none of the above" in responding to questions 1 and 2 about experiences of discrimination. Some Dialogue participants suggested the reason for this being that revealing discriminatory acts can be challenging as it requires someone to be vulnerable, even on a survey. Others suggested that some forms of microaggressions are so common that they are not regarded as discriminatory behavior. Attendees agreed that these experiences are complex and intersectional - differing for individuals along lines of race, gender, age, and other identity markers, and not limited to one element of discrimination.

DEI dialogue participants also discussed the practical ways we, as educators and classroom facilitators, can cultivate a learning and working community and environment that values, appreciates, and incorporates the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and needs of all members. The most prominent view in this regard was to foster a space where learners as well as colleagues can express their chosen identity freely. Being authentic and practicing active listening were deemed as keys to understanding our differences and acknowledging them. This part of the session ended with the conclusion that believing the receivers, "victims", of any sort of discrimination from microaggression to blatant acts of discrimination was a key step in building trust and creating space to be vulnerable in our communities.

Experiences, perspectives, and directions for DEI at work and in class

Together, the survey and dialogue session revealed members' experiences, perspectives, and desired directions for DEI at work and in class.

Experiences, perspectives, and directions for DEI at work

At work, TESL Ontario members have different experiences depending on who they are. In the survey, one member shared an experience of being denied physical accommodations to access their second-floor classroom after a knee injury. During the dialogue session, another member told the group how she has not received training to update her technology skills in order to teach effectively online, expressing that this technology gap worsens the ageism she has experienced at her workplace. Another dialogue session participant disclosed how colleagues gaslighted him after he told them about a race-based microaggression he experienced.

The different experiences of members influenced their diverse perspectives on DEI. Throughout the survey and dialogue session, several members expressed how various microaggressions made them feel Othered. In particular, members found that when colleagues asked them the question "where are you from" or made comments (even positive ones) about their accents or English proficiency, this made them feel questioned and like they did not belong at work. Other prominent views included the idea that people are not aware that their colleagues experience discrimination or lack the vocabulary to explain their own experiences of discrimination.

Members' experiences and perspectives at work suggest that English language professionals can contribute to more inclusive and equitable workplaces by listening to, believing, and learning about their own and others' experiences of discrimination. To avoid possible microaggressions, colleagues and allies can also learn from online resources rather than relying on individuals of historically marginalized communities to teach them. Colleagues can also contribute to more inclusive interactions by not making assumptions or explicitly asking about linguistic, cultural or religious affiliations, and waiting for this information to emerge naturally instead as relationships are built at work.

Experiences, perspectives, and directions for DEI in class

In class, TESL Ontario members were found to draw on a variety of strategies to enact DEI principles. Members suggested classroom practices such as asking learners to share their preferred names and pronouns; playing music in different languages to create a welcoming atmosphere; and explicitly expressing the value of different languages and cultures. They found that practices like these can normalize diversity, help learners to find commonalities, and foster empathy and vulnerability in the classroom. Members also shared challenges of responding to discriminatory views on areas such as gender and religion in class, and expressed the importance of explicit instruction around values of tolerance and inclusion. One dialogue participant suggested introducing stereotypes as a way to reflect on and respond to some of these challenges in class.

Member experiences in the classroom also reflected important perspectives. Two of the most commonly shared perspectives were the importance of fostering respect and the desire to create a safe space. Members also shared their views on the need to respectfully navigate different norms and beliefs while continuing to prioritize the inclusion and safety of all students through their classroom materials and discussions. While some members preferred a non-political teaching stance, others argued that teaching is inherently political and it is part of a teacher's responsibility to identify their own political beliefs and recognize how they influence their teaching.

Members' experiences and perspectives in the classroom suggest that English Language Teaching professionals can contribute to more inclusive and equitable practices by valuing and responding to the diversity of their learners and colleagues. Possible approaches include plurilingual and translanguaging practices, multimodal strategies, identity-based materials, and the integration of critical theory. These approaches can be complemented by intentional and consistent incorporation of DEI-related resources and vocabulary as part of theme-based or task-based lessons. For teachers to integrate more DEI principles in their teaching, their commitment to personal learning is essential, and should be supported by educational institutions, federal funding agencies, and professional development organizations.

Conclusion

The DEI survey and dialogue session revealed several takeaways for TESL Ontario members and other English Language Teaching professionals, representing a variety of distinct challenges and opportunities at work and in class. While perspectives on DEI varied across the membership - from resistance to curiosity to advocacy - there was a strong overall desire to enact DEI practices in workplaces and classrooms, despite the perceived vulnerable nature of the topic and practices. While TESL Ontario members expressed fears of saying or doing the wrong thing, they also showed an eagerness to share and listen to each other's experiences and to engage in learning, unlearning, and relearning. In this messy process of community growth, one member suggested an approach of "calling in" instead of "calling out"; of meeting and supporting colleagues wherever they are in their DEI learning journeys, just as we do with our students.

Other members called on TESL Ontario to provide more DEI-related professional development and learning opportunities. One way TESL Ontario has responded to this call is through a custom workshop at the 2023 annual conference, entitled "Beyond Buzzwords: Enacting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Work and in Class." This workshop, led by members of TESL Ontario's DEI committee, engaged English language teachers in a series of case studies and classroom materials from English Language Teaching workplaces and classrooms. Participants were invited to apply the concepts of microaggressions, intersectionality, heteronormativity, and neurotypicality in analyzing and brainstorming possible challenges and solutions related to the workshop tasks. The feedback from this workshop, along with the experiences and perspectives shared in the survey and dialogue session detailed in this article, will be leveraged to continuously inform the future directions of TESL Ontario's DEI work.

For TESL Ontario's DEI committee, the experience of conducting this survey and dialogue session reinforced the importance of eliciting and responding to diverse member voices in order to co-create DEI learning experiences with and for the membership—a key takeaway for TESL Ontario and other organizations wishing to enact DEI principles and practices.

Glossary

Gaslighting: A covert type of emotional abuse where the feelings and experiences of the victim are dismissed leading them to question their reality.

Heteronormativity: Implies that only straight and cisgender identities are the norm; an assumption that privileges these identities over any other type of sexual orientation.

Intersectionality: The ways in which systems of inequality based on various forms of discrimination overlap to create unique dynamics and impacts.

Microaggressions: Everyday, subtle, intentional or unintentional behaviors or actions that include biases toward marginalized groups. The "micro" in "microaggression" does not suggest that these actions cannot have a big impact on the receivers.

Neurotypicality: A way of describing the state of having a brain that functions similar to one's peers during the different stages of skills development.

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Author Bios

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Exploring effective professional development for ESL instructors

By Mohsen Jazeb & Sepideh Sharafi, Canada & Iran

Abstract

Professional development (PD) plays a crucial role in the success and quality of various occupations, including English as a second language (ESL) instruction. However, there is a need to understand ESL teachers' perceptions of PD, the challenges they face, and their recommendations for enhancing the PD process. This study focuses on language schools in Ontario, Canada, where research on the efficacy of PD events for ESL instructors is limited. By utilizing a quantitative research design with a survey-based approach, data were collected from ESL teachers employed in language schools and institutions in Ontario. The findings reveal that while teachers recognize the importance of PD, there is room for improvement in terms of PD topics, activities, and program relevance. The study identified challenges related to time management, lack of relevance, communication and awareness, and technological difficulties. Recommendations include conducting needs assessments, providing incentives and rewards, fostering collaboration, and offering technological support. These findings have implications for language schools in Ontario, as they can use the insights gained to refine their PD offerings and better meet the needs of ESL teachers, thereby improving the quality of English language instruction in the province.

Keywords: ESL teachers, professional development, language schools, perceptions

Introduction

The significance of professionalism and professional development (PD) as fundamental components of success and quality in various occupations has garnered considerable attention in recent decades (Li, 2022). For English as a second language (ESL) instructors, PD is vital in maintaining competencies and

mitigating burnout, stress, and demotivation, particularly among novice teachers (Li, 2022; Vadivel et al., 2021). Research on teacher attrition in Canada suggests that inadequate opportunities for growth and development are among the primary factors contributing to early career teachers leaving the profession (Kushkiev, 2019).

Effective PD initiatives have the potential to enhance personal attributes, in-service teacher education, and reduce professional isolation (Körkkö et al., 2020). As such, understanding ESL teachers' perceptions of PD could help align initiatives with their needs and expectations. However, there seems to be divergent views among teachers and administrators regarding the components of effective teacher professional development (TPD), including its characteristics, practices, scope, and theoretical underpinnings (Komba & Mwakabenga, 2020; McChesney & Aldridge, 2018).

The present study focuses on language schools in Ontario, Canada, where there is a paucity of research examining the efficacy of PD events for ESL instructors. Language schools play a pivotal role in providing language education in Canada and their policies and practices can significantly influence the PD of ESL teachers. Therefore, this study aims to investigate ESL teachers' perceptions of PD opportunities in language schools, the challenges they encounter, and their recommendations for enhancing the PD process. The findings of this study will inform the development of policies and practices that are congruent with the perceptions and needs of ESL teachers and facilitate their ongoing professional development in language schools.

Literature review

Professional development (PD) is crucial for ESL teachers to acquire new knowledge and improve their teaching practices (Borg, 2018; Li, 2022; Vadivel et al., 2021). In Ontario, Canada, ESL teachers in language schools are required to participate in mandatory PD programs (Kushkiev, 2019). This literature review summarizes the existing literature on the effectiveness of PD policies, challenges faced by ESL teachers during PD, and recommendations for enhancing the PD process.

PD policies have been found to positively impact ESL teachers' teaching skills and professional growth (Li, 2022; Vadivel et al., 2021). However, some studies report mixed results, indicating that changes in teaching practices may not always occur (Asih et al., 2022), or that pedagogical content knowledge may not improve significantly (Garet et al., 2016). There is a need to explore ESL teachers' perceptions of PD opportunities in language schools to better understand their experiences.

ESL teachers face challenges such as limited program duration, networking opportunities, seating arrangements, and instructions from facilitators (Vadivel et al., 2021). Other challenges include time

constraints, lack of administrative support, lack of relevance to teachers' needs and interests, and insufficient access to high-quality PD programs (Borg, 2018; Dorgan & Adams, 2020; Schneider, 2020; Szelei et al., 2019). Further research is needed to examine challenges specific to ESL teachers in language schools.

To enhance the effectiveness of PD programs, recommendations include tailoring programs to teachers' needs and involving teachers in program planning (Vadivel et al., 2021). Combining theoretical input with practical activities, fostering collaboration between coordinators and teacher trainers, and creating communities of practice are also suggested (Derakhshan et al., 2020; Vadivel et al., 2021). Additionally, interactive PD models, bottom-up approaches, and providing instructional resources and continuous support are recommended (Buendia & Macias, 2019; Derakhshan et al., 2020). This study aims to address the gap in understanding ESL teachers' perceptions of PD opportunities in language schools. The research questions are as follows:

1. What are the perceptions of ESL teachers in language schools in Ontario, Canada regarding the effectiveness of PD policies?

2. What challenges do ESL teachers in language schools in Ontario encounter when participating in PD opportunities?

3. What recommendations do ESL teachers in language schools in Ontario have for enhancing the PD process?

Method

The study utilized a quantitative research design with a survey-based approach. The use of a survey allowed for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the topic under investigation. The instrument used in this study consisted of an online questionnaire that was administered to ESL teachers in language schools and institutions in Ontario, Canada. The questionnaire was created using Google Forms, a user-friendly online survey platform. It was shared with participants via LinkedIn, utilizing their profiles as a means of reaching out to ESL teachers in the target population.

The participants consisted of ESL teachers employed in language schools and institutions within the province of Ontario. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. Part A collected demographic information with 9 items. Part B included 24 items that focused on ESL teachers' perceptions of professional development. Part C consisted of 3 items that explored the perceived challenges to professional development and recommendations for improvement. The questionnaire was adapted from two previous studies: Continuous Professional Development of English Language Teachers: Perception and Practices by AbdulRahman Al

Asmari and An Investigation into Turkish English Language Teachers' Perceived Professional Development Needs, Practices, and Challenges by Sibel Korkmazgil. The adoption of these questionnaires added to the validity and reliability of the study.

The questionnaire included closed-ended questions with Likert-scale response options to gather quantitative data on teachers' perceptions of PD events, the challenges they encountered, and their recommendations for enhancing the PD process. Open-ended questions were also included to allow for more detailed responses. The inclusion of both closed-ended and open-ended questions provided a comprehensive understanding of ESL teachers' experiences with professional development.

Results and discussion

Demographic information

The majority of respondents identified as female (88.9%), while a smaller proportion identified as male (11.1%). The participants' ages in the study varied from 34 to 57, with a mean age of 43. The participants reported attending a range of educational institutions, including Algonquin College, Carleton University, University of Saskatchewan, University of Ottawa, Yorkville University, Conestoga College, University of Guelph, Sheridan College, University of Massachusetts, and Azad University. Regarding educational attainment, 66.7% held a Master's degree, 11.1% held a Bachelor's degree, 11.1% held a PhD, and 11.1% held a graduate diploma. The respondents reported varying years of teaching experience, ranging from 1 year to 20 years.

Regarding the frequency of PD events at the participants' institutions, the responses revealed the following distribution: 33.3% reported that PD events were held semi-annually, 22.2% indicated a quarterly frequency, 11.1% reported monthly events, 11.1% indicated weekly events, and 22.2% mentioned other frequency, which was not specified.

Teachers' perceptions of PD

The second part of the questionnaire was concerned with Teachers' Perceptions of PD. A Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree was used to gather responses. The collected data were subsequently analyzed using SPSS. Such scale was used in the questionnaire to specify the level of the agreement or disagreement based on the following criteria:

Table 1. Guidelines of data interpretation

Mean Range	Interpretation
3.68 – 5.00	High degree of agreement
2.34 – 3.67	Moderate degree of agreement
1.00 – 2.33	Low degree of agreement

Table 2. Perceptions regarding PD Events

Statement	Mean
1. PD events are very important for developing my teaching skills.	3.56
2. PD events have covered a wide range of ELT themes (e.g., Assessment and Evaluation, Effective Classroom Strategies for English Language Learners, Incorporating Technology in ESL Instruction, etc.).	3.22
3. The topics chosen for PD events are based on a thorough needs analysis of ESL teachers, ensuring their relevance and effectiveness in addressing their professional development needs.	2.67
4. Activities carried out during PD events are effective.	2.89
5. PD events include a variety of activities designed for adult learners.	2.67
6. PD events provide a chance to learn with and from my colleagues.	3.33
7. PD events include continuous support and follow-up activities.	2.67
8. PD events expect changes in teachers' classroom practices.	2.78
9. PD events provide significant changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs of participants.	2.56
10. The learning atmosphere of PD activities is collaborative, informal, and respectful.	3.33
11. Event coordinators/presenters are knowledgeable and have credibility with the participants.	3.11
12. All PD activities include theory, demonstration, practice with feedback, and coaching.	2.56
13. There are opportunities for ESL teachers to share their own expertise and experiences during PD events.	3.33
14. PD events encourage ESL teachers to engage in ongoing professional growth and development beyond the required sessions.	3.1
15. The administration of the language school where I work is supportive and facilitates ESL teachers' participation in professional development activities.	2.89
16. Event coordinators/presenters encourage and support professional development through incentives and resources.	2.67
17. PD events align well with current trends and emerging technologies in ESL instruction.	3.11
18. Event coordinators/presenters have ongoing discussion groups on professional development issues.	2.67
19. Teachers have regular and equal access to professional development programs.	2.89
20. PD events have both long-term and short-term goals.	3.22
21. PD events incorporate the latest research and best practices in ESL instruction	2.89
22. My professional development needs are met.	2.78
23. I eagerly and regularly participate in non-mandatory PD events, as I am enthusiastic about continuous learning and professional growth.	2.89
24. I also attend PD events organized by other organizations (e.g., TESL Ontario).	3.00

According to the findings from Table 2, which presents the mean scores of teachers' perceptions regarding PD events, it can be observed that teachers generally agree to a moderate extent with the importance of PD events for developing their teaching skills, as indicated by a mean score of 3.56. The perception that PD events cover a wide range of ELT themes also received a moderate level of agreement, with a mean score of 3.22. However, the perception that the topics chosen for PD events are based on a thorough needs analysis of ESL teachers and the perception that activities carried out during PD events are effective received comparatively lower levels of agreement, with mean scores of 2.67 and 2.89, respectively. Similarly, the perception that PD events provide continuous support and follow-up activities received a mean score of 2.67. On the positive side, teachers generally agree that PD events provide a chance to learn with and from colleagues (mean score of 3.33) and that the learning atmosphere of PD activities is collaborative, informal, and respectful (mean score of 3.33).

Teachers' perceptions of PD events showed both areas of agreement and differing opinions. The findings indicate a potential gap between teachers' perceived needs and the selection of PD topics. Conducting needs assessments is crucial to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of PD programs. While teachers acknowledge some effective activities, there is room for improvement in designing engaging activities that support their professional growth. Collaboration and peer learning are valued by teachers in the PD process, as they appreciate the opportunity to share experiences and expertise with colleagues. Flexible PD formats and schedules are needed to accommodate teachers' busy schedules. Personalized and relevant PD programs are necessary for ESL teachers. Effective communication and ongoing technological support are crucial for teachers to engage in and adapt to PD.

Perceived challenges to PD and recommendations

The third part of the questionnaire explored Perceived Challenges to PD and Recommendations. Participants were asked to identify the key challenges they encountered in their professional development journey and provide suggestions for improvement. The responses provided valuable insights into the obstacles faced by teachers and offered recommendations to enhance the effectiveness and relevance of PD programs. The data collected in this section were carefully reviewed and analyzed to identify common themes and patterns, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by educators and informing potential strategies for addressing them.

The analysis of participant responses revealed several recurring themes and patterns pertaining to the challenges encountered in professional development and recommendations for enhancing the efficacy of PD programs.

Time management emerged as a prevalent challenge, with participants expressing difficulties in balancing PD activities alongside their teaching commitments. Conflicting schedules and limited time were identified as impediments to active engagement in PD events. Another recurrent theme was the perceived lack of relevance in certain PD events. Participants reported that these events did not align with their specific teaching contexts or failed to address their individual needs. Consequently, they advocated for a more tailored approach, emphasizing the importance of PD activities that cater to the unique requirements of educators.

Communication and awareness were identified as additional challenges. Participants highlighted instances where they were unaware of available PD opportunities or encountered scheduling conflicts that hindered their participation. To address these issues, respondents recommended improved communication channels and increased dissemination of information regarding PD offerings. Moreover, participants expressed a desire for more specialized PD opportunities. They perceived a dearth of events that focused on their specific fields of teaching, and instead observed a greater emphasis on broader educational topics. As such, participants advocated for PD programs that catered to their distinct teaching contexts, thereby facilitating greater relevance and applicability.

Technological challenges were also prominent in the findings. Participants noted the rapid pace of technological advancements and the resulting difficulty in keeping up with these changes. They emphasized the need for PD programs that equip educators with the necessary technological skills and methodological understanding to effectively integrate technology into their teaching practices. In terms of recommendations, participants highlighted the importance of conducting ongoing needs assessments to ensure PD programs align with the specific requirements of teachers. They emphasized the value of multidimensional practice activities that extend beyond theoretical concepts, providing practical strategies that can be readily applied in the classroom.

Furthermore, participants proposed the implementation of incentives and rewards as motivational factors to encourage teacher participation in PD events. Suggestions included modest monetary rewards or other forms of recognition to acknowledge teachers' commitment to professional growth. Collaboration and pragmatism were also emphasized as key aspects of effective PD. Participants emphasized the need for collaborative environments where educators can share their expertise and experiences, fostering an exchange of best practices. They also stressed the importance of pragmatism, with a desire for PD programs that prioritize practical strategies and solutions.

Lastly, respondents highlighted the significance of technological support within PD initiatives. They recommended the inclusion of technology funding and paid training opportunities within existing programs,

facilitating instructors' ability to remain abreast of technological advancements and effectively incorporate them into their teaching practice.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that while teachers recognize the importance of PD events for their professional growth, there are areas for improvement in terms of the selection of PD topics, the effectiveness of activities, and the relevance of PD programs to teachers' specific needs and contexts. The study identified challenges such as time management, lack of relevance, communication and awareness issues, and technological difficulties. The recommendations provided by participants highlight the importance of conducting needs assessments, offering incentives and rewards, fostering collaboration, and providing technological support to enhance the effectiveness and relevance of PD programs.

These findings have implications for language schools and institutions in Ontario, Canada, as they can use the insights gained from this study to refine their PD offerings and better meet the needs of ESL teachers. By addressing the identified challenges and implementing the recommended strategies, professional development programs can be enhanced to support teachers' continuous growth and improve the quality of English language instruction in Ontario.

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Author Bios

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ESOL instructor's reflections on the use of pedagogical translanguaging

By Maira Klyshbekova, UK

Abstract

In this article, I present my reflections on the use of pedagogical translanguaging at a language centre for newly arrived adult refugees and asylum seekers in the United Kingdom. As a volunteer ESOL instructor of this course, I decided to make use of the students' various linguistic repertoires by incorporating multilingual text reading and writing tasks. In the article, I present my thoughts on this practice and provide my recommendations to other ESOL instructors looking into utilising and bringing their students' languages into the classroom spaces.

Keywords: ESOL, refugees, students, fairy tales, pedagogical translanguaging.

Introduction

In response to the mobility of people, teachers around the world are encouraged to reshape their practices in order to meet the specific needs of their students. By the end of 2022, the number of refugees worldwide reached a record high number of 108.4 million with an estimated 43.4 million of which are children of school age (UNHCR, 2022). Even though many refugees and asylum seekers enter their host countries as multilingual speakers, they are often faced with monolingual language ideologies. Among the many consequences of resettlement, feelings of loneliness and homesickness, the adjustment to a new job market, and in most cases, learning the language of the host country, are taxing (Dovchin, 2021). This is on top of the hardships already experienced due to war, loss of loved ones, and starting a new life in a new place. Current scholarship that looks at refugees and asylum seekers' wellbeing (Dryden-Peterson & Reddick, 2021), emotions (Dovchin, 2021), and sense of acknowledgment have been putting forward the concept

of translanguaging and its use for pedagogical purposes. Inspired by the mentioned studies, I reflect on the use of translanguaging as a pedagogical practice in an ESOL course at a language centre for newly arrived adult refugees and asylum seekers in the United Kingdom. As a volunteer instructor of this course, I designed lessons with the aim of developing students' knowledge of vocabulary, acknowledging their varied linguistic repertoires, and bringing them into the classroom spaces. Below I share my reflections on the use of pedagogical translanguaging with the students of beginner and pre-intermediate levels.

Fairy tales and pedagogical translanguaging practice

Of the various topics that can be used in the ESOL course, I find the topic of fairy tales the most interesting, especially for students with beginner or pre-intermediate levels. In my lessons, I want to engage the students in fun and interactive activities and create an enjoyable atmosphere for them. This ESOL course at the language centre is open to adults with diverse English language skills, and the students in the course are either beginner or pre-intermediate speakers. In my lessons, I want to create a safe space for the students by choosing a topic that is enjoyable, positive, and easy to understand. Especially, as the students come from different cultural backgrounds and speak various languages, I want them to feel connected and included. Therefore, I find the topic of fairy tales to be universal and known to everyone which in turn helps to elicit strong and emotional responses (Lepin, 2012) and engage even the quietest students. I also think that the topic of fairy tales allows to create various activities targeted toward acknowledging the presence of different languages and activating their use in classroom spaces.

The CEFR (2018) highlighted the importance of using the students' languages and stated that "*in the reality of today's increasingly diverse societies, the construction of meaning may take place across languages and draw upon user/learners' plurilingual and pluricultural repertoires*" (p. 27).

The CEFR (2018) recommended exploring similarities among languages or analysing the same sources across languages, and these strategies are considered to be pedagogical translanguaging practices. Cenoz and Santos (2020) stated that pedagogical translanguaging is used "for cross-linguistic metalinguistic awareness so as to strengthen the students' ability to meet the communicative exigencies of the socioeducational situation" (p. 2). In other words, pedagogical translanguaging can be used with the aim to help students to make meaning and benefit from being multilingual by using their whole linguistic repertoires. Pedagogical translanguaging is related to the term translanguaging, which was first used in Welsh bilingual education (Cenoz & Santos, 2022; Lewis et al., 2012; Williams, 1994) as a way of alternating between the languages for both input and output. According to Cenoz and Santos (2022), pedagogical translanguaging is based on this concept, but at the same time, it is "broader and can apply to a wider range of context" (p. 346). A few of the most common strategies include "word walls, sentence starters, cognates, comparing multilingual texts,

multilingual vocabulary inquiry, and multilingual syntax/morphology inquiry" (Cenoz & Santos, 2020, p. 2), and in my lessons, I used multilingual text reading and writing tasks.

Lesson procedures

In this section besides my reflections, I also offer recommendations for teachers looking into incorporating pedagogical translanguaging strategies into their practices. In my lessons, I incorporated pedagogical translanguaging strategies by teaching a topic of fairy tales to adult students at beginner and pre-intermediate levels. Although this topic may be relevant to younger age groups, I still found that it worked well with this group of students.

To understand whether students are familiar with different fairy tales, I recommend teachers display the pictures of famous fairy tales and base their discussions around them. For instance, in my lessons, I usually display pictures of well-known fairy tales, such as *Cinderella, Three Little Pigs, Little Red Riding Hood,* and *Snow White.* In most cases, I find that students are not familiar with them and cannot elaborate on the fairy tales' plots. In such cases, teachers can ask students to look up unknown fairy tales online and this step usually leads to interesting results as students can report different variations of these fairy tales or mention other fairy tales popular in their home countries. For instance, the students mentioned that in their country, *Little Red Riding Hood* is known as *Leila and the Wolf.* Others shared that they are more familiar with *Chinese Cinderella* than with the original *Cinderella* fairy tale. This in turn facilitates the interaction between the students as they start sharing the well-known fairy tales in their countries and ask each other whether they are familiar with them. In this step, I emphasise that the students can report their findings on fairy tales' names and their plots in English but also encourage them to use and incorporate their linguistic repertoires. I find that this helps to decrease students' anxiety toward speaking as most of them are still learning the language. This step prepares them for the next task which is a *multilingual text reading* task.

In this task, students need to read an assigned fairy tale in their languages and then summarise and answer the questions in English. Afterwards, we brainstorm together the elements of fairy tales and move on to a *multilingual text writing* activity. After we identify the elements, I instruct the students to follow these fairy tales writing elements and write their own fairy tale using English as well as different languages in their repertoire. I also note that the students can include drawings instead of words in cases when they find it difficult to express themselves. In order to help them complete the task I also provide students with high-frequency words and phrases used in fairy tales so that they can incorporate them into their writings.

Fairy tale writing elements

Step 1	Start your fairy tale with the following opening sentence: "Once upon a time"
Step 2	Describe the setting in detail
Step 3	Describe your main character in detail
Step 4	Describe the plot of your fairy tale
Step 5	State the problem that needs to be solved in your fairy tale
Step 6	Describe the moral of the fairy tale

Students' final written works should follow the provided elements' structure where they can showcase their entire linguistic repertoires along with the drawings. As students can choose to create any kind of fairy tale, I noticed that the majority of the students still prefer to link these fairy tales to their lives. For instance, some of the students portrayed themselves as main characters and described the events from their lives or described the lessons they learned from a particular event. Some of the students described the events that made them flee their countries and noted that the morale of their fairy tale was to *never give up*. Other students wrote about political destabilisations as the main plot while others' plots revolved around their lives in a new country and how they are adapting to the new setting. Most students portrayed themselves as protagonists of their fairy tales while the hardships they experienced were in the role of an antagonist. This in turn created a vibrant discussion among the students as the written fairy tales are read in front of the classroom. Most students found these fairy tales relatable and even the quiet students became active and engaged with this type of activity. Also, the provision of high-frequency words helped students to tie the writing together. For instance, I include the phrase *lived happily ever after* in the high-frequency words and phrases list but purposefully leave it out from the elements. In most cases, I see that students conclude their fairy tales with this phrase and that shows me the importance of providing the list with high-frequency words and phrases. The students' writings were much longer compared to the previous tasks, and they shared that the usage of their languages allowed them to write in more detail and at the same time to increase their vocabulary knowledge by using high-frequency words in English. Thus, I felt that the *multilingual text writing* activity not only helped students to increase their vocabulary knowledge and write their fairy tales more vividly by providing as many details as possible, but most importantly decreased their anxiety toward making mistakes. As most of the students have a beginner level, I feel that these types of tasks and activities motivate and encourage them to learn more. The students became more active and confident as language learners but most importantly they were able to express themselves and share their stories.

Final thoughts

In view of the mentioned points, I can say that utilising pedagogical translanguaging activity allowed me to see the students from a different side. When students are encouraged to use the entire linguistic repertoire, their voices become much stronger. Such activities also help them to convey their messages as they can write about the obstacles or the lessons they learned on their path to a happy ending, just like characters in fairy tales. In the beginning, I thought that the use of pedagogical translanguaging activities would help me to develop students' knowledge of vocabulary, but in fact, it did more than that—it provided a platform for students' voices.

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Maira Klyshbekova is a third year PhD candidate in Education at the University of Sheffield. Her research focuses on multilingualism, pedagogical translanguaging, and medium of instruction policies. She has extensive experience in teaching English both at secondary school and university levels. Maira is also keen on exploring teacher support, training, and understanding the challenges that teachers experience in their teaching practices. She is also a Postdoctoral Research Associate at King's College London where she is exploring the use of AI in education.

Elevating ELLs in a science classroom: Evidence-informed strategies to support language development used by a high school teacher

By Maria Zaman, Ryan Summers, & Sarah Boese-Noreen, USA

Learning science can be a daunting task, resembling the challenge of deciphering a complex foreign language for many individuals. The intricacy stems from the incorporation of vocabulary with Latin and Greek roots, intertwined with specialized jargon that references specific concepts. This linguistic complexity often proves to be a stumbling block for learners. As a bilingual educator, my constant endeavour is to explore inventive ways to make subjects more accessible, particularly for English language learners (ELLs). In a recent undertaking, I conducted a comprehensive interview with an experienced high school teacher, delving into effective strategies for teaching science to ELLs. This endeavor sheds light on the fact that mastering science surpasses conventional language skills, such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening in English (Weinburgh et al., 2019). Recognizing that science proficiency requires a multifaceted approach is paramount in addressing the unique challenges faced by ELLs in scientific education.

Sarah Boese-Noreen teaches physical science courses in Grand Forks, North Dakota, USA. Readers may wonder why experiences from a teacher in a state whose population is more than 83% white should be considered helpful by others working with ELLs in more diverse contexts. Local demographics in ND have changed over the past decade, partially due to job opportunities in the region and an uptick in the number of immigrants and refugees who have relocated to the state. As a result, the ND Latinx population increased 2.4 percentage points to 4.4% between 2010 and 2021. The black population has also increased from 1.2 percentage points to 3.3% during this period. The impacts of these changes have been felt by public schools. Many districts suddenly had an increased number of ELLs across a range of proficiency levels that needed support in all disciplines. Sarah's school is more diverse than the state average (approximately 71% white) and about 3% of their students were identified as ELLs during 2022-2023, and Sarah has been teaching sections of physical science with an emphasis on supporting ELLs since 2017.

The following are excerpts from my conversation with Sarah; specific strategies are highlighted and unpacked in hopes of helping other educators.

> ***Maria:*** What barriers do you encounter when teaching science to ELL students, and how do you overcome them?

> ***Sarah:*** The language of science can be a barrier. For example, the technical language in textbooks typically uses the 3rd person tense and the writing is often difficult for ELLs.

During our conversation, it became clear that Sarah understands the unique challenges that ELL students face when grappling with scientific concepts and terminology.

> ***Maria:*** What strategies do you implement to help ELL students comprehend scientific concepts and terminology?

> ***Sarah:*** We break down content into bite-sized portions. When introducing new ideas in class, we purposefully ask questions that are designed to expand on students' prior knowledge or help them make connections between the phenomena being investigated and what they already know.

Sarah uses strategies to help students build connections by breaking down complex ideas and providing students with graphic organizers to organize their thinking (e.g., concept maps, word walls, and Venn diagrams). She also asks questions about topics that elicit students' background knowledge (e.g., cultural or linguistic knowledge). This helps Sarah bridge diverse students' background knowledge and their science-related experiences to deepen their understanding of topics (Lee & Buxton, 2010).

Sarah added that her school uses curriculum materials that are aligned with the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) (Next Generation Science Standards, 2013), where the scientific and engineering practices offer rich opportunities for language learning, while supporting science learning, for all students, especially English language learners. When supported appropriately, students are capable of grasping science ideas through their emerging language and comprehending and carrying out sophisticated language functions (e.g., arguing from evidence, constructing explanations, developing models). This is possible even if students' linguistic abilities are developing and they are using less-than-perfect English. By engaging in such practices, moreover, they simultaneously build on their understanding of science and their language proficiency (i.e., capacity to do more with language). Science instruction consistent with the NGSS emphasize learning through engaging in scientific practices (National Research Council, 2012). These practices are language intensive and require students to interact with ideas using multiple modalities in increasingly strategic ways. Students must read, write, and speak about explanations of scientific phenomena (Lee & Stephens, 2020, p. 430). In Sarah's classroom students share ideas, often negotiating

them with peers to reach shared conclusions. Teaching in this way provides students with opportunities for language and science learning at the same time.

Figure 1 (*Relationships and convergences among mathematics, science, and ELA practices (adapted from Cheuk, 2013)*)
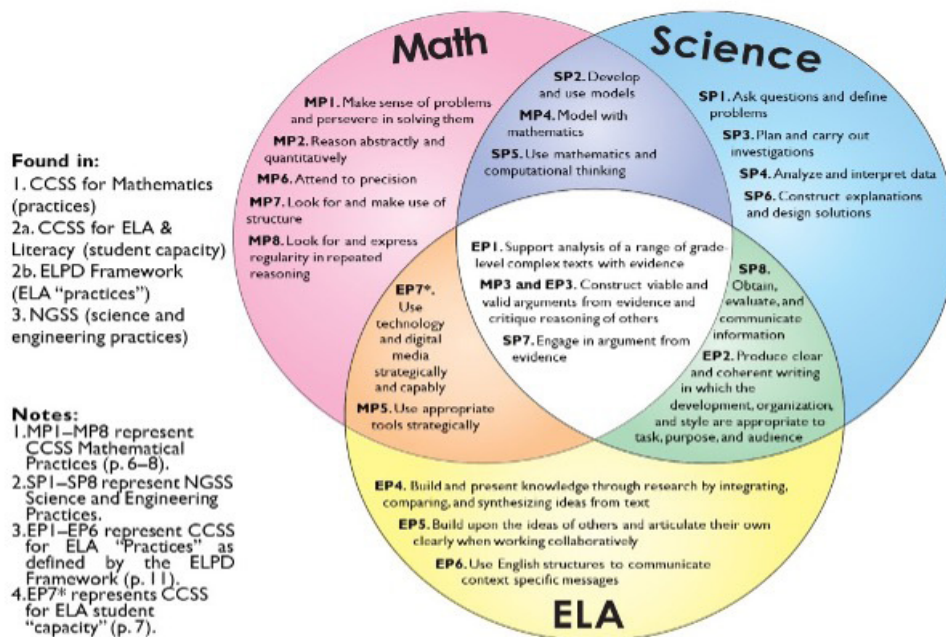
During our conversation, Sarah mentioned multiple times that she finds herself modeling reading and writing strategies along with scientific reasoning while teaching. Almost all of her responses to my questions illustrated these interconnected goals.

> **Maria:** How do you help ELL students who may be missing foundational knowledge in science catch up with their peers?

> **Sarah:** We often place students into intentional small groups with a teacher or classroom leader and students are encouraged to share ideas and help each other. The teacher or classroom leader helps facilitate these discussions and they can address gaps in understanding as needed.

This arrangement gives Sarah an opportunity to work with small groups of students. She checks students' understanding and reinforces their comprehension during this time. Students in her classes follow a standard process when working with their group. Each group has a manager, which may a student or a teacher-leader, and that person is responsible for making sure that everyone stays on track with their

assigned tasks. Sarah believes in collaborative learning and she intentionally groups students based on the task and their individual needs. She strives to create an environment in the classroom where students feel empowered to learn from one another. Sometimes she groups students with the same primary language because language can be a resource for students as they are making meaning while engaging with science ideas.

Sarah said that reading was a routine task her 9th graders in physical science students completed in groups. She asks students to independently read an assigned portion from their textbook or other text material. Then, students work with their groups to summarize the reading, identify the ideas the authors assume they already know about the topic, and discuss how their understanding has changed following the reading. Teacher-leaders can capitalize on opportunities to support students' use of reading strategies for scientific texts, prompting them to use academic language functions (e.g., describe, explain, predict, infer, conclude) for science topics (Lee et al, 2013) All students can get to the point where they can collaboratively discuss science concepts in academic conversations, and there are plenty of resources available to help model these routines (Video Playlist: Engaging ELLs in Academic Conversations | Teaching Channel, 2023).

> These scientific and engineering practices offer rich opportunities and demands for language learning while they support science learning for all students, especially English language learners... When supported appropriately, these students are capable of learning science through their emerging language and comprehending and carrying out sophisticated language functions (e.g., arguing from evidence, constructing explanations, developing models) using less-than-perfect English. By engaging in such practices, moreover, they simultaneously build on their understanding of science and their language proficiency (i.e., capacity to do more with language). *(NGSS Lead States, 2013, Appendix D, Case Study 4)*

Sarah reiterated that all students benefit from a cooperative learning environment with peer collaboration. All students complete the same hands-on investigations in her science classes, too, so ELLs take part in all the same activities as their classmates. She stressed that all 9th grade students receive plenty of guidance to set them up for safe and productive learning in the lab setting at the beginning of the school year. Still, students' ability to read and follow instructions often gives her clues about the language skills of ELLs. These clues combined with writing samples, such as students' written laboratory notes and reports, help Sarah to gauge their understanding of scientific concepts and their language skills.

> *Maria:* How do you assess learning in your classroom?

> *Sarah:* All students are assessed using 4-point standards-based proficiency scale in my science class. For ELLs, their language skills are also assessed heavily at the beginning of each academic

year. In my 9ᵗʰ grade physical science class, for example, students complete several reading and writing tasks in the first couple months of school, and these tasks provide evidence about their proficiency.

As Sarah described how she thoughtfully selected tasks that could be used to provide evidence about students' science and language proficiency, I wondered how she used that information to make adjustments to her teaching.

> *Maria:* How do you adjust your lessons to accommodate students of varying English proficiency levels?

> *Sarah:* We ensure that every student, regardless of their English proficiency level, can access the material. For those with lower English proficiency, we provide content in their native language. What's interesting is that we encourage students to navigate between their native language and English, helping them bridge the language gap effectively.

Sarah effectively bridges the language gap and empowers students to grasp scientific content more thoroughly by allowing ELL students to navigate between their native language and English (Roseberry & Warren, 2008). This demonstrates her understanding of the cognitive processes involved in learning, as well as her commitment to accommodating students of varying English proficiency levels.

All the thoughtful planning that Sarah described made me wonder about the types of support she had available at her to school.

> *Maria:* Do you collaborate with other teachers and staff to support ELL students in their science education?

> *Sarah:* I collaborate closely with an English language (EL) teacher and specialist at our high school. We meet regularly to exchange ideas and discuss strategies, and work together to address the unique needs of our students.

Sarah praised her colleague, saying "she brings invaluable insight and experience to the field of teaching English language learners." Sarah teaches at a comparatively large high school in North Dakota (approximately 1140 students enrolled for 2023-2024), and she is fortunate to have access to an English-language specialist as a resource for her and her students.

Throughout the conversation, Sarah stressed the importance of personalization when trying to connect with ELLs. This is something she says that her colleague has helped her to better understand. Learning in

science flourishes when classroom topics have relevancy to students' own experiences and cultures (National Research Council, 2012). Sarah has deepened her commitment to incorporating diverse perspectives into the science topics she introduces. "We want to incorporate the life stories and perspectives of our students into the classroom," Sarah said. This stance is beneficial for all students because they gain global competence by examining local, global and intercultural issues, and develop an understanding about the perspectives and world views of others (Barrett, 2018).

As educational institutions undergo a transformation characterized by increasing diversity and a growing population of ELLs, it becomes imperative to equip teachers with the necessary tools and strategies to address the unique needs of all students (Weinburgh et al., 2019). This shift underscores the pressing demand for inclusive pedagogical approaches that not only acknowledge linguistic diversity but also cultivate an environment where every student, regardless of their language background, can thrive academically and engage meaningfully in the learning process. Thus, the commitment to preparing educators for this evolving landscape becomes a cornerstone in fostering an inclusive and equitable educational experience for all.

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Author Bios

Maria Zaman is a passionate educator currently pursuing a PhD in Teaching and Leadership at the University of North Dakota. With over five years of experience in education in Bangladesh, Maria has taught English Composition at UND, contributing to the academic growth of her students. As a bilingual individual, Maria recognizes the significance of providing equitable educational opportunities. Her teaching philosophy revolves around creating an atmosphere where all students, regardless of their linguistic background, feel empowered to excel. Through her dedication to inclusive education, Maria strives to make a positive impact on the educational landscape, emphasizing the importance of language proficiency in unlocking academic success.

Ryan Summers is a science education researcher whose research and teaching focuses on helping others understand and appreciate science. Ryan investigates the views held by students and teachers about how scientific knowledge is generated as well as representations of these ideas contained within instructional materials. He builds on a foundation of scholarship that acknowledges social and cultural influences on the development of scientific knowledge. Ryan also prepares science educators to help middle and high school students grasp these ideas in the future as an associate professor of science education at the University of North Dakota.

Sarah Boese-Noreen is an educator who aims to provide all learners with equitable opportunities to engage with science ideas. Sarah teaches physical science classes for students with varied levels of English proficiency. Sarah believes that all learners are capable of understanding, representing, and communicating science ideas. Sarah's commitment to these beliefs led her to embed written and verbal tasks in her classes to specifically attend to the varied needs of the growing number of students learning English as a second language at Red River High School located in Grand Forks, ND, USA.