

# AAALGrads

THE AAAL GRADUATE STUDENT COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

## *Looking Forward:* **A Return to Normal or New Beginnings?**



நீல தங்கம் - neela thangam - blue gold  
by Suganya Rajendran Schmura

**CREATIVE CORNER**

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**PLUS A RESOURCE REVIEW  
AND MORE!**



## Letter from the Co-Editors

**Dear AAALGrads Community,**

Welcome to the Fall 2021 issue of the AAALGrads Newsletter: "Looking Forward: A Return to Normal or New Beginnings?"

When we decided on the theme for this issue, we were looking towards post-pandemic times and asked authors to question some of the "new normals" that have emerged within our academic communities. We wondered if these new normals were really "new" to begin with, if they would remain, and/or if they were ever equitable in the first place.

In writing this letter now to introduce the Fall issue, it is clear and we are not yet able to put challenges like Zoom burnout, screen fatigue, and the ongoing digital divide behind us. Nor can we forget about sociopolitical issues that continue to divide our communities. New COVID variants have been identified and with cold winter weather upon us, it is accurate to say that we might have spoken too soon about transitioning to a post-pandemic time. We can, however, still learn from our experiences since March 2020 and discuss what we can/should carry forward. Indeed, we are still at an intersection of old versus new, of returning to "normal" or embracing new normals as we continue to navigate through one of the most trying times in recent history.

Of course, our hope is that as a community of graduate students, we can find our way out of the lingering fog left behind by our ongoing hardships. We can do this by sharing our ideas, predictions, and suggestions for best practices moving forward. In that regard, we feel that this Fall 2021 issue delivers.

We are grateful to all of the authors who contributed to the issue and who were patient with us as we bounced ideas back and forth, suggested revisions, offered praise, and, overall, worked as a community of graduate students intent on producing a newsletter brimming with relevant ideas. We hope you enjoy it as much as we do.

**Sincerely,**

Nathan Thomas, Katherine Kerschen,  
Mariana Lima Becker, and Sooyoung Kang,  
*Co-Editors*

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# Fostering students' voices: Asking about their learning during a pandemic

By Anna Piotti

*The Pennsylvania State University*

For over a century, American theorists, researchers, teachers, organizations, and politicians (among others) have worked to understand how best to encourage foreign language learning and student enrollment in foreign language courses.<sup>(1)</sup> To accommodate their conclusions, various pedagogical trends have waxed and waned. This has meant that the history of foreign language instruction in the United States has witnessed changing classroom norms and then their changing again, as instructors adapt to or adopt new practices (Stein-Smith, 2016).

Just before COVID-19 circled the globe, the topic of foreign language education change was once again on the table at the university level. Bigelow (2017) warned that “the current cultural context in the United States stands to threaten language teaching programs in higher education even more seriously than in the past,” (p. 412) and Sheffer (2017) argued that the survival of many language programs would depend on revising the way we approached instruction. The nature of that change was still uncertain in 2020, however, as we moved into emergency-remote instruction across our country. Language education came to include screenshares, emojis, breakout rooms, and background filters; there was an increase in multimodal material, like broadcasting a video or navigating a foreign city with GoogleMaps, and simultaneous sharing, as students’ contributions piled up in the chat—all faster and wider reaching than calling on students individually. Guests popped in from around the world to share their languages, their cultures, and their stories. It only took a click or two. These became the new norms for many language learners—for better and for worse. This article homes in on the better, demonstrating how the pedagogical technique of interviewing students (which developed out of this period of unrest) is now helping my students post-pandemic.

Before explaining my interview project and the lessons I took from it, I would like to position myself. I am a PhD student in the Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures department at the Pennsylvania State University. My dual title degree will be in German Linguistics and Language Science, and part of my graduate education is teaching beginner and intermediate German language courses to undergraduate students. In my teaching, I draw from two sources: my own and colleagues’ research on second language instruction and my own experience as a language learner. Bringing these together, I hope to encourage student/teacher co-construction of class knowledge through meaningful, relevant, empowering, critical, and culturally sustaining pedagogical practices. My own research actually takes place in these foreign language classrooms: I design and implement pedagogical materials to nurture powerful learning environments (see de Corte, 1990). There are teachers, learners, and researchers, I like to tell students. And we are all of them.

Yet, these three identities were challenged during the pandemic. Information sharing was directed at a black, faceless void; classrooms invaded our homes; and asking clear questions and reaching concise conclusions became inconceivable in our unpredictable environment. I witnessed students, colleagues, and myself struggle to engage with these three identities in the ways we had previously. For example, I found that I lost my classroom of empowered learners; they no longer felt safe taking agentic roles during this time of unrest and uncertainty. *(continued on page 4)*

(*cont.*) Witnessing this trend across multiple semesters of emergency-remote instruction, I finally decided to fight fire with fire and approach change with change. In Spring 2021, I brought theoretically and empirically grounded learning-by-teaching [LBT] paradigms (see Balta et al., 2017; Hott et al., 2012; Palinscar & Brown, 1984) into my intermediate German course. In short, LBT paradigms nurture students towards acquiring and solidifying knowledge and behaviors through asking them to provide their own understandings (i.e., share and teach). In line with these pedagogical practices, I established student safety by mentioning the value of student input/expertise and modelling openness/vulnerability. I also worked to foster student agency by inviting students to vocalize and reflect. Believing my students would speak up if anything were amiss, I naïvely assumed that everything was going well and that I knew what my students were doing and feeling. Beyond this, preliminary classroom data pointed to affective, behavioral, and cognitive developments from these LBT paradigms. In the classroom, I found that students laughed more, countered more, and engaged with material at a deeper level. They even began to engage in student-student conversations without teacher mediation. In weekly surveys, students noted the metacognitive strategies they were employing in their learning and how they were both a support for peers and supported by peers. Meanwhile, students who taught topic X received higher scores on quiz sections focusing on topic X, as compared to classmates. These anecdotal findings entrenched my belief further: My students were thriving.

**Believing my students would speak up if anything were amiss, I naïvely assumed that everything was going well and that I knew what my students were doing and feeling.**

Midway through the semester, as students began to skip more classes and turn off their cameras, it dawned on me: My students might still be distant, distracted, and distressed—I might just be blind to it. Perhaps I was missing the more personal and holistic experience of being a student in my class. To address this, I decided to run a second research project to investigate my students' lived experiences. I would conduct interviews with them—explicitly making space for their voices. I teamed up with an undergraduate student not enrolled in the course, and we became students-as-partners (see Healey et al., 2016) in the truest sense of the term. Drawing from all three of our identities—student, teacher, and researcher, we began to collaborate on semi-structured interview questions to ask my students. When the semester ended, I initiated the interviews through a video recording, introducing my (former) students to the undergraduate researcher. **(2)** Then, she took the floor and started talking with them.

After editing the automatically generated transcripts of these meetings, we approached them deductively—looking for predetermined concepts of safety and agency, paramount to effective LBT paradigms (Piotti & Soba, in prep)—and latently—looking for the underlying meanings, engaging with data subjectively, reflectively, and thoughtfully (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Coding and data analysis led us to the following conclusions: Students described how feeling supported by both peers and the instructor led them to take risks and push their learning further. This helped them learn more and increased their chances of connecting coursework to their learning in other courses, their research, and their lives beyond school. They saw this as a positive outcome. One student described the value of the teaching aspect of the course. Not only did it help him work through the material, but it pushed him to practice a behavior, namely teaching, that he saw as fundamental to humanity. LBT in remote-instruction classrooms has benefits. (*continued on page 5*)

(*cont.*) There were also unexpected takeaways. These were harder to hear, but perhaps more important to learn. For example, during the semester I had let students locate and use their own resources—ones with which they were familiar. However, one student reported that she only knew Wikipedia and wished she had been provided other sources that were more reliable. For her, there had been too much agency. Another student described how I did not “punish” or “put [students] down” for errors, which made him feel as if he did not need to understand all the grammar topics. For him, there had been too much safety.

Beyond this, students’ thoughts on several teaching techniques surprised me. For instance, I had thought breakout rooms offered students a place to be themselves, away from the instructor’s gaze, and work collaboratively in small groups. However, my students shared that breakout rooms were “not helpful” and “the worst.” One student explained how she and peers mostly just sat in silence, rarely completing the assigned task. Another student disclosed what would happen when I then entered these spaces. He explained the systematic process of unmuting himself and then fabricating what they had done in the breakout room. After he admitted to lying, he reflected that he did not know whether this behavior had been for himself and his peers, or for me—to convince me that things were better than they were. A final takeaway is perhaps the most disheartening. My best student in the class, both academically and participatorily, mentioned that he did not believe he was “actually learning” in our remote classroom. His high grades made him feel as if he had cheated the system. Perhaps he had, and I had been unaware of it or (and I believe this more likely) he was unable to recognize his own success. Either way, if I had known this information sooner, I might have helped him.

Since conducting these interviews and analyzing data, I have begun applying students’ thoughts into my teaching, like guiding students in how to locate reputable sources. I am also considering the benefits of interviewing students. This project provided me (the instructor) an insider’s view into students’ learning experiences and offered something for students as well. As one student noted, the interview had been an opportunity to speak truthfully and expose issues. Although designing, conducting, transcribing, and analyzing a semi-structured interview is not feasible every semester, I now have reserved time and space (inside and outside class) for student voices through surveys, one-on-one meetings, and frequently (re)establishing our classroom community as a safe place to speak up. This has worked. For example, one student recently questioned the participation-grading system and we worked together on a compromise. Now, students can make up lost participation points from being sick by meeting me on Zoom to co-design our class’ next lesson.

The learning and the teaching during the pandemic were challenging and even though many instructors adapted instruction and/or adopted new pedagogies, the outcomes they witnessed ultimately came through their narrow frame of reference. Therefore, it has been heartwarming to see innovative and student-centered language learning research emerge out of the pandemic, across the globe and across language levels (e.g., Thomas et al., 2021). I hope they continue. Through opening the door and listening to students’ lived experiences, we can become more informed instructors and help our students succeed. (*references on page 6*)

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1. These efforts include Chomsky (1957), Savignon (1972), Ray (1990), the Modern Language Association’s 2007 report, and Senator Paul Simon’s Study Abroad Program Act of 2019, respectively.
  2. For ethical reasons, I was not present during the interviews.

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Anna Piotti is a dual-title Ph.D. candidate in German Linguistics and Language Science at the Pennsylvania State University. Her research interests fall at the intersection of (language) learning and pedagogy. She focuses on challenging the status quo in higher education through critically approaching current pedagogy. She works to identify and develop sustainable pedagogical practices, namely ones that recognize the value of student-agency, diversity, interdisciplinary, and multiculturalism.



# Diversity among Graduate Students at AAAL: A Survey Report

By Xiao Tan (Arizona State University), Frances K. Wenrich (Boston University), Zakaria Fahmi (University of South Florida), Sarvenaz Balali (Texas A&M University)

## Introduction

AAAL, as a transdisciplinary and multicultural organization, is committed to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. Along similar lines, the Graduate Student Council (GSC) applies a variety of initiatives and strategies to promote diversity and inclusiveness in our community of graduate students. As part of this effort, this year we administered a survey to gain a deeper understanding of the needs and perspectives of our graduate students and their attitudes toward our practices for embracing diversity. A total of 94 responses were received. In the following sections, we will report on our analysis of the survey results in terms of respondents' demographic information and their viewpoints about our diversity-related practices. We will then provide a general overview of the responses to the survey and will elaborate on the implications of these responses for the scope of diversity and inclusivity in the GSC.

## Demographic Landscape

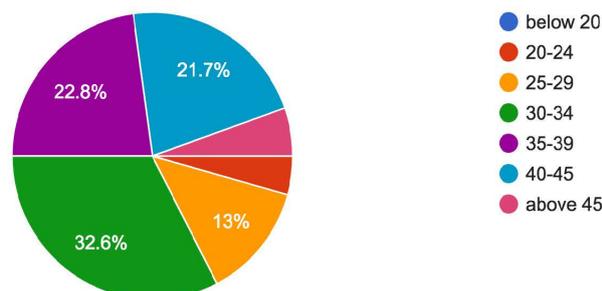
The first section of the survey addressed institutional and individual characteristics pertaining to the geographical distribution of students' institutions, types of institutions, and areas of research. It also addressed student demographics regarding their level of study, age, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, residency status, generational education, and disability/service status.

### *Institutional Characteristics*

The geographical distribution of the institutions displayed national and international concentrations. Domestically, our graduate students are predominantly from the southwest and northeast regions of the United States. Internationally, the students' affiliations are distributed across the globe, but most noticeably in Canada, the UK, Japan, and Morocco. These results also indicated that the majority of these institutions are public universities (80.4%), while private universities come at a much lower rate (18%). Finally, areas of research indicated the predominance of second language acquisition (SLA), corpus linguistics, second language (L2) writing, and sociolinguistics. *(continued on page 8)*

Age:

92 responses



**Figure 1: Age distribution among participants (92 responses).**

*Individual Characteristics*

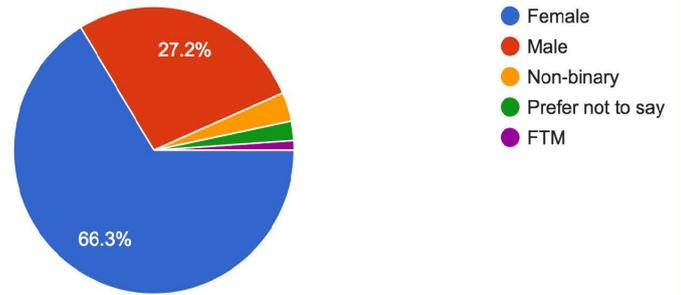
Students’ level of study showed that the majority of the respondents are enrolled in doctoral programs (85.9%), while 11 respondents (12%) are enrolled in master’s programs, followed by postdoctoral students at 1.1% (1 response). Additionally, students between 30–34 years of age comprise the major age group in the survey findings. Figures 1-3 describe the distributions of age, gender, and sexual orientation in the data.

In terms of race and ethnicity, “White/Caucasian” is the predominant racial background among survey respondents at 48.9%, followed by “Asian” at 27.2%. The findings for race and ethnicity are illustrated in Figure 4.

With regards to students’ residency status, the results show that the international student population outweighs domestic students with 55.6% (50 responses) versus 44.4% (40 responses). In terms of students’ generation of college attendance, it is striking to see that a great majority of respondents were first-generation graduate students with 61.4% (51 responses), while second generation was at 22.9% (19 responses), and third generation at 9.6% (8 responses).

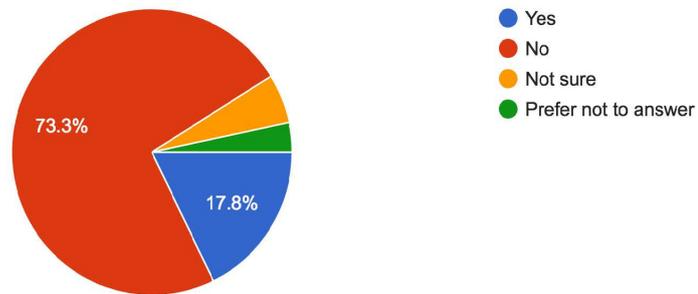
Furthermore, the percentage of students who reported having a disability was 10.9% (10 responses). While a minority (28.3%, 26 responses) reported being caregivers for family members, the majority of the respondents (71.7%, 66 responses) did not identify themselves as such. Figures 5 and 6 show the percentages of students with disabilities and those who reported providing care for their family members. *(continued on page 9)*

What is your gender?  
92 responses



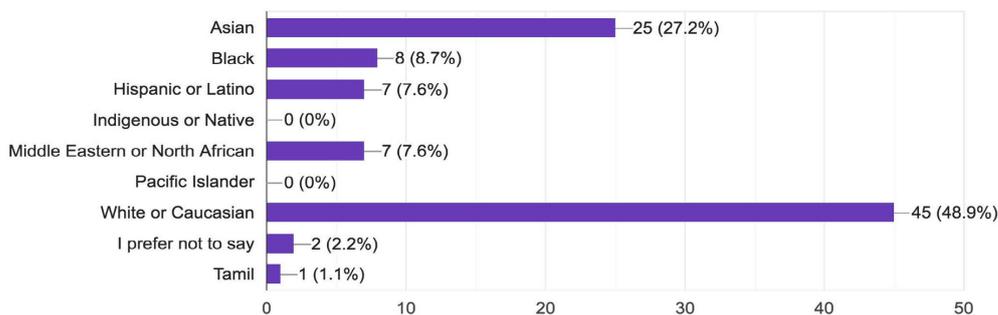
**Figure 2: Gender distribution among participants (92 responses).**

Do you identify as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community?  
90 responses



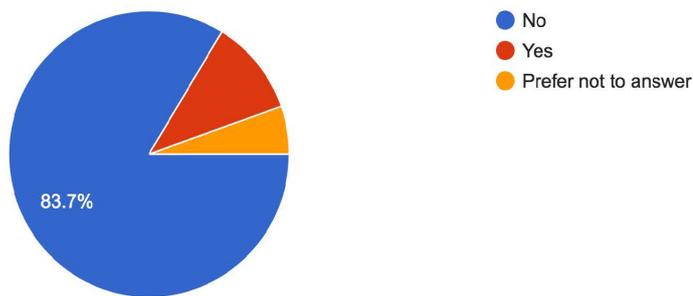
**Figure 3: Sexual orientation among participants (90 responses).**

I identify my race/ethnicity/origin as:  
92 responses



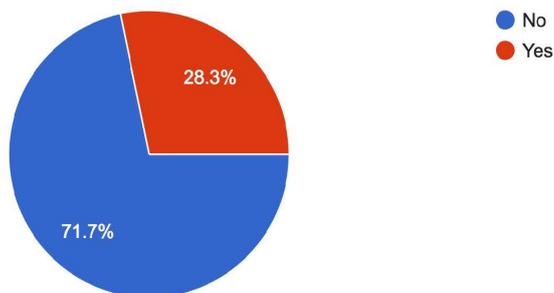
**Figure 4: Distribution of race and ethnicity of survey participants (92 responses).**

Do you identify as a person with a disability or as differently-abled?  
92 responses



**Figure 5: Distribution of students with disabilities (92 responses).**

Are you a care-giver for family members?  
92 responses



**Figure 6: Distribution of students who self-identified as caregivers (92 responses).**

**Rating of Experience**

The second section of the survey intended to gather data on graduate students’ attitudes toward the GSC’s effort to promote diversity, equity, and inclusivity. The survey results illustrate that overall graduate students in the AAAL community have had positive experiences with GSC-organized events. More than half of the respondents indicated that they would agree or strongly agree that the GSC supports members from diverse backgrounds (50%) and values diversity, equity, and inclusivity (55%). The satisfactory rate, however, drops slightly on questions regarding the GSC’s effort to address students’ needs at different career stages (42%), foster communication among members of diverse backgrounds (40%), and feature diverse topics and panelists at GSC events (44%).

Moreover, respondents expressed their need to have more opportunities to connect with scholars from other disciplinary backgrounds. In terms of the GSC’s support for students with special needs, such as international students and students with families and/or disabilities, an overwhelming percentage of respondents indicate that they are unaware of such support. This gap might be explained partially by the demographic make-up of our respondents and partially by the lack of explicit effort to address those needs.

**Experiences and Suggestions**

When considering the diversity experience of current members, we asked three questions in the third part of our survey. These open-ended questions centered on how the AAAL community responded to events and opportunities that were offered by the organization and how we can improve moving forward. The first question received multiple responses grounded in the benefits of attending the national conference. Respondents noted how this setting fostered networking opportunities and formed connections through the mentor/mentee program. The mentor/mentee program offered an opportunity for members to better understand expectations of working in academia and also addressed questions these students raised. In addition, the AAAL workshops were seen as beneficial for professional growth and gaining a better understanding of the field of applied linguistics. While many members found these aspects of AAAL to be positive elements of the community, others noted that there is room for improvement, especially in assisting those with a diverse background. *(continued on page 10)*

(cont.) When looking to improve equitable opportunities in AAAL, members echoed how they would like to see an increase in creating space for minorities and promoting financial aid for members. Requests for a more diverse space in terms of LGBTQ+ representation and inclusion accompanied calls to recognize marginalized communities and international students. Survey respondents noted how they would like AAAL to expand their target demographic to include international students where it was greatly felt that domestic students were mostly being considered. Lastly, students asked for better representation and recognition when identifying students of different ethnicities as seen in the survey where we requested demographic information. Members would like to see an appropriate representation on the GSC which would reflect the true diversity encompassed by AAAL.

The results of this survey will allow the GSC to critically review ways in which graduate students can be included and acknowledged by AAAL. As numerous responses noted, many members are new and have not participated in or interacted with the AAAL community yet. In future event planning, the GSC will consider creating events and connections so that these new members are welcomed in an equitable environment at the conference. By understanding the perspectives of AAAL members, we can move forward in welcoming new and former members to inclusive events.

### Concluding Remarks

Honoring diversity has always been a priority for AAAL. In the past few years, the executive committee has invested in a variety of diversity efforts, such as publishing [An Open Letter Regarding Diversity in AAAL](#). In addition, the Secretary and the PAEC (Public Affairs & Engagement Committee) regularly summarize and report on issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, and access in the newsletters. As the Secretary pointed out in the [summer issue of 2019](#), the work on diversity is ongoing, and it is not exclusive to the executive committee. By providing insights into who AAAL's graduate students are, what they value, and what they need, this report contributes to building a more inclusive community for future applied linguists.



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**Frances Wenrich** is a Graduate Student in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) at Boston University-Wheelock College of Education and Human Development. Her current research investigates topics including psycholinguistics, language engagement and second language acquisition.



**Zakaria Fahmi** is a Ph.D. student in the Linguistic and Applied Language Studies (LALS) program at the University of South Florida. His research interest includes the discourses and ideologies of language and culture in education, media, and society, social approaches to bi-multilingualism, language contact, and corpus linguistics.



**Sarvenaz Balali** is a PhD candidate in English specializing in applied linguistics at Texas A&M University-Commerce. Her current research focuses on the sociocultural aspects of language education, the experience of cultural discontinuity in particular. She is enthusiastic about studying the interaction between sociocultural and cognitive dimensions of second language education.

# நீல தங்கம் neela thangam - blue gold

By Suganya Rajendran Schmura (Texas A&M University Commerce)



**When the pandemic started**, I was plunged into a state of uncertainty about what a “new normal” would look like as our collective timeline was swiftly divided into a “before” and “after.” In the “before”, I was a full-time real estate agent, and my days were packed with client appointments and social engagements. In March 2020, I was thrust into the “after.” With a sudden and unexpected surplus of free time, I was able to delve into two fields that I had been enthralled with since I was young but had found increasingly less time to explore as I got older: art and linguistics.

In August 2020, I enrolled in the Applied Linguistics graduate program at Texas A&M University-Commerce and simultaneously started to find my voice as an abstract artist. This led to the launch of my art business in January 2021. Both pursuits were tied by a common thread which was brought to the forefront of my consciousness: a strong desire to unpack and understand how my immigrant experience, especially the complex feelings of identity and the trauma of language loss, has shaped who I am today.



(cont.) Long before March 2020, I went through a similar division of “before” and “after” when my family and I immigrated to the United States in the late 90s. Before, I was Tamil: I spoke Tamil, I ate Tamil food, and I wore Tamil clothes with no hesitation. After, my Tamil language, food, and clothes suddenly felt like uncomfortable layers of myself that I had to shed to be able to mold into a new identity.

I spent the first few decades after immigration focusing on assimilating to American culture and trying to suppress all parts of my Tamil identity. In my quest to be “normal”, or similar to my white monolingual English-speaking classmates, I rejected participating in Tamil culture or speaking the Tamil language. This rejection unfortunately led to the attrition of my once fluent mother tongue. I slowly lost my South Indian accent when speaking English and gained a standard American accent in my teenage years, which I believed to be the ultimate assimilation success story. Despite my unambiguously Tamil name (Suganya) and my brown skin, which I felt were barriers in my road to so-called normalcy, I thought that I was finally able to claim an American identity. However, I never quite made it to the state of normalcy that I longed for. (cont. on page 12)

(cont.) I didn't feel like I belonged among Americans, and after actively rejecting my Tamil culture and language for so long, I no longer felt like I belonged among Tamils. I had one foot in each culture, but felt part of neither.

I am now working on my master's thesis in which I investigate how Tamils in the diaspora relate their Tamil proficiency to their ethnolinguistic Tamil identity as well as simultaneously exploring my own relationship with my identity through my art practice. Both pursuits have required me to slow down and approach things differently than how I was used to in the "before"—to uncomfortably sit with my thoughts and feelings, painstakingly research existing literature and techniques, and deliberately craft my ideas into words and colors.

This piece, "நீல தங்கம்" or "neela thangam" (blue gold), explores many feelings I was confronted with last year. I wanted to reclaim my identity through the visibility of my language, which is why all of my pieces are named in Tamil, and my artist's signature on the bottom right of my pieces is the first letter of my name in Tamil, "சு" or "su". The deep colors of warm oranges and cool blues, mixing and intersecting in ways that create new shades and sharp contrast, remind me that my identity encompasses a multitude of personas and is ever-changing. The bold nesting lines—which are created by a handmade toothed rubber wedge pushed through white paint to reveal the muted colors underneath—represent the ancient Tamil traditions and language that I feel I am always connected to. The hesitant thin white scribbles represent my attempts to claim my culture and feelings of shame and resentment when I was not able to achieve the sense of belonging that I so desired. The overlaid sparse white dots represent the fleeting moments in time that I felt connected to different aspects of my identity. The colors are applied with a mix of intentional and intuitive motions that allow me to explore and express the more vulnerable aspects of pain,

joy, fear, shame, and resilience of my personal immigrant identity journey.

At the start of the pandemic, I yearned for things to return to normal. In fact, I had been yearning for the elusive state of being normal—which I thought required perfect English, proximity to whiteness, and rejection of my Tamil language and culture—since I immigrated to this country years ago.

**Now, I no longer yearn for the normalcy of the "before". Instead, I look forward to an "after" in which I can be my whole self.**



Suganya Rajendran Schmura is currently pursuing a master's degree in Applied Linguistics at Texas A&M University Commerce with her research focusing on heritage language maintenance and ethnolinguistic identity within the Tamil diaspora. She is also an abstract artist exploring her own personal journey with language loss and identity through color and movement. You can view her work at:

[www.studiosuganya.com](http://www.studiosuganya.com)

# On Becoming a Scholar: Editing Books as a Doctoral Student

By Pramod K. Sah

*The University of British Columbia, Canada*

**Professional  
Development  
Corner**

In the global meritocratic academic structure, it has become absolutely mandatory for doctoral students to publish in peer-reviewed outlets to show their potential as emerging scholars. A line of publications has become one of the key criteria to weigh scholarly potential or success in the increasingly competitive academic job market (Bartkowski, et al., 2015). Given the current pandemic situation leading [many universities to freeze new hiring](#), doctoral students face an even greater challenge: they will not only be competing against their fellow doctoral candidates and new graduates but also against junior faculty members. This makes the market even more competitive than before and may push doctoral students to publish even more intensely. Of course, there is no set rule on how many publications one should have (or in what outlets), but the pressure to publish has certainly increased. In the journey to become competitive, many doctoral students are considering editing books and special issues in academic journals. In this newsletter article, I share my personal experience of editing books, and hope that others may find my experience useful should they choose to pursue a similar path.

As Mizzi (2014) notes, through publishing processes, doctoral students shift their identity from “being a student to becoming a scholar” (p. 54). I am very sure we all have been advised to come out of the student bubble as we become advanced doctoral students and prepare for the job market. Accordingly, in addition to publishing journal articles and book chapters, I decided to edit a book, which I believed to be an opportunity for me (a) to develop my network (although it is a very vague concept, we are also advised to broaden our network as an important strategy to becoming successful in the job market); (b) to have experience in editing and dealing with publishers; and (c) more importantly, to signpost my presence in the field.

After I advanced to candidacy in my doctoral program, I approached Routledge and shared my ideas of editing a book on English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in the context of Asian universities. The publisher instantly agreed with the idea, I believe, mainly because EMI has become a hot topic recently and a much-needed area of research. I then looked for an experienced scholar to serve as a co-editor and to guide me in my new journey of becoming a book editor. I approached Dr. Fan Fang, who I had met at a conference. I was aware of his scholarship in EMI and Global Englishes in the Asian context and his experience in editing books and special issues.

The next step was to seek chapters. We decided to send an open call for chapters as well as to personally invite some established scholars. Some book editors do not choose to make an open call, but we decided to do so because we believed that the open call would bring in some interesting research from new/emerging scholars (including doctoral students) who we were not aware of. In doing so, we received so many excellent proposals. We found it challenging to review and select just a small number of them—the publisher had given us a fixed word limit for the volume. (*continued on p. 17*)

(cont.) Finally, we decided to go for two volumes: the first, English Medium Instruction and Linguistic Diversity in Asian Universities: Unsettling Critical Edges and the second, Pedagogies of English Medium Instruction Program in Asian Universities. Initially, we had planned a volume to deal with three strands of research: policy, pedagogy, and politics. However, we decided to have a separate volume on “pedagogy” of EMI as we had received a number of excellent proposals dealing with this theme. The other volume then focused on “policies” and “politics” of EMI.

### **Benefits and challenges in editing the books**

This journey of editing two books (coming out in early 2022) has benefited me in so many ways. For me, the key benefit is academic socialization: I have developed my own community of colleagues who share similar research interests. In other words, I have developed a network of EMI scholars from different parts of the world. I have had opportunities to read and learn about the research of those (about 50) scholars and, in turn, they have become familiar with my own scholarship.

Other benefits I have received include some amount of recognition in the field of EMI, invitations to contribute to volumes and special issues, and I was even invited to give a keynote at the [ExcitELT](#) conference organized by the EMI Research Group at the University of Oxford and the [Teaching English & Teaching in English in Global Contexts](#) network. I have also had opportunities to learn some academic and interpersonal skills, including the skills of reading drafts, commenting/giving feedback, negotiating those comments, and making editorial decisions.

Working as a middle person between reviewers and authors has provided both opportunities and challenges in terms of negotiation and decision-making processes. With these glittering benefits also come challenges both in the editing processes and working towards my own doctoral program. Firstly, editing a book requires lots of time and energy, which a doctoral student needs to subtract from their primary responsibility of producing a dissertation. We need to weigh the cost of accumulating publication capital on the scale of:

1. how much credibility an edited volume receives in the job application (I have had a suggestion that a journal article is given more credit than an edited volume),
2. how much emotional struggle we undergo, mainly for minoritized international students who have family and kids and have left behind people who we care about,
3. how anxious we become in seeking a balance between completing a dissertation, editing volumes, publishing articles/chapters, and navigating the job market, and
4. how much “emotional labor” (Hochschild, 2012) we put on others and ourselves.

Pointing to these issues should by no means discourage fellow scholars from editing a book. Let us also not forget that we all have our distinct life trajectories that make considering these issues vital.

Moreover, there can be a challenge in negotiating with your co-editor and collaborators. Such negotiations can be made in terms of ideas (conceptual and methodological), the timeline, and other commitments. It is possible that some chapters that we consider to be crucial in terms of geographical and gender inclusivity, for example, may not be turned in; or, although turned in, they do not achieve the desired standard of quality. We then need to look for alternatives, which means another round of labor. This requires another set of negotiations in terms of how much time all co-editors need to commit and how much flexibility a junior scholar can have. Sometimes, we are overwhelmed, and we tend to (voluntarily) take up extra labor. *(continued on page 18)*

(cont.) In sum, the process of editing books has brought about several academic benefits and elevated my confidence in coming out of the student bubble and growing as a scholar. However, editing books alongside publishing articles, chapters, and doing all sorts of professional services has posed a series of challenges and anxieties while I am preparing for the job market. Hence, it is entirely up to you whether you are ready to take up this extra labor. Time will tell if my endeavors have been worthwhile; however, I think they are worth the ride.

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**Professional  
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# Publishing During Your Doctoral Studies

By Dr. Kevin W. H. Tai, Honorary Postdoctoral Research Fellow  
UCL Institute of Education, University College London

In September 2021, I completed my PhD in Applied Linguistics at the UCL Institute of Education, University College London. My studies were fully funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

Throughout my doctoral journey, I was successful in publishing a lot of my doctoral research findings long before my viva. As a result, I often get asked questions such as:

- How do you publish peer-reviewed journal articles during your PhD?
- Do you have any tips on publishing for other PhD students?
- What kind of challenges have you faced in publishing as a PhD student?
- What strategies could other PhD students adopt to improve their chances of getting published?

In this article, I aim to offer some tips about publishing research papers in international peer-reviewed journals since it is very difficult for many graduate students to navigate the publishing field. Before I do that, however, it is important to introduce my research interests and empirical studies that were part of my PhD.

## Research Interests and Doctoral Work

My research interests include: language education policy, classroom discourse, translanguaging in multilingual contexts and qualitative research methods (particularly Multimodal Conversation Analysis, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and Linguistic Ethnography). My doctoral project consisted of a linguistic ethnographic investigation in Hong Kong (HK) English Medium Instruction (EMI) secondary mathematics and history classrooms. Methodologically, this study integrated Multimodal Conversation Analysis with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. This unique combination involved observing participant's pedagogical practices over time as well as understanding the teachers' reflections on classroom practices. The classroom interactional data were analysed using Multimodal Conversation Analysis, looking at not only different languages (Cantonese, Mandarin and English in this case) but also spatial repertoire, objects and other facilities in the classrooms. The findings offer an empirical basis for developing translanguaging as an alternative approach to current EMI policy and practice. They also help to discover the classroom conditions required for translanguaging practices to succeed. This allows teachers to employ translanguaging to achieve their pedagogical goals, bridge communication gaps and empower learners.

## Publishing and Editorial Experience

In terms of publishing experience, I have a successful track record of original research. My first academic publication was a paper based on my undergraduate BA Honours thesis which I co-authored with my supervisor, Dr Adam Brandt (Tai and Brandt, 2018). I then disseminated two research papers from my MSc thesis with one of my supervisors, Dr Nahal Khabbazzbashi. I addressed my research questions separately in two different papers (Tai and Khabbazzbashi, 2019a; 2019b) so that each paper has a unique argument. *(continued on page 14)*

(cont.) With my PhD findings, I published four research articles during my studies with my principal supervisor, Professor Li Wei. The papers are based on the themes of my PhD data analysis chapters: translanguaging space for playful talk (Tai and Li Wei, 2021a), translanguaging space for bringing outside knowledge into the classroom (Tai and Li Wei, 2020), translanguaging space for co-learning (Tai and Li Wei, 2021b) and technological-mediated translanguaging space (Tai and Li Wei, 2021c). I have also conducted collaborative projects with some of my colleagues, which were disseminated in academic journals (e.g. Ho and Tai, 2019). Currently, I am preparing to publish several more research articles from my PhD thesis. I am also writing a research methodology book on Multimodal Conversation Analysis and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

In addition to my studies, I have worked (and continue to work) as an Editorial Board Member and Editorial Assistant for the *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* and *The Language Learning Journal*. My main responsibility is to nominate and invite potential peer reviewers to review manuscripts. I have to be open to new perspectives when evaluating manuscripts, and this has helped with my own research writing.

Based on my experiences in publishing empirical research and acting as an editorial board member of leading journals in applied linguistics, I would like to share three tips for publishing during your PhD.

### Tips for Publishing

1. **Have a strong argument for your paper.** You need to think about: Why is it important for the reader to read your paper? What can the reader learn from your paper? How do the findings of your research offer implications for policymaking or educational practice?
2. **Consider co-authoring research papers with your PhD supervisor(s).** Ideally, your supervisor(s) will be willing to support you and reframe your arguments so that they are good enough to be published in high impact journals.
3. **Look for the right journal for your paper.** The first thing that you can do is to look at your reference list and see what journals you have cited. That will be a good indication of what journals will be relevant to your research topic and, thus, more likely to accept your paper. Journal editors will be interested to see whether your paper has referenced papers that are published in their journals.

The main challenge that I have encountered in publishing during my PhD is dealing with the peer reviewers' ruthless comments. It can be really discouraging, and I sometimes question myself: Why do I have to go through such a process? I have come to feel that the more comments that I read, the more it prepares me to deal with these comments calmly and professionally. Regarding responding to the harsh or negative reviewer comments, I think we should deal with them as we would deal with any other comment: Give a point-by-point response to the comments, mentioning whether you agree or disagree with them. If you disagree with some of the comments, provide your reasons for doing so.

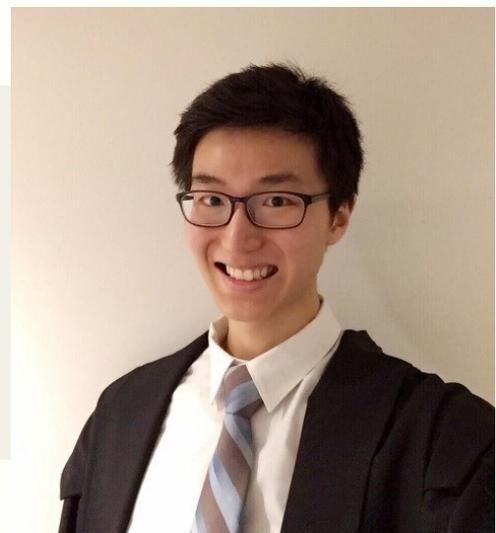
Finally, it's very important for PhD candidates to build a support network of other people that they can bounce ideas off of and get feedback from. You can talk to your supervisor; they know you, they know about your project, and they may know about relevant research or teaching opportunities. Furthermore, you can talk to other PhD students; they will know exactly what you're going through and will be able to offer different insights into the PhD. (continued on page 15)

(cont.) As early career academics, we are operating within an increasingly challenging environment. There are expectations for us to develop our teaching repertoire and our research publication records during our doctoral studies. It can be frustrating at times, but it is also a privilege to be able to create new knowledge and immerse ourselves in the theoretical questions that interest us. Enjoy the doctoral journey and make the most out of it while you can.

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# The Art of Leadership for Keeping Community Communication Going in the Post-pandemic Era

By Yoko Mori

University of Otago, New Zealand

**Professional  
Development  
Corner**

Looking forward to the post-pandemic era, I find a hybrid model of face-to-face and virtual communication to be ideal for sustaining academic and empathetic interactions within our community of practice (i.e., a community of applied linguists comprised of students, teachers, and researchers). While online meetings have been a challenge—in that it is difficult to feel the same connectedness (e.g., as those in casual chats over coffee)—few academics can deny these events have also brought about advantages. To me, one advantage would be the inclusiveness of online and hybrid international conferences that have taken place. In this column, I would like to draw attention to conversations over these new forms of international conferences and touch on how imaginative leadership—which can take place via conference organizational leadership—is essential as we approach the post-pandemic era.

Since many international conferences have become virtual during this pandemic, many of us have “warped” (i.e., transferred instantly) from one country to another. In some fortunate cases, we have been able to build new friendships and strengthen existing ones. The world is, indeed, vast, but technology has enabled us to connect, re-connect, and evolve creatively even in the most challenging of times. Drawing on these experiences, inserting virtual gatherings between face-to-face conferences seems to be an option many of us would be willing to share in the future. In pre-pandemic times, a large number of international conferences had taken place annually or bi-annually with few or no gatherings in between them. However, this post-pandemic idea enables us to continue our conversations across a series of virtual gatherings to the next face-to-face conference or as new, entirely virtual communities. The potential synergy of having a continuous flow of virtual gatherings coupled with occasional face-to-face conferences is likely to: 1) broaden opportunities to enrich the knowledge base of the field, 2) strengthen relationships, and 3) promote community members’ professional development—notably, creating leadership opportunities for those individuals who take responsibility in keeping our academic communication going. In what follows, I focus on the third point: promoting community members’ professional development by nurturing leaders who can sustain active communication with our community of practice.

**The hybrid model of communication guided by imaginative leadership brings in light, keeping us going with hope in our community of practice.**

Palus and Horth (1996) claimed that leadership is a form of art making. According to the authors, the processes of leadership and art making are both “meaning making” in a community of practice. They argued that leadership and art making both require a lot of imagination and creativity. The authors proposed that these qualities are nurtured through co-inquiry where “powerful questions” facilitate exploration and “cultivation of doubt” leads to innovative ideas. Indeed, “leadership makes, remakes, and maintains the fabric of knowledge by which a group recognizes its identity and its work practices” (p. 54). *(continued on page 20)*

(cont.) I have experienced conferences where both teachers and students contributed to take leadership roles in these creative endeavors. For example, in a recent international conference hosted by a US university, postgraduate students took initiative in creatively applying the virtual Gather platform to the on-site venue. This enabled virtual participants to interact and share the same time and space with those on-site, creating a sense of inclusivity. Also, this gave the postgraduate students a sense of leadership in being able to connect members of their academic community with one another. In this situation, indeed, “powerful questions” and energetic discussions developed as if everything were done on-site. What was most impressive to me was that these host students had the forethought and kindness to extend their knowledge to beginners like me, with no such experience using this virtual platform. A practice video via email was sent prior to the conference so that we could all participate stress-free. The homemade video made us feel much at-home, too. Now, in the post-conference phase, we exchange follow-up emails, opening up opportunities for further discussions and explorations. Essentially, we feel more connected because of the leadership roles the postgraduate students assumed as communication facilitators for our community of practice.

As we approach the new phase of life, coexisting with Covid-19, the importance of thinking about what we can carry on from this pandemic time is widely discussed. Imaginative leadership is what I think of and what I would like to carry forward from the many impressive experiences I had via virtual events. Whether it be through face-to-face or virtual communication, leadership which is founded on putting oneself in another’s shoes seems to be the key to sustain peaceful yet vigorous conversations for a better future. Of course, face-to-face communication remains ideal for many people; however, to make the most of the opportunities when we do get to exchange ideas with our academic community, the hybrid model of communication seems a constructive way to do so, not only in the ongoing situation, but also in the post-pandemic era.

Additionally, during this pandemic, I have learned that “community-specific language” and interactions help us to stay connected, to share our feelings and thoughts with peace of mind, even if we are at times overwhelmed with the “pandemic language” that has crept into our lives. Indeed, the famous slogan “Keep Calm and Carry On” lingers in my mind each time I have the honor to interact—virtually or otherwise—with members of our academic community. I cherish the opportunity I have to listen to stories of why community members continue to explore the paths they have chosen, and I feel it is a valuable opportunity to be immersed in familiar community-specific language—language I would have no opportunity to hear without the leadership of those who work to sustain the communication within our community. It is impossible to know when we will be able to fully enter the post-pandemic era; however, I believe the hybrid model of communication guided by imaginative leadership brings in light, keeping us going with hope in our community of practice.

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Yoko Mori is a doctoral student of higher education at the University of Otago, New Zealand. Her research interests include professional identity development, motivation, English as a Medium of Instruction, intercultural communication, and internationalization of higher education.

# Resource Review

## ***Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom, by Lisa Delpit***

*Reviewed by Charles McKinney, IV  
SIT Graduate Institute*

During the summer term of this year, I completed a graduate course titled Intercultural Communication and Ethnographic Inquiry for Language Educators as part of the required master's curriculum in my low-residency TESOL program at the School for International Training (SIT). My small and intimate cohort were required to read Lisa Delpit's *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*. Even though this book was originally published in the 1990s and then reprinted in 2006, I still see widespread relevance for its consumption and for the implementation of its ideas at present. For example, the book addresses current issues such as radical race relations, a broken American public education system, and, oftentimes, inadequate cultural competence training in both in-service and preservice teacher development programs within the US, specifically.

It is no secret that we live in an age of fragile race relations in which Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color (BIPOC) as well as socioeconomically underprivileged students/teachers must contend with the diverse forms of implicit bias or covert discrimination that make upward mobility in mainstream America difficult. Stakeholders from working class, humbler backgrounds often must work harder than their more privileged White counterparts. They do this childhood into adulthood to prove their educational/professional value and intelligence. A case in point is author Lisa Delpit herself, who grew up in a segregated Southern community, where she attended a newly integrated high school in the 1960s and faced both overt and covert racism that "developed when aspects of our culture became targets for remediation at best, and evidence for our inability to learn at worst" (Delpit, 2006, p. 73).

The aforementioned negative experiences in adolescence provided the impetus with which Delpit would devote her life and work to understanding how the world could look differently through a fresh lens in the sociopolitical effort to reform education for disadvantaged children and children of color. These children bear the brunt of being misunderstood, miseducated, and misrepresented as intellectual, cultural, and social beings. Delpit not only delineates her powerful experiences navigating the tricky power dynamics of academia in her award-winning book, but also the compelling stories of voices that go unheard and unnoticed in an increasingly multicultural American society.

Delpit challenges readers to interrogate their precise assumptions, beliefs, and values about how children of color and poor children learn and are taught by their predominantly White progressive teachers. She draws from her personal experience in the formal schooling system as well as the experiences of others through educational ethnographic research conducted in two distinct contexts: Papua New Guinea and Alaska, USA. She learned overarching lessons about cultural empathy, humility, and perspective broadening that influenced her approach to knowing, teaching, and learning.  
*(continued on page 22)*

(cont.) As Delpit (2006), herself, acknowledged, her survival in Papua New Guinea, for instance, depended on her cooperation and capacity to learn from her new colleagues and new setting during her year-long research fellowship. She conducted her research on education/literacy instruction in a manner that served to honor the integrity and identity of the local people and their core values. She endeavored to uplift rather than to destroy the heritage of the Papua New Guinean people, thus avoiding a perpetuation of Eurocentric linguistic imperialism. She chose a decolonizing methodology that brought her into relational harmony with the local indigenous people while simultaneously unveiling the cultural beauty and ideology that characterizes Papua New Guinea and Delpit's specific research context with primary education literacy instruction. Delpit purposed to empower the people in education in the way that they wanted it (and not via what she deemed best by Western standards comparable to the proselytization agenda of earlier missionaries): a balance between acquiring and using modern economically-friendly English with the traditional heritage-preserving local language.

The lessons that Delpit learned through her ethnographic research have broad implications for teachers from all walks of life in this brave new world of hybrid education. As K-12 classrooms are becoming more diverse, it becomes even more important for educators of a multicultural and multilingual student body to adopt culturally relevant teaching approaches that value the unique and fresh perspectives, ideas, and varieties of language(s) that students have to offer their peers and teachers. Teachers can leverage the richness and originality of African American Vernacular English (AAVE), for instance, to engage students more deeply in the writing process while also equipping them with the Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) needed for success in their academic and professional lives following primary education. As Delpit (2006) notes in her book, "we can ignore or try to obliterate language diversity in the classroom, or we can encourage in our teachers and students a 'mental set for diversity'" (p. 68).

Delpit points out how children of color and poor children have been done a grave disservice when they are not (properly) taught the knowledge and skills they need linguistically to become proficient speakers and writers of Standard American English (SAE). Unfortunately, many students graduate high school unequipped for college and must work harder to get caught up (for those who get into and attend college). Delpit (2006) also notes that educators need to respect the home languages and cultures of their diverse students and to leverage this linguistic diversity in the classroom so that everyone can benefit because "both student and teacher are expert at what they know best" (p. 32). For example, a Black instructor who effectively understands and utilizes AAVE and the communicational/interactional patterns of children of color can connect with and reach them in a way that, perhaps, a White instructor may misconstrue as a learning deficit, at best, and uneducable, at worst.

A major strength of *Other People's Children* is the author's choice to feature alternative voices typically marginalized within mainstream academia. It was vital for Delpit to have these educators share their stories of feeling excluded from the conversation in graduate school courses, dealing with colleagues who did not value their firsthand experience and expertise as educators of color with students of the same cultural and, possibly, socioeconomic backgrounds, and the general uphill battle that minoritized professionals face in an ever-growing, racialized, postmodern society. Giving a voice to these often "silenced dialogues of power and pedagogy in educating other people's children" (Delpit, 2006, p. 21) can foster an intercultural awareness and can bridge cross-cultural gaps.  
(continued on page 23)

(cont.) As a result, diverse practitioners may be encouraged to converge in solving pressing problems confronting education and our youth. Some of these issues include obtaining instruction in and access to the “codes of power” (i.e., linguistic/academic skills within the context of the 21st century global skills) needed for their success in the larger world beyond their respective communities.

Given the challenges of the global pandemic the past 18 months and counting, including the educational inequities that have gripped the attention of administrators, politicians, educational activists, and others (purportedly) invested in its progress, it behooves all of us to reimagine and redesign an educational system that levels the playing field for all learners. This means a system in which every student feels valued, included, and heard for the unique cognitive and cultural (among other factors) assets they contribute to the learning space. We must accommodate and celebrate diversity, daring to see the world through the eyes of our multicultural students. The implications for teacher training and development improvement cannot be overlooked through Delpit’s anecdotal evidence. Her book is a stark eye-opener for some and a reminder for others that teacher preparation programs need to embrace appropriate cross-cultural knowledge, skills, attitudes, and awareness curricula that will prepare and empower teachers to harness the power of diversity in their classrooms rather than fear or ignore it.

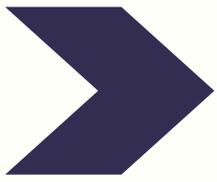
Overall, this book inspires me to enhance my teaching practice both as a language teacher and aspiring teacher educator. I believe it will stimulate the intellect and stir the soul of all who feast on its pages in a self-reflexive and critically conscious manner. As academic stakeholders everywhere grapple with the monumental task of effectively educating an increasingly diverse student populace in a post-pandemic brave new world, *Other’s People Children* provides a way to navigate the rich intercultural and plurilingual terrain that makes our world a beautiful and colorful place to live. Delpit’s brilliant work of heart should be read by all prospective and practicing educators for its powerful and poignant message of acknowledging and appreciating the abundant cultural and linguistic diversity that exists within American classrooms from primary to postsecondary education. Twenty-first-century teacher education programs ought to consider including this seminal opus into their curricula. In short, as the language and race doctoral scholar and ELT professional J.P.B. Gerald (2020, subheading) wrote in “There Were Never Any Rules” at the pandemic’s inception: “we can do better than a return to normal in the education world.”

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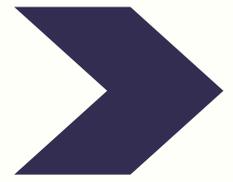
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Charles McKinney has been traveling the world teaching English for 11 years and is currently based in the Middle East. With one semester remaining in his MA-TESOL program at SIT, he aspires to advance into teacher training and development, which are among his varied research interests (in addition to plurilingual pedagogy and critical race theory).



## Readers Respond Forum



*Now in its second iteration, the "Readers Respond Forum" allows readers and authors to engage in constructive dialogue and exchange of ideas about the articles published in AAALGrads. In this issue, Ahmad Alharthi provides a follow-up response to Ashley Moore's Spring 2021 article "Are Diversity Statements Nonperformative? A Critical Discussion," which was itself a response Alharthi's Professional Development Corner, "How to Write a Diversity Statement," published in Fall 2020. Below you will find Alharthi's reply to Moore's response. The original piece and Moore's response can be found in the past issues of AAALGrads, available [here](#).*

### Are There Any Benefits to Diversity Statements?

*By Ahmad A. Alharthi  
University of Washington*

I have read with interest and pleasure the response by Ashley Moore—published in the AAALGrads Spring 2021 issue—to my guide on how to write a diversity statement, which had been published in the Fall 2020 issue. I would like to thank Moore for his engagement with my piece, and the editors for giving me the opportunity to comment on Moore's response. Moore raises valid and serious concerns about the genre in question, which I think are worth keeping in mind when discussing the topic of diversity.

Let me point out, first and foremost, that efforts related to equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are nothing new, especially in the context of the United States. Through Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, discriminatory practices became prohibited in the workplace. Over the following decades, this legislation was amended and expanded several times, and diversity became an important workplace value that is located at the intersection of good ethics and legal mandates. In their blog, de Anca and Aragón (2018) explain that companies have started to develop diversity initiatives since the 1980s. Part of that effort is what Carnes et al. (2019) describe as "institutional" or "organizational" diversity statements, which refer to the messages written by employers (both in academia and beyond) to convey their commitment to EDI work. As Moore notes, soliciting individual diversity statements from prospective applicants to academia is a relatively recent phenomenon. However, this step is merely an extension of the effort to promote EDI work on the part of employers. Sylvester et al. (2019) see it as a step in the right direction because it allows institutions to "evaluate what they say are core values in hiring processes" (p. 154).

Both the notion of diversity and the diversity statement requirement have been critiqued on several fronts. Regarding diversity, Mac Donald (2018a) offers a conservative take, which questions its very value in education, while Michaels (2006) offers a more leftist analysis, arguing that issues of class and economy are more urgent than diversity and, therefore, should take primary focus. In a similar manner, diversity statements have received criticism from a wide spectrum of political affiliations. (*continued on page 25*)

(*cont.*) For example, Mac Donald (2018b) wrote an article where she challenges their usefulness. Likewise, Jeffrey Flier, former Dean of Harvard Medical School, tweeted that diversity statements represent “an affront to academic freedom” (Flier, 2018), despite following up with a clarification that he “fully supports” diversity itself (Flaherty, 2018a). Indeed, Diamond (2018) cites two diversity advisors who have their own qualms against diversity statements, expressing concerns similar to those of Moore’s.

I happen to share some of those concerns. In fact, I find it hard to disagree with any of the points made by Moore. So, instead of trying to refute his list of potential “pitfalls” (Carnes et al., 2019), I would like to highlight some of the potential benefits for diversity statements. By doing so, I hope to provide the reader with a clearer picture of some of the pros and cons of diversity statements, leaving it up to the reader to make up their mind as to whether or not (and to what extent) the statement in question can be an effective tool for the purpose of faculty hiring.

### **Diversity statements can promote a culture of egalitarianism and advance the social justice agenda**

In their analysis of diversity statements written over the past few years, Sylvester et al. (2019) identify seven elements that applicants used to demonstrate their commitment to EDI work. Three elements speak to the ideological nature of EDI: 1) valuing and understanding EDI, 2) personal background and experiences, and 3) skill building and personal growth. The other four elements speak to the materiality of EDI: 4) teaching, 5) mentorship, 6) research/scholarship, and 7) engagement/service. A balance between the two themes (ideological and material) represents what De Costa et al. (2021) describe as “centering” EDI in one’s work. But even limiting oneself to the first theme in the diversity statement—in case of the absence of the second theme—can serve as a contract or a “pledge” (Diamond, 2018) that applicants understand what EDI work entails and that they appreciate its importance. Further, the diversity statement requirement shows that both employers and employees are on the same page regarding EDI work and that both parties take that work seriously.

### **Diversity statements can validate “invisible labor” and help distribute EDI-related efforts**

Until recently, EDI work has not factored into professional development in a serious way, which made this kind of work “hard, thankless, and largely invisible” (Matthew, 2016, p. 14). The diversity statement required at initial hiring offers us the chance to fix this situation, highlight the importance of EDI work, and give due credit to those involved in it. It is worth noting that the University of California, a pioneering institution in validating EDI work, now rewards contributions related to EDI even for “merit increases and promotion determinations” (“Equity, Diversity and Inclusion,” 2019, p. 5). Related to “invisible labor” is the issue of “cultural taxation” (Padilla, 1994), where faculty of color are tasked with EDI work (e.g., serving on diversity committees on campus) merely because they are faculty of color (see Hall, 2016). Requiring diversity statements from all applicants regardless of their background can send the message that EDI work is the responsibility of all faculty members, not just certain members of certain groups (Sylvester et al., 2019).

### **Diversity statements can and should be linked to the idea of excellence in academic work**

Besides the social justice angle, the work of diversity should also be viewed through the lens of excellence. The history of composition studies, which is one of the “supporting disciplines” to applied linguistics (Grabe, 2010, p. 36), teaches us that over the past century, every time there was a new student enrollment pattern, new instructional methods were developed in order to deal with that reality. In other words, new pedagogical needs prompt educators to be more innovative with their instructional approaches. (*continued on page 26*)

(*cont.*) The same point can be made about the notion of “public scholarship,” which refers to “diverse modes of creating and circulating knowledge for and with publics and communities” (as cited in “What is Public Scholarship?”, 2021). According to Flaherty (2018b), public scholarship was used by prospective applicants in their diversity statements to demonstrate their commitment to diversity work. From developing pedagogies that address different learning styles to seeking creative ways to expand the outreach of one’s research, diversity contributions are “intellectual work” (Sylvester et al., 2019, p. 154), just as much as diversity statements are “critical scholarly documents that will foster productive conversations about the faculty’s role in shaping and improving higher education” (Canning & Reddick, 2019).

### **Diversity statements can serve as a useful reflective exercise**

The opportunity to write about one’s commitment to diversity should be viewed positively. In their blog, de Anca and Aragón (2018) remark that “diversity is a journey [which] requires careful navigation.” One way to navigate this journey is through the very act of writing, which would enable one to examine the various ways they know, view, understand and think of EDI work. Therefore, I find Moore’s suggestion—that one should write two versions of the diversity statement—to be extremely intriguing and effective. One version (i.e., the trial version) can serve as a brainstorming exercise about what could have been done in the past or what could be done in the future; the other version (i.e., the real version) is the statement documenting actual deeds and actions. In the short run, the trial version contributes to one’s understanding about diversity. In the long run, it inspires a stronger commitment to EDI work, which will eventually become part of the real version of the statement. The lack of a perfect record demonstrating EDI work should not deter us from trying to write a diversity statement, because—as pointed out by Mitchell (2018)—we readily engage in the process of writing statements for both teaching and research, even though we are far from being perfect at either domain.

### **Conclusion**

I hope that my list of positives does not turn us away from Moore’s list, nor that it underplays that there are real potential problems to diversity statements. In their article about organizational diversity statements, Carnes et al. (2019) engage in an insightful discussion about some potential pitfalls of that genre, suggesting ways to turn those pitfalls into potential promises. Similarly, I think we should continuously scrutinize the requirement of individual diversity statements in order to make it more beneficial (or at least less harmful) to all parties involved. The list offered by Moore provides us with that opportunity and allows us to think of ways to turn “bureaucratized diversity” (Ferguson, 2017) into “meaningful diversity” (Matthew, 2016, p. 9). That is the trick, in my opinion.

Finally, at a time when “cancel culture” is unfortunately prevailing and the diversity of opinion is not as welcomed as it once was, I would be remiss not to touch on this aspect of diversity here. In the blog I cited earlier, de Anca and Aragón (2018) note that diversity is a complex concept which encompasses at least three layers. These include: 1) demographic diversity, or the type of diversity that is tied to “identities of origin” (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender); 2) experiential diversity, or the type of diversity that is tied to “identities of growth” (e.g., affinities, hobbies, skills); and 3) cognitive diversity, or the type of diversity that is tied to “identities of aspiration” (e.g., worldviews, political beliefs, moral compass). What the authors call “demographic diversity” (or what I refer to in my original piece as the “big eight”) is only one component of diversity. But that component has no chance of surviving without the other two supporting it. It is, in large part, through points of critique, which are part of the cognitive diversity, that we are able to stay humble and reflect on the extent of the soundness of our ways of doing things. Without diversity of thought, the type of diversity that we are trying to fight for and defend would be seriously at risk. (*references on page 27*)

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## Author Bio

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# Meet the GSC Steering Committee for 2021-2022

The GSC Steering Committee is a leadership team that works closely with the AAAL Executive Committee for taking initiatives to address GSC members' academic professional development needs.

Full profiles of each Steering Committee member can be found [here](#).

## Laxmi Prasad Ojha Co-chair (GSC Rep on EC & FFAL)



Laxmi is a PhD student in Curriculum Instruction and Teacher Education at Michigan State University. His research interests include multilingualism, language ideologies, bilingual education, language policy, TESOL, and teacher education. He can be reached at [ojhalaxm@msu.edu](mailto:ojhalaxm@msu.edu).

## Svetlana Koltovskaia Co-chair (GSC Rep on PAEC)



Svetlana is a Ph.D. candidate in TESOL and Applied Linguistics at Oklahoma State University (OSU). Her research interests include computer-assisted language learning, L2 writing, and intercultural pragmatics. She can be reached at [skoltov@okstate.edu](mailto:skoltov@okstate.edu).

## Xiao Tan Secretary (GSC Rep on FFAL & Diversity Sub- Committee Leader)



Xiao Tan is a PhD candidate in Writing, Rhetorics, and Literacies at Arizona State University. Her current research interests include multimodal writing, second language writing and teacher education. Her email address is [xtan42@asu.edu](mailto:xtan42@asu.edu).

## Lupe Rincon-Mendoza Member-at-large (Event Planning Sub- Committee Leader)



Lupe is a PhD candidate in the Department of Applied Linguistics at the Pennsylvania State University. Her research interests include academic socialization, sociolinguistics, and sociocultural theory. She can be reached at [gZR28@psu.edu](mailto:gZR28@psu.edu).

## Nathan Thomas Member-at-large (Newsletter Sub- Committee Leader)



Nathan Thomas is a PhD candidate in Applied Linguistics and a postgraduate teaching assistant in TESOL at the UCL Institute of Education. His research interests are wide ranging, with current projects on language learning strategies, self/other-regulation, and English medium instruction.

## Oksana Moroz Member-at-large (Social Media Sub- Committee Leader)



Oksana Moroz is a Mama PhD Candidate in Composition & Applied Linguistics and a Teaching Associate at Indiana U of Pennsylvania. Her research interests include gender and teacher identity, digital identities of students, issues of accents and language ideologies, and teaching with Wikipedia. She can be reached at [o.moroz@iup.edu](mailto:o.moroz@iup.edu).

# GSC Conference Webinar Summaries

The AAAL Graduate Student Council hosts a series of events every year during the AAAL annual conference to support the professional development of graduate students as well as to promote an interconnected community amongst graduate students and scholars in the field. Below are brief summaries of the presentations from the pre-conference workshops at the 2021 AAAL conference. You can find the full resources on [this page](#). Summaries contributed by members of the Event Planning Sub-Committee: Lupe Rincon-Mendoza, Maria (Masha) Kostromitina, Blanche Gao, and Fatehmeh Bordbarajavidi

## Dr. Ruth Harman

### Balancing the Holistic Experience of Being a Graduate Student in 2021

Dr. Harman introduced the idea of three-fold domains of our lives as researchers, including ME (how are you doing?), MESO communities of research and teaching (how are your students, colleagues, and families doing?), and MACRO societal issues (how can I support systemic change?). Dr. Harman used herself as a case to explain how we could use these three domains to better understand ourselves and what could be potential issues. Dr. Harman encouraged us to use humor, focus on relationships, and embrace acceptance of who we are and how we are feeling. We need to “cherish and nourish all three domains in our lives: graduate student, family member, and community activist”. More importantly, “don’t forget to laugh,” said Dr. Harman.

## Dr. Matthew Prior

### Balancing the Holistic Experience of Being a Graduate Student

Dr. Prior started the presentation by emphasizing the importance of having a work-life balance, especially for graduate students. Although there might be many challenges in graduate-student life, “grad school is a temporary stop.” Dr. Prior continued by inviting students to be intentional and cultivate sustainable habits. Moreover, it is important to check in with ourselves and treat self-care as a sacred obligation. It is also necessary to search for mentors and develop multiple, healthy relationships within our communities. Dr. Prior said that we need to “work slower but work smarter.” Lastly, graduate students should remember that there are many resources available within universities, online, and in our broader academic communities.

## Dr. Tove Larsson

### Some thoughts on work-life balance

Dr. Tove Larsson shared her insights on how to maintain a work-life balance in graduate school and beyond. From the very beginning, Dr. Larsson established a very open space where she detailed her experiences with overworking, and how it affected her life and relationships. Outlining the reasons why “deprioritizing” work is so hard, she reminded the viewers of the mental and physical gains from doing so. Based on her experiences, Dr. Larsson offered tips for maintaining a sustainable balance between work and life: setting up rules to distinguish between work time and free time, developing strategies for handling unexpected work situations, being forgiving towards ourselves, and prioritizing tasks based both on their importance and deadlines. How exactly can we start implementing these strategies then? “The first step here is deciding that you actually want to do it,” said Dr. Larsson.

**Dr. Cindy Berger****Strategies for interviewing in Ed Tech**

In her workshop, Dr. Cindy Berger offered useful strategies for interviewing well when looking for a job in the field of Educational Technology. After giving a brief overview of her background and work experience with Duolingo, Dr. Berger provided “insider tips” for how to nail an interview. She recommended being prepared to complete tasks before or during the interview, demonstrating your teamwork and clear communication skills, and focusing on your projects rather than studies. Dr. Berger also provided a list of additional skills, including time management, creativity, cross-functional collaboration, and resilience to feedback, which would be helpful to highlight during the interview.

**Dr. Kevin Wong****Navigating the Academic Job Market**

Dr. Wong shared his experience in the job market in terms of job applications, phone interviews, campus visits, and the offer he received. He also shared the application spreadsheet that he made for his job search and the items he included (e.g., school, location, position, etc.). Regarding telephone interviews, he shared tips for answering questions, and he also shared the questions he received for his telephone interview, such as: How do you teach students with diverse needs? What is your research agenda and how do you see yourself developing it in the next 2–5 years? He also shared his experience with the campus visit and the questions that the search committee and the dean asked him. Finally, he shared how to negotiate when receiving an offer. In the end, he recommended a book to read before applying for a job.

**Dr. Christine Tardy****Navigating the Job Market & Publishing**

Dr. Tardy shared some insights in preparing for an interview. After briefly covering the process of applying for an academic job, Dr. Tardy made recommendations on how to prepare for the interview process (e.g., reviewing the job ad, learning about the department, preparing notes and questions for the search committee). Additionally, she stressed the importance of the kinds of questions that prospective candidates should ask when they are interviewed by a search committee. Dr. Tardy provided some insider tips on questions to avoid asking during the interview process, such as asking about the initial starting salary. She concluded by reminding our graduate student community that an interview is an encouraging sign that indicates interest, and that all parties want the interview to end well.

**Dr. Bezhad Mansouri****Navigating the Job Market & Publishing**

Dr. Mansouri provided his experiences with publishing and selecting the right journal for his work. After providing an overview of some of the common myths and misconceptions of publishing, Dr. Mansouri shared strategies for identifying the proper journal according to your research interests, as well as traps to avoid (e.g., predatory journals, short review processes, unknown publishers). He also provided some tips for finding colleagues to collaborate with.

# Call for Proposals for the AAALGrads Newsletter Spring 2022 Issue

In preparing for the Fall 2021 issue of AAALGrads, we called for articles that questioned some of the “new normals” that have emerged within our academic communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. We also asked authors to discuss what we could learn from our experiences during this time and what we could/should carry forward. While these are, of course, topics that continue to be relevant to AAALGrads readers, with several themed issues now behind us, we feel it is time to broaden the scope (once again) to any and all topics that potential authors feel may be relevant to our graduate student community.

We are open to receiving a wide range of proposals and hope to showcase an array of topics and scholarly areas that our graduate student community is currently engaged with.

## Possible Formats

We extend our call to include Feature Articles, Resource Reviews (e.g., books and technological tools), Creative Corner pieces (e.g., poetry, art, and video), short “how to” or “what I wish someone had told me” blurbs for the Professional Development Corner, and responses to articles from the current newsletter for the Readers Respond Forum.

- **Feature Article.** A feature article should be about 750-1,500 words. It should address and critically develop a question or idea relevant to the AAALGrads community. Feature articles can report on empirical research, take a theoretical perspective, or share completed projects and administrative or service work.
- **Resource Review.** A resource review should be about 500-1,000 words. It should critique material (e.g., books, textbooks, technological tools, or a website) that might be helpful to graduate students. You are expected to have read and/or used the material before you write your review. For your proposal, please include a brief summary of the resource and your opinion of its helpfulness for graduate students.
- **Creative Corner.** The Creative Corner is an experimental section designed to showcase the creativity and diverse experiences of graduate students in our field. In addition to short essays, submissions in this section may include poetry, art, and/or a high quality video related to graduate student life. In your proposal, please be sure to describe the submission format (e.g., 25 MB .mp4 video). Reflections on personal experiences are encouraged.
- **Professional Development Corner.** Blurbs for the Professional Development Corner are 500-to-1,000-word “how to” or “what I wish someone had told me” reports by advanced graduate students. The format can take several shapes, such as, but not limited to: a short narrative of a successful strategy, a “do’s and don’ts” list, or a flowchart. The goal of this newsletter section is to give graduate students adequate support and guidance as they navigate their graduate careers. In that vein, please maintain a professional tone and positive outlook. Do not refer to institutions, departments, or individual people by name.
- **Readers Respond Forum.** You can now respond to articles from the current newsletter issue (Fall 2021). The original author(s) will also be given the opportunity to write a counter-response. With permission of the author(s), these responses will be included in our upcoming issue (Spring 2022) to facilitate scholarly and intellectual exchange. You can see examples in the Spring 2021 and Fall 2021 issues.

# CfP - Spring 2022 Issue

## Guidelines for Proposals, Submission, and Timeline

Your proposal should...

- be approximately 300 words
- provide your name, department and institution, degree, and area of study
- identify the section of interest (feature article, resource review, Creative Corner, or Professional Development Corner)
- include a brief overview of what you plan to submit
- confirm your ability to commit to the timeline (provided below)

Proposals will be collected through this [Google Form](#) and are **due by January 7, 2022 @11:59 PM Eastern Time**. You can submit a proposal if you are a current student or recent graduate. You do not have to be a current AAAL member.

Tentative Timeline	
Friday, January 7, 2022	Proposals due
Monday, January 10, 2022	Authors notified of acceptance
Friday, January 28, 2022	First draft of manuscripts due
Monday, January 31, 2022	Editors provide feedback to authors on first drafts
Friday, February 11, 2022	Revised drafts due
Monday, February 14, 2022	Editors provide additional feedback if <b>necessary</b>
Friday, February 25, 2022	Final drafts of manuscripts due
Friday, March 4, 2022	Editors return final draft with proofs
Monday, March 7, 2022	Authors respond to proofs and provide short biography & headshot
<b>The issue is expected to appear in mid March (before the AAAL conference).</b>	

For questions or inquiries, please reach out to the newsletter co-editors Nathan Thomas, Katherine Kerschen, Sooyoung Kang, and Mariana Lima Becker at [aaalgrads@gmail.com](mailto:aaalgrads@gmail.com).

## GET IN TOUCH WITH US!



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## NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

It's time for our annual design competition! Winners will have their designs featured on apparel and accessories and be publicly recognized at the 2022 AAAL conference. All proceeds will be used to support graduate students and the Fund for the Future of Applied Linguistics (FFAL). Click [here](#) for competition details.

AAAL Grad students, are you ready for our conference in March 2022? Hotel rooms are pricey and they're going fast!

If you would like to find someone to room with, the GSC is offering you a monitored discussion space for roommate searching. Click [here](#) for more details and to access the roommate finder.

