

# AAALGrads

THE AAAL GRADUATE STUDENT COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

Welcome! In this issue of the AAALGrads newsletter, you will find:

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  - [Letter From the AAAL Presidents](#)
- **Feature articles:**
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  - ["It's Okay not to Be Okay: Detecting Suicidal Signs in Online Communication" by Tetiana Tytko \(University of Maryland, College Park\)](#)
- **"Creative Corner":**
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  - ["Inspired by Sea Lions That Make Their 'ibasho' on a Beach: A Hint for a Happy Survival" by Yoko Mori \(University of Otago\)](#)
- **Resource reviews:**
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  - ["Pandemic Conferencing: Implications for Future Virtual Exchange" by Michael D. Winans, Blanca Romero Pino, & Xiaomeng Zhang \(Arizona State University\)](#)
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- **"Readers Respond Forum":**
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    - *Original piece:* ["White Ignorance and the Struggle for an Anti-Racist Applied Linguistics" by Nicholas Close Subtirelu \(Georgetown University\)](#)
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Also check out our [past issues!](#)

We welcome your feedback and input. You can leave comments in our surveys, or reach us through email at [grad@aaal.org](mailto:grad@aaal.org) OR [aaalgrads@gmail.com](mailto:aaalgrads@gmail.com).

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## Letter from the Co-Editors

Dear fellow graduate students,

Welcome to the Spring 2021 issue of the AAALGrads newsletter! As excited as we are to bring you this issue, we release it in full acknowledgment that the past 13 months have been a highly unusual and exhausting time for most, if not all, of us.

The ongoing pandemic has been a major disruptor which has created all kinds of ambiguity and uncertainty for the academic community. From graduate students specifically, we have heard about major challenges and trauma like disrupted research plans, lost funding, lack of childcare, unclear visa regulations, a collapsing job market, mental health problems, or, even worse, sickness or death. Throughout 2020, we also witnessed racial tensions and protests in response to the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and other Black, Indigenous, and Other People of Color across the United States, as well as a highly divisive presidential race which many believed the country's future to depend on. Many of these issues persist into 2021.

In our call for proposals for this issue, we predicted that while we will eventually return to a feeling of normalcy, academia will likely not revert to its old, pre-2020 form. We wrote that the crises and tensions we faced throughout 2020 have drawn new attention to existing problems and faultlines in a neoliberal higher education, manifested, for instance, in an increasingly competitive job market, the growing scarcity of funding, or the ongoing disenfranchisement of minorities in the academic community. Yet, in face of the ambiguity and uncertainty we have experienced, and continue to experience, many of us have had no other option but to bounce back, adapt, and keep going.

As such, we called upon the members of our community to submit proposals which illustrate not only the resilience of graduate students but which also voice the growing desire for reform and alternative ways of doing, thinking, and being in higher education that the above developments have amplified. Our choice of "Ambiguity, Uncertainty, and Resilience" as a theme was driven by the goal to create a space where members of our community can engage in discussions about new paths for applied linguistics and higher education which can make our professional environments more adaptive and resilient and, consequently, support us in overcoming the hardship of 2020 by embracing a positive outlook into the future of our profession.

In keeping with this premise, let us give you an overview of the items you will find in the Spring 2021 issue of the AAALGrads newsletter:

- **Letters:**
  - [Letter From the AAAL Presidents](#): Past AAAL President Kendall King and current President Patsy Duff discuss some of the work AAAL has done in response to the various instances of uncertainty and ambiguity we have faced in the past 13 months.
- **Feature articles:**
  - In "[International Graduate Students' Perceptions of Post-COVID-19 Online Learning](#)," Adam Agostinelli (Boston College) reports on graduate students' perceived challenges and affordances of remote instruction.
  - In "[Resilient Optimism Through Uncertainty in the Development of Virtual Professional Development for EFL Teachers in Tajikistan](#)," Elise Brittain (The University of Texas at San Antonio) discusses her experience providing remote EFL teacher development as a participant in the U.S. Department of State Virtual Student Federal Service (VSFS) Internship program.
  - In "[It's Okay not to Be Okay: Detecting Suicidal Signs in Online Communication](#)," Tetiana Tytko (University of Maryland, College Park) shares the findings of a corpus study on suicidal signs in graduate students and offers valuable resources for those in crisis.
- **"Creative Corner":**
  - In her poem, "[Being a Doctoral Mom](#)," Ji Ma (Georgia State University) expresses her thoughts about what it means to be an international student and parent during the pandemic.
  - In her reflection, "[Letter to Younger Self](#)," Elisabeth Chan (George Mason University) reflects on her trajectory as a Chinese-American member of the academic community.
  - In her reflection, "[Inspired by Sea Lions That Make Their 'ibasho' on a Beach: A Hint for a Happy Survival](#)," Yoko Mori (University of Otago) uses the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to reflect on the concepts of home and liminality.
- **Resource reviews:**
  - In "[Synthesis of Resources: Self-Educating to Become Savvy Digital Information Consumers](#)," Huan Gao (University of Florida) provides a critical review of six organizations which can support the development of digital literacy.
  - In "[Pandemic Conferencing: Implications for Future Virtual Exchange](#)," Michael Winans, Blanca Romero Pino, and Xiaomeng Zhang (Arizona State University) share their experience organizing a fully online conference, including a critical analysis of digital conferencing tools and their affordances.
- **"Professional Development Corner":**
  - In "[Learning How to Navigate Doctoral Supervision](#)," Tatiana Becerra Posada (McGill University) shares her experience securing and working with a doctoral supervisor during the pandemic.
- **"Readers Respond Forum":**
  - [White Ignorance](#): We received two responses to Nicholas Subtirelu's Fall 2020 article on white ignorance: "Revisiting Subtirelu's Article on 'White Ignorance and the Struggle for an Anti-Racist Applied Linguistics'" by Zakaria Fahmi (University of South Florida) and "Decentering and Unlearning: A Response to 'White Ignorance and the Struggle for an Anti-Racist Applied Linguistics'" by Di Liang (The Pennsylvania State University). Nicholas Subtirelu engages further with the two responses in "On Becoming Antiracist Racists: Author's Response."
  - [Diversity Statement](#): In "Are Diversity Statements Nonperformative? A Critical Discussion," Ashley Moore (University of British Columbia) engages with Ahmad Alharti's Fall 2020 article, "How to Write a Diversity Statement," by discussing the genre through a critical performativity lens.
- **Acknowledgments and accomplishments:**
  - Brittany Frieson is the [2021 Dissertation Award Winner](#). We interviewed her about her dissertation, which focuses on the literacy practices of African American Language speakers, her experience as a graduate student, and her plans for the future.
  - Every year, the GSC calls on graduate students to share their artistic talent in the [AAAL design competition](#). Di Liang (The Pennsylvania State University) and Lynn Zhang (University of Wisconsin-Madison) present and explain their designs in this section.
  - We have compiled the bios and conference presentation abstracts of our [2021 Graduate Student Award winners](#).
- **Resources:**
  - [Crowdsourced Resources and Funding Opportunities Related to Ambiguity, Uncertainty, and Resilience](#): This section contains a list of resources surrounding ambiguity, uncertainty, and resilience that graduate students and GSC members have compiled. You will find scholarly publications, relevant readings and articles, as well as a list of awards, grants, and funding opportunities.
  - [Follow-Up to Our January GSC Webinar](#): In January, the event planning sub-committee organized a webinar on remote research. You will find the panelist's information, a summary of the talk, and various relevant readings on the topic in this section.
  - [Social Media Blog](#): Did you know that the social media sub-committee keeps a blog with interesting topics for graduate students, like navigating the job market or the PhD experience? You will find an overview of the posts from the past one and a half years.
  - We also re-published some items from the Summer 2020 special issue on COVID-19 which are aligned with our fall theme. We hope you will find these useful and encouraging:
    - [Quarantine Stories from Graduate Students](#)
    - [Interviews About COVID-19 with Applied Linguists and Administrators](#)
    - [COVID-19 Resources for Graduate Students](#)
- **Interactive items:**
  - [Diversity Climate Survey](#): We invite all graduate students to complete a survey about their diverse backgrounds and their experiences with diversity in the profession. This will help the GSC to improve our operations and to better support our graduate student members.
  - [Readers Respond Forum](#): To create community and exchange of ideas, readers can respond to articles published in the current issue. You can read more about this format and find the submission form in the "Readers Respond Forum" section.
  - [Call for Proposals for the Fall 2021 Issue of the AAALGrads newsletter](#): We cordially invite you to contribute to our fall issue, which will be centered on the theme "Looking Forward: A Return to Normal or New Beginnings?" You can learn more about the rationale, submission formats, and submission guidelines in this section.

Finally, the co-editors would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this issue, either as an author or a reviewer. We realize that the past 13 months have been exceptionally exhausting and demanding due to COVID-19. We feel fortunate and honored to have worked with so many kind and patient individuals. We value your input, diligence, and commitment to the applied linguistics community.

Sincerely,  
Zhenjie Weng, Mariana Lima Becker, & Stefan Vogel, Co-Editors

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## *Distinguished Service and/or Engaged Research Graduate Student Award in Relation to Diversity Efforts*

Did you know that there is a new award recognizing graduate students for their service and/or research in relation to diversity? You can read more about the [award on the AAAL website](#). For your convenience, we also include a screenshot of the award page below.

### **Distinguished Service and/or Engaged Research Graduate Student Award in Relation to Diversity Efforts**

The Distinguished Service and Engaged Research Graduate Student Award in Relation to Diversity Efforts recognizes a graduate student (i.e., a student member of AAAL at the time of application and enrolled in a university Master's, Ph.D., or Ed.D. program in applied linguistics or a related field whose *service* and *engaged research endeavors* (1) promote the interests of traditionally underrepresented or minoritized groups in the field of applied linguistics, (2) raise public awareness of important social issues connected to language, and (3) increase the opportunities for collaboration and dialogue among all members of AAAL. This award is to be given annually. Awardee(s) and their work will be recognized through social media and publications by the Graduate Student Council. This award differs from the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access (DEIA) Graduate Student Award (GSA), to be launched Fall 2021, which is given to graduate students to support their attendance at the AAAL annual conference.

#### **Eligibility**

*Service endeavors* could include systematic use of social media platforms to promote issues related to diversity, organization of both in-person and digital meetings for groups of graduate students previously underrepresented in AAAL and in applied linguistics, collaboration with local communities (e.g., K-12 schools, teachers, high school students, etc.) in the promotion and support of multilingualism, equity, and diversity, or other actions which meet the aforementioned criteria.

*Engaged research efforts* (1) promote the interests of previously underrepresented or minoritized groups in the field of applied linguistics, (2) raise public awareness of important social issues connected to language, (3) increase the opportunities for collaboration and dialogue among all members of AAAL, and (4) include direct outcomes for research and community participants. Engaged research endeavors could include community-based action research, design-based research, teacher-research-service collaborations, and others in the promotion and support of multilingualism, equity, and diversity, or other actions which meet the aforementioned criteria.

This award is to be given annually. At the discretion of the award committee, the award may or may not be presented during a given year. A reason not to make an award would be an insufficient number of nominations or no nomination that meets the excellence expected.

#### **Nomination Procedure**

Any member of AAAL may nominate a graduate student for this award. This includes faculty members, graduate student peers, and the nominee themselves. Individuals who have been nominated but not selected for the award in previous years are eligible. However, they must be re-nominated with a current statement of nomination and CV to be considered for the current award. Members of the current and former GSC steering committee and sub-committees are ineligible.

The nomination should include (1) a statement of nomination (maximum length of two single-spaced pages, authored by one or a maximum of two individuals or a maximum of three-minute multimodal composition), stating specific contributions of the nominee in the aforementioned criteria; (2) an attached current CV of the nominee (or a comparable summary of the nominee's major scholarship and service achievements); and (3) a 50-word summary of the nominee's contributions to diversity efforts. Due to the stipulated need for confidentiality of nominations, only these nominated materials will be accepted.

The nomination deadline is June 1 annually. Award selection is made by January 30 annually. Please send your nomination to [Andi@aaal.org](mailto:Andi@aaal.org) (<mailto:Andi@aaal.org>).

Nominations will be assessed based on the extent to which they address the following questions:

1. What contributions to the interests of previously underrepresented or minoritized groups in the field of applied linguistics have been made?
2. How do these efforts raise public awareness of important social issues connected to language?
3. What opportunities for collaboration and dialogue among all members of AAAL have been created or enhanced?

[Click here to access the website version of the award description](#)



[grad@aaal.org](mailto:grad@aaal.org)  
<https://www.aaal.org/graduate-student-council>  
<https://www.aaal-gsc.org/>



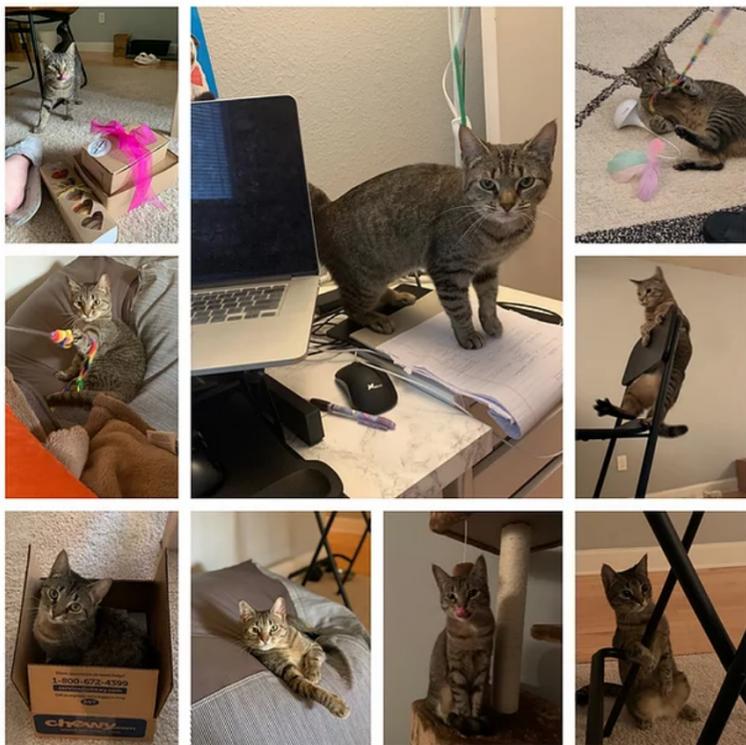
# Quarantine Stories From the Graduate Student Community

When shelter-in-place orders went into effect throughout the United States, many of us felt isolated and disoriented. To find out more about the strategies graduate students have been using to cope during the pandemic, our social media sub-committee collected stories of resilience, optimism, and hope through our social media channels. Check out these amazing contributions from members of the graduate student community!



## Yunjung (Eunice) Nam

"Hello, AAAL Grads! While staying at home, I have been working on the 'Home Cafe' project--in preparation for a potential second job in addition to an applied linguist. ☺ I have been making diverse kinds of coffee, tea lattes, and fruit juice. It has been a great therapy for my tired soul and body!"



## Xian (Jan) Li

"Hi, everyone! I fostered a cat (Frankie) when the whole shelter-in-place thing started. She has been the best supervisor to my study and a great company during this unusual time. I ended up adopting her last month. Super grateful for this furry colleague."

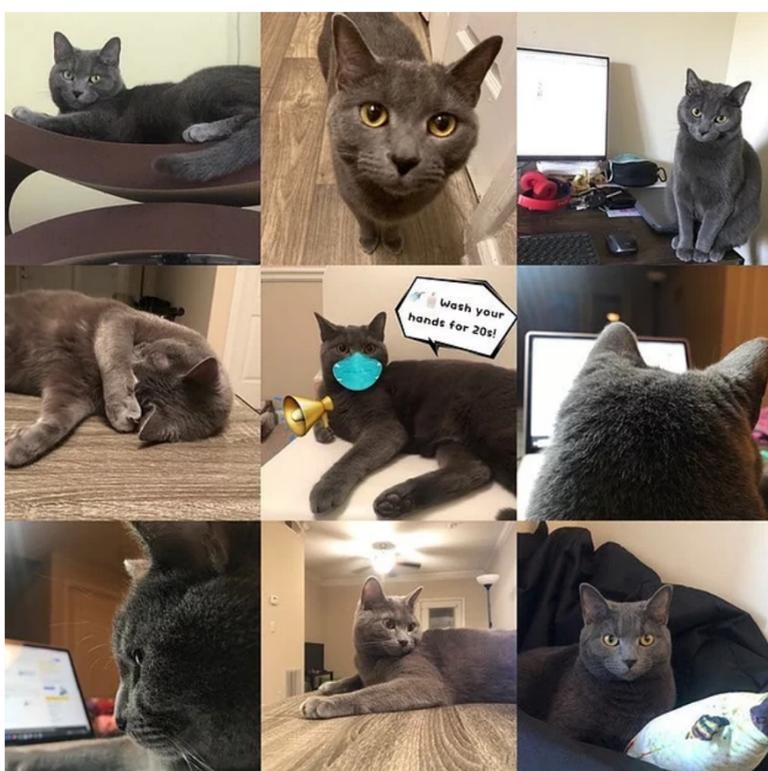


## Selahattin Yilmaz

"Hello, AAAL world! I am Selahattin Yilmaz, a Ph.D. candidate in applied linguistics at Georgia State University, Atlanta. Thanks to the awesome GSC team, I get to share with you some photos of my cooking and a little bit about me.

Currently, I'm working on finishing my dissertation. And since I've been spending more time at home than usual with the pandemic, I've been able to cook and bake quite often. I'm generally interested in finding ways to make traditional recipes healthier, which, I think, has helped me stay healthy and challenged during the lockdown. I hope you like the photos here from some of my cooking that I usually post on my cooking Instagram account (@myworldoftastes).

Stay safe and healthy as we have many more amazing AAAL conferences to have."



## Qian Wan

"Hello! I'm Qian and this is my furry friend, Riley, a gray domestic shorthair bilingual cat. He enjoys chasing after his toys and reading linguistics papers beside my computer. I'm so happy to have been staying with him during this lockdown and we hope everyone will stay safe and well! ☺"



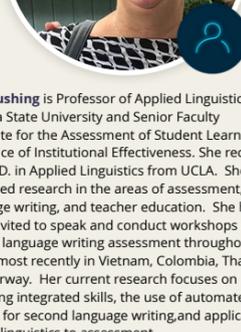
## Tianfang (Sally) Wang

"Hi, AAALGrads! During the pandemic, cooking helps me to stay calm and eat healthy. I made a few of my favorite dishes and shared some of them with my friends."

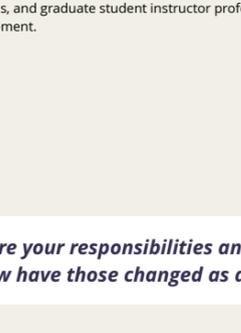
## Interviews About Covid-19 With Applied Linguists and Administrators



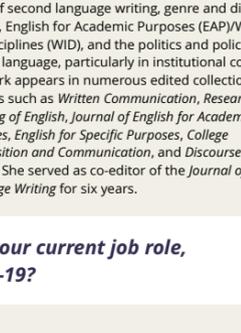
**Suzanne Panferov Reese** is the chair of the Second Language Acquisition and Teaching Ph.D. program and teaches in Public and Applied Humanities at the University of Arizona. Previously, she served as Associate Vice President for Global Initiatives and directed the Center for English as a Second Language. She teaches courses in language program administration and presents on professionalism and leadership. Additionally, Prof. Panferov Reese has served as the President of TESOL International and UCIPEP.



**Sara Cushing** is Professor of Applied Linguistics at Georgia State University and Senior Faculty Associate for the Assessment of Student Learning in the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. She received her Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics from UCLA. She has published research in the areas of assessment, second language writing, and teacher education. She has been invited to speak and conduct workshops on second language writing assessment throughout the world, most recently in Vietnam, Colombia, Thailand, and Norway. Her current research focuses on assessing integrated skills, the use of automated scoring for second language writing, and applications of corpus linguistics to assessment.



**Chelsea Timlin** is Assistant Director for Technology at the Center for Language Studies and Lecturer in Language Studies at Brown University. She holds a PhD in Second Language Acquisition and Teaching from the University of Arizona. Her research interests include second and foreign language pedagogy and curriculum development, learners' development of inter-cultural literacies, and graduate student instructor professional development.



**Christine Tardy** teaches courses in the undergraduate English program, MA-TESL program, and SLAT PhD program at the University of Arizona. She also works with the university's Global unit, coordinating the instruction of English first-year writing at the University of Arizona's partner universities abroad where they have global programs. Her research focuses on the areas of second language writing, genre and discourse studies, English for Academic Purposes (EAP)/Writing in the Disciplines (WID), and the politics and policies of the English language, particularly in institutional contexts. Her work appears in numerous edited collections and in journals such as *Written Communication*, *Research in the Teaching of English*, *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *English for Specific Purposes*, *College Composition and Communication*, and *Discourse & Society*. She served as co-editor of the *Journal of Second Language Writing* for six years.

### What are your responsibilities and resources in your current job role, and how have those changed as a result of Covid-19?

**Suzanne Panferov Reese** My role as the incoming Chair of our Ph.D. in Second Language Acquisition and Teaching is ever evolving. Pre-Covid 19, this role was responsible for overseeing the day-to-day administrative and curricular affairs of the program and managing the fiscal oversight of the program, in consultation with a faculty Executive Committee. This includes cooperating with faculty across four colleges to offer a diverse set of curricula and set expectations for supporting and mentoring doctoral students from admissions to graduation. However, now negotiating for funding for graduate students has become extraordinarily complicated with severe budget cuts due to the virus. Additionally, we are uncertain about the ability of our new international students in the fall 2020 cohort to travel, get visas, and arrive on time for the semester start. Finally, at the forefront of everyone's mind is what teaching will look like in the fall. Much debate is flying about in social media about the pros and cons of returning in person versus hybrid or online courses. Our own university president swore on national tv early in the summer that we will be in person, but now an upward turn in our case numbers may nix that. So, preparations for teaching are evolving for either situation, making flexibility in teaching preparations more important than ever before.

**Sara Cushing** I have two roles—one as an administrator and one as a faculty member. As an administrator, I am responsible for overseeing the assessment of student learning outcomes for the university. Every program needs to submit a report annually on their assessment. My role has not changed appreciably except that I am working from home. As a faculty member, I had to put my course online in the middle of the semester, like everyone else.

**Chelsea Timlin** As the Assistant Director of Technology, my primary responsibility is to provide language faculty with resources that support their use of technology in second language instruction. Prior to moving to telework due to Covid-19, I offered monthly workshops designed around specific tools or topics that language faculty indicated interest in (e.g., digital social reading, active learning with student response systems, and tools provided by the institution). I also met with individual language faculty on a regular basis about implementing technologies in their courses, online placement exams, and designing hybrid courses.

After transitioning to working remotely, I reconfigured my regular workshops into a Summer Webinar Series devoted to designing online and hybrid language courses. These webinars focused on topics such as hybrid course design, using multimedia in online contexts, encouraging interpersonal communication in digital spaces, assessment in online language courses, and establishing and maintaining community in online language courses. I also have created a Resource Website for language faculty to refer to for external resources (e.g., Title VI LRCs, ACTFL, NECTFL, IALLT) and information about various technologies for language teaching (for example, Canvas modules). I lead regular workshop sessions via Zoom and have been meeting language faculty individually and entire departments over Zoom for specialized discussions of technology for their courses.

In my role as Lecturer in Language Studies, I co-taught a section of intensive beginning German during Spring 2020. Once we moved to remote instruction in March, I took over the design of asynchronous activities that students completed every Tuesday and led my regular section on Thursdays.

In general, I have gained more access and visibility to language departments and faculty who did not typically attend the in-person workshops or meet with me in person to discuss technology in their courses. Interest in and the need for resources on implementing technology has risen for obvious reasons, so my to-do list has actually grown significantly in the past few months compared to the Fall 2019 and early Spring 2020 semesters.

**Christine Tardy** My basic teaching responsibilities have not changed drastically other than the move to online teaching. This summer I have been completing some mini-courses on online teaching (offered by my university) to up my game in this area—though I am lucky that I have already taught online and have previously completed some professional development in this area.

I also work with my university's Global unit, coordinating the instruction of English first-year writing at our partner universities abroad where we have global programs. That has involved a lot of rapidly changing situations with many unknowns. Do we need to prepare for remote instruction or f2f instruction? Will f2f instruction end up as remote instruction anyway? What support do teachers need? How will the pandemic affect student enrollment in these programs? Do we have ever-evolving global relations affect the future of these programs? It seems we have a new set of questions every week.

### How did you solve conflicts or overcome difficulties during this period of time?

**Suzanne Panferov Reese** Solving conflicts and difficulties always involves lots of communication and information sharing. One of the hardest challenges in leading university programs of any time right now is the lack of information just because we do not know yet what is to come. We need to be open and ready to communicate that we just do not know all of the answers so that no one feels like information is being withheld. Training is essential too. Being able to pivot teaching quickly from in-person to online quickly is critical but takes resources and basic training. I recommend using any down time to learn and share all that we can about best practices of teaching online. And getting everyone at the same table preparing contingencies and thinking through the various impacts of various decisions is super important. It is critical to invest time now talking with all stakeholders about how any changes may affect others, not only to prevent future calamities but also to save time. Universities are complex entities, and when one domino falls so do many others.

**Sara Cushing** I tried to recognize that everyone was under a lot of stress and dealing with a variety of challenges. I was flexible with deadlines and reduced the workload for the course I was teaching, recognizing that graduate students, many of whom were also teaching and having to put their courses online, were under even more stress than I was.

**Chelsea Timlin** Many of the conflicts I have experienced during this time have stemmed from a struggle to address my increased responsibilities at work in a "normal" home life. The day care facilities in our state closed in April and only some reopened in early June. Because my partner is immuno-compromised, we could not (nor did we want to) take the risk of putting our son back into a daycare with poorly outlined safety procedures. My partner and I both have demanding full-time positions, and it has been a difficult process of creating and maintaining a routine that allows us both at least 3-4 hours of work during regular business hours. This routine, while far from perfect, is the most effective strategy we have found thus far to combat stress induced by having to juggle all of these responsibilities at once.

**Christine Tardy** Probably much like everyone else, I have generally just tried to make it through one day at a time! I was very fortunate (and somewhat unfortunate) that when things closed down in March, I was actually on sabbatical. This meant that I didn't have to worry about moving my classes online or dealing with the many logistical issues that my colleagues were contending with. Because I have a son in first grade, I was able to help him with remote schooling (and, it turns out that first graders really aren't able to do much—if any—of that kind of work on their own). I am grateful I had the time to help him, though it was disappointing to lose the treasured sabbatical time.

Since March, I've been in a process of trying to create a new routine. Trying to adjust to working at home with a young child has definitely been the biggest challenge. I have had to let some work go, and I am sure that will also be the case in the Fall as remote K-12 school continues and I add my own teaching and meetings to the mix. I am re-adjusting timelines on my own research projects and turning down new writing project opportunities. I have tried to prioritize working with my graduate students, so we still meet weekly on Zoom; we write together and check in on their progress. It gives all of us some sense of normalcy and some support.

I have also started a writing group with other academic moms. We set modest goals at the start of each week and check in at the end of the week to see what we accomplished. It is really encouraging to be connected with others who are facing similar challenges of balancing work-at-home and 24/7 parenting. Working parents are being stretched thin right now and are also dealing with the stresses of making decisions about their kids' schooling in the Fall. In the writing group, we give each other a lot of support and also some ideas and strategies for managing things. I would recommend everyone to find some kind of support network like this, where you can cheer each other on.

### How do you see Covid-19 impacting university students, faculty, and/or staff around the country, particularly regarding the ways in which this pandemic has challenged established ways of thinking and doing in higher education?

**Suzanne Panferov Reese** Covid-19 is a significant disruptor. Our way of university life has been turned upside down. This has a disorienting effect for many. Change is hard and this virus has required us to change our ways of teaching, communicating, assessing, and meeting. This questions our basic assumption of what teaching is if there is no classroom. This forces us to think differently, redefine priorities, and take risks we hadn't expected, which may in the end be good for us, but it's difficult to go through. The process of change is messy, and we did not ask to make this change. Students must consider new courses of study, master new modes of data collection, manage delays in research, consider different career paths, and even possibly accept later graduation dates. Faculty need to try new teaching technologies, postpone sabbaticals, and learn the intricacies of online meetings. And staff are juggling so many conflicting priorities with no clear road map for the future. But even in the face of this uncertainty, we must continue to aspire to greater goals of education and improving humanity.

**Sara Cushing** I think we are at a watershed moment (to quote from a webinar I watched recently) and it's impossible to predict the future. Largely due to economic pressures, universities have long been on an unsustainable path of attempting to do more with fewer resources, which has resulted, among other things, in a two-tier faculty system, with relatively well paid, secure tenure-track faculty on the one hand and low paid adjunct or fixed term faculty on the other. Covid-19 has brought us closer to a crisis, I think, with students largely dissatisfied with the sudden move to online education and a lot of uncertainty around plans for going back to campus. With even tighter budgets, universities are going to have to make difficult choices about their priorities. Some may have to close their doors. I hope there is some strategic thinking going on among the higher levels of administration about how to be creative about education going forward. There are certain advantages of online teaching that faculty are reluctantly coming around to, and if there is enough training and buy-in from the faculty, teaching can be done very creatively if it's not bound to a single time and place. Students may need to be more intentional about their educational goals, if "going to college" means more than just the inevitable next step after high school and they can't necessarily count on four years of parties and football games on a beautiful campus. For my staff, I think telecommuting will become a more realistic option going forward, now that it's been made abundantly clear that a lot of people can work from home just as productively.

**Chelsea Timlin** The majority of my interactions are with faculty, and it has become quite apparent that there is a solid group of faculty I work with who regularly implement technology in their teaching, many did not utilize much, if any, technology in their classrooms prior to moving to remote instruction. This sudden switch to relying on technology has created a significant amount of stress, particularly because of the assumption that technology poses limitations to what they have been doing in the physical classroom for so long. I consider it my responsibility to showcase the benefits and abilities of technology to facilitate the practices faculty are already comfortable with and to create positive and productive second language teaching and learning experiences, particularly through the access technology provides to digital texts and spaces for multimodal communication.

**Christine Tardy** What I see from my colleagues, locally and around the country, is a lot of stress, worry, and even anger about how the crisis is being handled within universities. At my own university, I know of graduate students who have lost their funding extensions, which is obviously devastating when one is trying to complete a dissertation. Many of the students I work with had to go through the worries of the proposed restrictions on international students staying in the US, though those have fortunately been removed. In addition, many incoming students are unable to begin their education because of the pandemic—and of course these decreases in enrollments impact the entire university. At my institution, predicted decreases in enrollments have resulted in a large number of lecturers losing their jobs. Additionally, in many places, faculty and graduate students have been given very little voice in decisions about whether universities will "re-open" and, if so, how.

All that said, I am encouraged by the faculty organization at my own university in strongly advocating for faculty, staff, and graduate students. I also do think the virus has provided a potential opportunity to re-think how we do things in higher education. Maybe we don't all need to be on campus all the time, perhaps more meetings can be done online, and I think we are learning that some useful technology was previously under-utilized. But I also think this crisis has highlighted the value of campus life and the importance of the personal interactions that faculty have with students. So while we make changes moving forward, I hope we keep in mind that those interactions are critical and worth preserving; for the moment, we just need to find new ways to create such interactions.

### From your perspective, what will be long-term effects of the crisis on graduate education and the job market?

**Suzanne Panferov Reese** One of the most significant longer-term effects, I believe, will be the acceptance and expectation of online teaching and learning as the norm rather than the exception. Gone are the days when one expects to be in a classroom or in a boardroom. I expect job markets will increasingly demand online teaching and skills in digital proficiencies and perhaps offer fewer tenure-track opportunities. Communication has also changed and our boundaries between our work lives and our home lives are blurry. The instantaneous quality of communication means our professional tasks bleed over into our living rooms and kitchens and even that our teens might read the article we are reviewing over our shoulder, glimpsing into the mystery of our work worlds. For some this is leading to extraordinary longer workdays and messiness of interruptions of focus and time. For others this leads to extreme isolation and disconnect. We will regroup and reformulate our "work" as we know it but not without bumps along the way.

**Sara Cushing** The trend away from tenure-track positions in academia will be accelerated by the crisis, I think, and graduate students will need to position themselves for other types of careers, for example in industry or government. Faculty members will also need to understand the job market better and be realistic about the opportunities for their students.

**Chelsea Timlin** I'll be honest in saying that I am concerned about the effect this crisis will have on the already declining availability of academic jobs (and I mean any jobs, not just tenure-track positions). I do believe universities (and other non-academic entities) are now realizing a need for field-specific experts who are knowledgeable of the role that technology plays in instruction and professional development. I am extremely grateful for the team of instructional technologists at my institution, but I often observe conflicts between what language faculty want to do with technology and the more general perspective that is provided by instructional technology teams. Perhaps I am being hopeful, but I believe that acknowledging this need will motivate more departments and universities as a whole to design positions for recent graduates who have experience with technology-enhanced teaching and research in a given field.

**Christine Tardy** The long-term effects are still unclear, but I suspect higher education in the U.S. will look quite different in the years ahead. I think at some universities, smaller programs will be under threat of closure. We need to advocate strongly for the value of programs in applied linguistics and for continued support for graduate student funding, but also be open to new modes of delivering our programs. It also seems likely that the shift away from tenure-track jobs will accelerate, so we need to demonstrate the value of such positions at our local institutions while also preparing graduate students for a broader range of jobs as they enter the job market.

### What tips and strategies do you have for graduate students facing uncertainty and ambiguity during this crisis?

**Suzanne Panferov Reese** Remember that class where you first encountered the term "tolerance of ambiguity" about language learning? We are a profession of people who embrace and tolerate uncertainty and delve into new languages and cultures and uncertainty. We have done this every day. The trick is how to manage life when everything is uncertain. Manage by the hour, rather than the year. My daughter who lost her high school graduation to this virus declared recently how she just "never expected this" at this time in her life. I assured her that in my many more years of experience, I too have never experienced this. Day by day we have to look for lessons learned. We have to cherish and appreciate each other more. We have to live authentic lives. Some days just getting up and getting dressed is enough. On other days, we may rent a living room or clean out a whole closet and write an annotated bibliography. What is extraordinarily needed now more than ever is compassion for ourselves and each other. This means self-care and care for others. Know your resources for support and ask for help.

This pandemic has disrupted our lives and created all sorts of chaos. It has raised frustrations and flared tempers. It has exposed old festering wounds of intolerance and bigotry. Now is the time for our younger professionals, our graduate students, to step forward to embrace the opportunities of these times to change our world, improve our world, teach our world, and heal our world.

**Sara Cushing** Take care of yourself, first of all. Try to accept ambiguity, because you can't know the future. Control the things you have control over, such as your habits of sleep, diet, and exercise. Reach out for help if you need it. Talk to your advisor or a trusted mentor if you are feeling anxious. Don't try to tough it out on your own—find someone to talk to or take a walk with. Be gentle with yourself!

This is also a good time to explore career options outside of academia. There are plenty of people in your field who chose alternate paths who would love to tell you about their work and how they ended up where they are. I can't think of anyone who would not welcome an inquiry from a graduate student or be more than happy to share their story with you.

**Chelsea Timlin** As this crisis began, I was preparing for my dissertation defense while heading a new full-time staff and lecturer position and caring for a toddler at home. I was greatly affected by the uncertainty that has become commonplace over the last 6 months, particularly while waiting to hear whether my in-person defense would be cancelled and when any revisions would need to be submitted. Through all of this, I found tremendous support through my graduate program from my dissertation advisor, committee members, and the program coordinators. I strongly recommend confiding in the individuals in these positions when you are unsure of what comes next. I also learned to be lenient with myself and my expectations for how much I would achieve in a given week. The only time I found to write and complete revisions was usually sometime after 9:00 PM, once my son was in bed and after a full day of work and parenting. It took some time and fighting with myself, but once I acknowledged that I would not be my most cognitively present self all the time, I was able to set realistic goals and completed my revisions on time. Sometimes this meant writing for at least 20, uninterrupted minutes and sometimes it meant taking the night off because it was just too much to handle. This was all made easier after I joined two different writing accountability groups for the summer, one of which was a group of fierce academic moms. The moral of the story: find supportive people, set realistic goals, and above all, be kind to yourself.

**Christine Tardy** My heart really goes out to graduate students right now. It's an incredibly stressful time to be trying to focus on your education while knowing that the job market is likely going to look very different for a while. I tell my own students to focus on the things they can control: if you are in classes, get the most out of them; if you are teaching, take advantage of the opportunity to learn new teaching tools and approaches; if you are doing research, be flexible and do what you can to complete your project, even if it looks different from what you originally imagined. There will still be jobs for language professionals, but those might look very different from what they have looked like in the past. I think being open-minded about the job market, including where you can relocate to, is probably going to be essential in the coming years. I would also recommend that graduate students be in close touch with faculty mentors and voice your concerns and worries. You might work together with faculty to suggest workshops that could help students navigate these times, for example. Most faculty are very strong advocates for graduate students, and it is important that we work together so that faculty can carry out that advocacy and support students in the best ways possible.

# COVID-19 RESOURCES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

In this section of the newsletter, we share tips and strategies that you may find helpful in navigating the challenges associated with the pandemic:

- In Part 1, we report on tools and resources that were identified as helpful by graduate students in the [summer 2020 needs analysis survey](#).
- In Part 2, you will find resources that we have compiled based on challenges and concerns expressed in the [summer 2020 needs analysis survey](#).
- Part 3 is a short piece on funding by [Georgia Ehlers](#), who is Director of the [Office of Fellowships & Community Engagement](#) at the University of Arizona.

## PART 1

Below, we outline resources and tools that, according to summer 2020 needs analysis survey, have been helpful to your peers in adjusting their teaching, research, or routine in general during the pandemic.

Most survey participants mentioned the following tools as helpful in continuing or adapting their research projects:

- Data collection: *Qualtrics, Google surveys, LimeSurvey, The Words in the World Open Office Hours*
- Data analysis software: *E-Prime Go, PsychoPy, corpus tools*

Most of the responses credited tools that enabled transitioning to online instruction while resembling in-person teaching, such as:

- Communication technology: *Zoom*
- Collaboration tools: *Google Suites, Google Docs*
- Course management systems: *Canvas*
- Video-sharing platforms: *YouTube*
- Video editing technologies: *iMovie, VoiceThread, Flipgrid*
- Scheduling and record keeping platforms: *Doodle, MyWOnline*
- Poling platforms: *Poll Everywhere*
- Cloud storage: *Google Drive*

Some survey participants also benefited from social media along with open online courses available on the web:

- Social media: *Facebook*
- Open online courses: *webinars, MOOCs, writing spaces*

Others were more pragmatic in their use of tools and resources and mentioned physical equipment that was helpful while working online:

- Ergonomic tools: *laptop stand, wireless keyboard and mouse, back support*
- Tech tools and hardware: *noise cancelling headphones, printer*

## PART 2

### Resources for life in general during/after Coronavirus

- [Adapting to disaster, episode 4: Overcoming fear and anger](#) (The Professor Is In)
- [Why you should ignore all that Coronavirus-inspired productivity pressure](#) (The Chronicle of Higher Education)
- [COVID-19 and the academic parent](#) (The Chronicle of Higher Education)
- [Music is getting me through this pandemic: A hobby can do the same for you](#) (Today)

### Resources to help you with your academic life during Coronavirus

- [How to create an APA Style reference for a canceled conference presentation](#) (American Psychological Association)
- [Qual, quant, and quarantine: Six tips for conducting research during a health event](#) (Fors Marsh Group)
- [What publishers are doing to help during COVID-19](#) (Good E-Reader)
- [What publishers are doing to help during the Coronavirus pandemic](#) (Association of American Publishers)
- [Time trackers to structure your day](#) (Clockify)
- [The 25+ best sites for finding remote work online in 2020](#) (Skillcrush)
- [Beyond tenurecentrism \(COVID19 best-of-postac help\)](#) (The Professor Is In)
- [The A-Z of the PhD trajectory](#) (free Springer book)

### Resources on virtual conferencing

- [Attending a virtual conference for the first time?](#) (Unito)
- [Presenting online](#) (University of Melbourne)
- [Tips and best practices for online presenting](#) (Colorado Department of Education)
- [As COVID-19 forces conferences online, scientists discover upsides of virtual format](#) (American Association for the Advancement of Science)
- [Attending traditional conferences vs. online conferences](#) (VA Networking)
- [Learning to love virtual conferences in the Coronavirus era](#) (Nature)

### Resources to help you learn a new skill during quarantine

- [Linguistics Podcasts](#) (PlayerFM)
- [Learn Python 2](#) (Code Academy)
- [Research Data Service @ GSU Library](#) (Georgia State University, open for everyone)
- [Ready for R \(with Ted Laderas\)](#) (Oregon Health and Science University)

### Language teaching-related resources

- [Teaching writing online](#) (TESOL)
- [Teaching Online Tidbits \(TOTs\)](#) (University of Arizona Writing Program)
- [COVID-19: Online teaching resources](#) (Wiley)
- [Coronavirus resources for ELT](#) (TESOL)
- [Top 200 tools for learning 2019](#)

## PART 3

### Opportunities Arise When Funding Priorities Change

Georgia Ehlers

After 125 days of working from home as the Director of the Office of Fellowships and Community Engagement and a new school year weeks away, this seems to be a good time to reflect on changes in external funding for graduate students. Research priorities across the world have pivoted. Graduate students are rethinking time to degree and research topics. Some universities and colleges faced with budget reductions pushed the pause button on support for incoming graduate students. International students are especially affected by travel and visa restrictions. Uncertainty, vacillation and conflicted policy direction have become our constant companions.

In the world of external funding, we see some programs suspended, others accepting applications, and some making awards even though the student may not be able to utilize the funding until travel bans are lifted and visas can be issued.

This uncertainty has generated many questions from incoming and continuing students. Here are some of the most common and our responses.

**Q:** I have been funded for dissertation research abroad. With the Global Level 4 Health Advisory, travel is restricted, and visas are not being issued. The funder has stated that travel may resume next this fall or next spring. What can I do?

**A:** No effort is wasted. Institutions are hoping, planning, and adapting to the elusive new normal. If you are funded but cannot travel yet, consider requesting a one-year no-cost extension. This must be requested by the student if directly funded or by the university-sponsored projects unit if awarded to the university. Continue preparing to go, but develop a backup plan in case you are unable to travel for some time and must change your topic or methods. What else can you do here and now while waiting? Can you access awarded funds for remote research or other expenses? Has your research site made new resources available online?

If you were evacuated from the field, your commitment is, no doubt, still strong. It may take time, but you'll find a way to go back and a way to stay connected. [Sarah Renkert writes eloquently about her experience being evacuated from Peru, where she has conducted research for many years. Her resolve to continue her work there is inspiring.](#)

**Q:** Billions in emergency funding dollars are being poured into COVID-related research to understand how it works and to develop a vaccine. I don't do COVID research. What can I do?

**A:** Research priorities do change over time, often associated with decadal priorities agreed upon by specific disciplines (mapping the genome or blackholes or surveying Mars). Funding priorities may change with government administrations (travel to the moon and Mars, nano-technology, cyber-security), significant health and economic concerns (polio, cancer, Alzheimer's, pollution, climate change), or unexpected events (9/11, pandemics). In my experience, unexpected events do impact smaller fellowship programs, which may be defunded. Funding is generally dependent on available funds. Some major fellowship programs, like the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship, may identify a specific group of priorities for funding. This serves as an incentive to rally researchers to current needs.

Though your research focus may not be specific to COVID-19, does it relate in any tangential way? The impact of the pandemic is global, affecting education, small businesses, marketing, technology, security, delivery systems and more. A report from the Lincoln Lab at MIT (Kylie Foy, July 8, 2020) describes early research in identifying vocal biomarkers of COVID-19 in people infected but not yet showing symptoms.

You may be committed to a topic far removed from anything to do with COVID-19, but review the requests for proposals, read the current research which may benefit from the methods of your discipline, talk with your advisors, and consider whether there might be a way to contribute to the effort. Research is demanding, and sustained effort requires sustained interest. But your larger vision of the priorities of the field and understanding of how funding is allocated within your discipline will help you steer through the funding minefields.

**Q:** I can't attend school without support. I have applied for funding, but my funding requests were rejected.

**A:** Rejection can be a challenge and discouraging. I was advised to never take rejection personally and to always keep my ideas fresh and updated so as to pull them out of the hat when opportunity knocks. Keep the major sources of funding in your field in mind, and in multi- or interdisciplinary fields look at the intersections with better funded disciplines. Can you frame your field to be more broadly eligible? Although rejection is a setback, there is always much to be learned from the experience. With feedback, preliminary research, and a sharper focus, revised proposals often find funding. Consider reworking your proposal and looking carefully at the priorities of the funder, making sure your proposal and you are a good fit.

**Q:** What can I do to find and apply for funding?

**A:** Do take advantage of the resources at your institution such as:

- Join a Fellowship Application Development Program or Writing Efficiency Group at your school. Make time to write regularly! If there are no institutional writing groups, invite several of your peers to a writing group. Set and stick to deadlines and build in mini-rewards for each deadline met.
- Access the resources in your home department and across campus that support students: specific centers involved in fellowship application and management, grant writing and research methods classes, and research support centers. Scan those emails that list funding opportunities.
- Find the best matches for yourself from funding databases such as PIVOT and Grant Forward. Internal listings and searchable databases for your field and general internet searches can also be useful. Look for new funding and always check the home website (or email if it isn't clear) to see if traditionally offered funds are still active.
- Network with your advisors, colleagues and peers. Join your professional society as a student for even more ideas and possible support.
- File the FAFSA and check how CARES Act funding is being distributed on your campus. Many internal scholarships require need-based information.

A final word: Crisis and unexpected change can cause great discomfort and can also create great opportunity. Grant funding is always shifting. It expands or shrinks. It is focused on this or that. Yourable projects are those in the intersection between your own interests and those interests of the funder. Use your "eagle eye" to scan the field and your "mouse eye" to adjust in this time of enormous challenge and opportunity. There will be new and evolving opportunities in each part of your life. Funding organizations are responding to the pandemic with more virtual opportunities to learn about different funding programs and some even encourage graduate students to apply to be readers of applications. We are confident that you will find a way to move ahead in your career path making the best decisions for yourself and those who rely on you.



Georgia Ehlers ([gehlers@arizona.edu](mailto:gehlers@arizona.edu)) is Director of the Office of Fellowships and Community Engagement in the Graduate Development of the University of Arizona. She has worked as a grants writer, development officer and grants administrator with funding agencies. She has 27 years of experience supporting graduate students seeking funding.

**Editorial note:** The information posted on this page (Part 1 & Part 2) includes resources, companies, products, and services that the AAAL GSC believes you might find of interest. The AAAL GSC provides these resources solely for informational purposes. The presence of resources, companies, products, and services does not imply endorsement. When site visitors select a link to an outside website, they are leaving the GSC site and are subject to the privacy and security policies of the owners and sponsors of the outside website. All liability for improper reproduction of copyrighted material lies with the individual who submitted the resource.

## *Diversity Climate Survey*

The AAAL Graduate Student Council (GSC) aims to promote graduate students' professional growth and assist AAAL in fostering an open environment supportive of graduate students from diverse backgrounds. We would like to know how we can improve GSC to serve the AAAL graduate student community better. Please take 5 minutes to answer this [survey](#). All questions are optional, and your input is much appreciated! Thanks in advance for helping us build a community where all are welcome, supported, and heard!

### AAAL GSC 2021 Diversity Survey

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Thanks in advance for helping us build a community where all are welcome, supported, and heard!

The GSC Diversity Sub-Committee

What is the main focus of your interest (research and/or studies) in applied linguistics?

Your answer

How would you describe your institution?

- Public university
- Private university
- Other:



# AAAL GSC 2021 Diversity Survey

The AAAL Graduate Student Council (GSC) aims to promote graduate students' professional growth and assist AAAL in fostering an open environment supportive of graduate students from diverse backgrounds. We would like to know how we can improve GSC to serve the AAAL graduate student community better. Please take 5 minutes to answer this survey. All questions are optional, and your input is much appreciated!

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What is the main focus of your interest (research and/or studies) in applied linguistics?

Your answer

How would you describe your institution?

Public university

Private university

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

In what city, state/province, and country is your institution located?

Your answer

I am a

Master's student

Doctoral student

Post-doc

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you identify yourself as

first-generation graduate student

second-generation graduate student

third-generation graduate student

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Age:

below 20

20-24

25-29

30-34

35-39

40-45

above 45

What is your gender?

Female

Male

Non-binary

Prefer not to say

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Yes

No

Not sure

Prefer not to answer

I identify my race/ethnicity/origin as:

Asian

Black

Hispanic or Latino

Indigenous or Native

Middle Eastern or North African

Pacific Islander

White or Caucasian

I prefer not to say

Are you pursuing graduate study in a country other than your own?

No

Yes

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

No

Yes

Prefer not to answer

Are you a care-giver for family members?

No

Yes

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AAALGrads 5(2) / Spring 2021  
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This piece originally published at <https://www.aaal-gsc.org/sp21-diversity-climate-survey>

# AAAL GSC 2021 Diversity Survey

## Part Two

A main task the Graduate Student Council (GSC) perform is to organize events for graduate students. In the past years, we have organized online webinars, published AAALGrads Newsletters, posted monthly YouTube videos and blogposts, coordinated interactive activities through our social media, and hosted graduate student events at the annual AAAL conferences.

Based on your current understanding and/or experience with these events, please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Based on your current understanding and/or experience with these events, please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	1 - Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5 - Strongly Agree	N/A	I don't know
AAAL GSC supports members from diverse ethnracial, linguistic, and social backgrounds.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
AAAL GSC takes into account the needs of members who are at different points in their studies and careers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
AAAL GSC addresses the needs of members with families.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
AAAL GSC supports members with disabilities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
AAAL GSC fosters communication between members with diverse backgrounds.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
AAAL GSC offers opportunities for graduate students and junior scholars to connect with senior scholars from diverse backgrounds.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
AAAL GSC events provide a diverse representation of topics and panelists.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
AAAL GSC addresses the needs of its international students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
AAAL GSC values diversity, equity, and inclusivity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In general, my experiences with AAAL GSC events have been positive.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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# AAAL GSC 2021 Diversity Survey

## Part Three

Personal Experience (Open-ended)

Q1. Have you had any positive experiences with the AAAL GSC or graduate student events that stood out in terms of supporting your professional, academic, or personal development?

Your answer

---

Q2. Are there any ways in which you would like to see AAAL GSC improve in terms of how it supports the professional, academic, and personal development of members from diverse backgrounds and experiences?

Your answer

---

Q3. Do you have any other suggestions or anything else you would like to share?

Your answer

---

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# AAAL GSC 2021 Diversity Survey

## Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts and experiences with us. We appreciate your input and time.

Do you think the length of this survey is appropriate?

Yes

No

What else do you think we should ask in future climate surveys?

Your answer

---

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# Readers Respond Forum (formerly Letter to the Editor)

A major goal of the AAAL Graduate Student Council's is to create community among graduate students in applied linguistics and to facilitate scholarly, professional, and intellectual exchange. To this end, we introduced the "Letter to the Editor" to the AAALGrads Newsletter in the Spring 2021 issue, which has been rebranded as "Readers Respond Forum" for Fall 2021.

All readers of the newsletter are invited to respond to articles published in the current issue (Spring 2021) and to share their thoughts and reactions in a constructive manner. With permission, readers' responses, along with reactions from the original author(s), will be included in the upcoming issue (Fall 2021). This may entail a review and revision process. All reader reactions should be received by September 20th, 2021. Please fill out the embedded form below to express your interest in writing a response.

## AAALGrads Newsletter: Readers Respond Forum

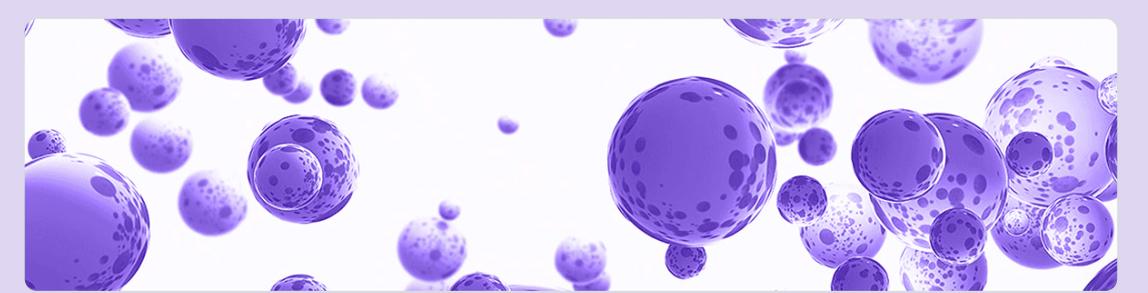
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**\* Required**

Email \*

Your email

What is your name? \*



# AAALGrads Newsletter: Readers Respond Forum

A major goal of the AAAL Graduate Student Council's is to create community among graduate students in applied linguistics and to facilitate scholarly, professional, and intellectual exchange. To this end, we are introducing the "Readers Respond Forum" to the AAALGrads Newsletter. All readers of the newsletter are invited to respond to articles published in the current issue (Spring 2021) and to share their thoughts and reactions in a constructive manner. With permission, readers' responses will be included in the upcoming issue (Fall 2021). This may entail a review and revision process. All reader reactions should be received by September 20, 2021 through this submission form. Letters that the editors receive will also serve as general feedback for future issues.

The name and photo associated with your Google account will be recorded when you upload files and submit this form.

Not [aaalgrads@gmail.com](mailto:aaalgrads@gmail.com)? [Switch account](#)

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What is your name? \*

Your answer

What is your institutional affiliation? \*

Your answer

What degree are you seeking? \*

Master's

Doctorate

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

What is your area of study or specialization within applied linguistics? \*

Your answer

What newsletter article from the Spring 2021 issue are you responding to? Please be sure to include the title of the contribution as well as the name(s) of the original author(s). \*

Your answer

Please attach your response here in .docx or .pdf format. Your response should not exceed the length of the original piece. \*

[Add file](#)

Are you interested in having your response published in the upcoming issue of the AAALGrads Newsletter? \*

Yes

No

I'm not sure. Please email me to discuss further.

Is there anything else you would like to share with the GSC or newsletter team? \*

Your answer

A copy of your responses will be emailed to the address you provided.

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## Call for Proposals for the AAALGrads Newsletter (Fall 2021 Issue)

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

#### 1 Rationale

In the previous AAALGrads Newsletter, the editors and contributing authors discussed ambiguity, uncertainty, and resilience in the face of COVID-19, racial tensions, and a highly divisive presidential race in the US. While the aftershocks of these phenomena are still being felt today—and are likely to be ongoing issues for some time—we would like to bring into question some of the “new normals” that have emerged within our academic communities. We wonder if these new normals will remain and/or if they were ever equitable in the first place.

In response to COVID-19, emergency remote teaching, learning, and research became norms in their respective domains. However, Zoom burnout and screen fatigue are ubiquitous. We also must contend with the inescapable digital divide in terms of access to a strong internet connection and other digital technologies we have come to depend on. Thus, what will become of the “2020 norms”, and what might the consequences of the past year be as we begin to transition back to in-person academic activity? Have we learned anything in front of our devices that we can/should carry forward? What should we abandon?

There is also the issue of whether the sociopolitical progress that has been made over the past year will continue or if we will see even more divided communities at various levels of scale (e.g., local, national, global). With digital activism more prominent now than ever before, what will become of ongoing discussions of equity, diversity, and inclusion as we re-enter brick-and-mortar institutions? In this regard, we are left at an intersection of old versus new, of returning to normal or embracing new normals as we navigate one of the most trying times in recent history.

Of course, our hope is that as a community, we can find our way out of the lingering fog left behind by our recent hardships. We can do this by sharing ideas, predictions, and suggestions for best practices moving forward. While it may have been “too unpredictable to forecast” at the time of the call for papers for the Spring 2021 issue, at this time, with the movements that have occurred since, we encourage potential contributors to be bold and voice their opinions without fear of being wrong. As applied linguists, we understand the power of language, and this newsletter is a safe space where your voices can be heard.

While we are open to receiving a wide range of proposals, possible topics and questions which could be addressed in this issue are:

- What pedagogical tools and techniques should be maintained or further developed in the post-pandemic era? What can we do without?
- What should the approach to research and scholarship be? What digital tools for data collection should continue to be part of our repertoire post-pandemic? How can we increase equity in terms of both production and consumption of scholarship?
- In what ways have the events of the last year forced a re-consideration of the typical graduate education and career trajectory? How can graduate training become more inclusive of a diversity of professional goals?
- How can AAAL as an organization, and the applied linguistics community more broadly, continue to build on its efforts from the past year to create a more diverse and equitable community?

## 2 Possible Formats

We extend our call to include feature articles, resource reviews (e.g., books and technological tools), creative 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.

- **Feature Article.** A feature article should be about 750-1,500 words. It should address and critically develop a question or idea related to the newsletter theme. 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). Personal experiences related to the issue’s theme 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.** Authors are encouraged to connect their advice to the newsletter theme.

Possible topics for the Professional Development Corner include, but are not limited to:

1. How to build a mentoring relationship
2. How to start publishing early
3. How to build a versatile professional profile
4. How to job hunt effectively
5. How to find funding
6. How to develop a strategies for your graduate program, dissertation, or career
7. How to develop time- and project management skills
8. How to network effectively
9. How to develop leadership skills
10. How to explore alternative/alt-ac career paths

- **Readers Respond Forum.** As of Spring 2021 we have established a new submission format: you can now **respond to articles from the current newsletter issue (Spring 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 (Fall 2021) to facilitate scholarly and intellectual exchange. Please note that reader responses are **due on September 20, 2021**. More information is available on our [newsletter website](#).

### 3 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 **August 16, 2021 @11:59 PM Eastern Time**. You can submit a proposal if you're a graduate student in the field of applied linguistics--you do not have to be a current AAAL member.

Tentative Timeline	
<b>Monday, August 16, 2021</b>	Proposals due
<b>Monday, August 23, 2021</b>	Authors notified of acceptance
<b>Monday, September 20, 2021</b>	First draft (D1) of manuscripts due
<b>Monday, September 27, 2021</b>	Editors provide feedback to authors on first drafts
<b>Monday, October 4, 2021</b>	Revised drafts (D2) due
<b>Monday, October 11, 2021</b>	Editors provide additional feedback <b>if necessary</b>
<b>Monday, October 25, 2021</b>	Final drafts (D3) of manuscripts due
<b>Monday, November 1, 2021</b>	Editors return final draft with proofs
<b>Monday, November 8, 2021</b>	Authors respond to proofs and provide short biography & headshot
<b>The issue is expected to appear in mid November of 2021.</b>	

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

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## Letter from the AAAL Presidents



**Kendall King** is Professor of Second Language Education in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Minnesota. She is the past President of AAAL.



**Patsy Duff** is Professor of Applied Linguistics in the Department of Language and Literacy Education at the University of British Columbia. She is also Associate Dean, Research, in the Faculty of Education. She is the current President of AAAL.

### Ongoing AAAL Initiatives in Times of Uncertainty and Change

*Kendall King and Patsy Duff*

All of us who serve on AAAL's [Executive Committee \(EC\)](#), are fully aware that the last 13 months has been a period like no other in each of our personal and professional lives. It has also been an extraordinary year for AAAL as an organization. Like all of you, AAAL leadership has learned to function in new (remote) ways, and has been working hard to sustain and advance our organization, and in particular to support our large, diverse, and growing number of graduate students and recently graduated doctoral students who are early-career scholars.

We are highly aware that the academic landscape has been greatly altered by COVID in myriad ways: funding to support research and travel has been trimmed; academic positions are fewer in number, less likely to be tenure-track, and even more unlikely to be designated as research-stream tenure-track positions (with more such positions now devoted to teaching and educational leadership); and teaching expectations are more intense and unpredictable (on-campus? virtual? hybrid?). Below we highlight some of the work AAAL has done to respond to these new realities and to support professional development and engagement among all members, and graduate students and early career scholars in particular. For this latter category, we organized a special networking event at AAAL 2021 and will aim to continue to support graduate students and (other) early career scholars on their academic and professional trajectories going forward.

AAAL leadership has sought to make the process of actively participating and volunteering in the association more transparent and more inviting for all, and especially for graduate students. Volunteering fosters meaningful academic connections and can be an important step towards subsequent AAAL's leadership roles. To that end, we have launched a [revamped volunteer recruitment system and webpage](#) in addition to the many opportunities provided by graduate student leadership. We were delighted to have the involvement and assistance of approximately 40 graduate student volunteers at AAAL 2021, for example, in addition to the many who participate throughout the year in various voluntary roles. We were also thrilled to have record levels of participation by graduate students and volunteer mentors in this year's Conference Connections, our well established mentoring program for emerging scholars.

AAAL's EC has also sought to support and engage members beyond the annual conference. For example, we hosted a very popular 2020 summer webinar series, which we expect will continue throughout the year. We offer a huge thanks to the Standing Committee on Online Education and Outreach for coordinating these webinar efforts. These have been very well attended by graduate students, and graduate students have been central to their development, with graduate students also serving as moderators in some cases (and at our virtual conference as well). We welcome and look forward to this continued partnership.

Additionally, to welcome the many new members to AAAL in 2020-21, the EC has hosted regular online 'meet and greets' with an introduction to the Association and then opportunities for interaction in smaller breakout groups. These informal, interactive sessions have been attended by hundreds of members from around the globe, including many graduate students. More will follow in 2021-22!

In response to the growing number of non-tenure-track positions in the United States and possibly elsewhere (and the decreasing number of tenure-track positions), Naoko Taguchi and her task force completed new guidelines to support the work, well-being, and advancement of non-tenure-track faculty at "Research-1" universities. These were recently released on our website: <https://www.aaal.org/nttf-promotion-advancement>

AAAL leadership has also engaged in intensive work towards ensuring that our organization is more fully characterized by the values of diversity, equity, inclusion and access (DEIA), through several initiatives.

First, our association has developed two new awards to be launched in 2021-22: the DEIA Graduate Student Award, which was spearheaded by the Graduate Student Council, and the Distinguished Scholarship and Engaged Research Graduate Student Award, a collaborative initiative of the Fund for the Future of Applied Linguistics (FFAL) and the 2020-2021 Diversity Award Task Force (chaired by Glenn Martinez). Like the existing Graduate Student Award, the first of these awards requires having an accepted (sole-authored) presentation at the upcoming conference, and the call for nominations will take place in October, 2021. The second new award is not connected with conference participation and the deadline for nominations for this inaugural award is June 1, 2021.

In addition, because the AAAL 2021 conference was delivered virtually, we were able to offer 10 Indigenous Language Scholar Support funds, more than in previous years (since only registration needed to be covered for recipients, not travel costs), and 5 of them went to graduate students around the world.

Second, AAAL leadership has also approved procedures with a critical eye to how race, gender, and body are presented visually. We are grateful to the Social Media Sub-committee (Chair: Yu Jung Han) of the Standing Committee on Online Education and Outreach for developing policies for use of all images on AAAL's web pages and social media, especially those depicting AAAL members (real or imagined).

Third, EC has charged a task force with the development and planning of Solidarity Awards to support conference participation of members residing in low-income countries.

Lastly, we are also pleased that we have changed our Standing Rules to allow our organization to respond in a somewhat more timely way to world events around us through position statements, for example.

We thank you for your engagement in AAAL now and in the future and look forward to collaborating in many ways in the years ahead. In the meantime, we trust that graduate students, like many others registered for the AAAL 2021 conference, will take advantage of the 1000+ sessions available for (re)viewing on our virtual conference platform until September 2021!

# International Graduate Students' Perceptions of Post-COVID-19 Online Learning

Feature article by Adam V. Agostinelli, Boston College

## Introduction

Research related to international students' perceptions of online learning indicates that academic and informal English (Tan et al., 2010), cultural differences (Kang & Chang, 2016; Kung, 2017), and a lack of multicultural course content, plagiarism, and time zone differences (Liu et al., 2010) are barriers that international students face. Many of these students also seem to feel that classroom interaction is either lacking in online environments or difficult to engage in (Leem et al., 2018; Phirangee & Malec, 2017). Other evidence shows that the lack of social cues in the online setting is a barrier to learning for both domestic (Tichavsky et al., 2015) and international students (Zhang & Kenny, 2010).

To contribute to these findings, this case study explores five international graduate students' perceptions of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic at a U.S. university. The goal of this research was to better understand the affordances and challenges associated with this medium of instruction. Findings indicated that (1) English comprehension difficulties are enhanced in the online interface, (2) students struggle to build relationships and participate in class because of English-related dynamics and a lack of social cues, (3) some students are easily distracted during synchronous classes and heavily rely on passive learning skills, and (4) students acknowledge and appreciate certain aspects of online learning. Even though the participants in this study showed great resilience by performing well in their classes since the switch to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there remains a need for instructors to further innovate their pedagogical approaches, particularly by utilizing strategies that mitigate ambiguity of instructions and promote engagement in active learning opportunities.

## Participants

The five participants of this study were full-time international graduate students at a private university in the northeastern U.S. (see Table 1 for participant information). Each of the participants attended classes remotely during the Fall 2020 semester from within the U.S., with the exception of Hyuk, who moved back to Korea in the middle of the semester for personal reasons. None of the students initially enrolled in their programs of study with the intention of taking any online classes. This is an important distinction because their experiences likely differed from students who set out to enroll in entirely online degree programs.

Table 1  
Participant Information

Pseudonym (Gender)	Home Country	Languages	Degree	Years as a student in the US	Data Collected	Online Education Experience
Eunbi (F)	South Korea	Korean & English	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year PhD	3.5	2 interviews & observations	Yes (Teacher Professional Development)
Shin (M)	South Korea	Korean & English	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year PhD	1.5	2 interviews & observations	Yes (Teacher Professional Development)
Hyuk (M)	South Korea	Korean & English	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year PhD	1.5	2 interviews & observations	Yes (Teacher Professional Development)
Ana (F)	Chile	Spanish, English, & French	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year PhD	1.5	2 interviews & observations	No
Guo (M)	China	Chinese (Mandarin) & English	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year MA	1.5	1 interview	Yes (TOEFL Tutoring)

## Method

A snowball sampling method was used to find five volunteer participants (Baimyrzaeva, 2018). The primary sources of qualitative data used for this study were two 40-to-70-minute semi-structured interviews, recorded on Zoom and administered four months apart in Summer and Fall 2020 (for four out of five participants; for the fifth participant only one interview in Fall 2020 was administered). Semi-structured interviews in this study contained a mix of standard questions that were combined with individualized exploratory questions. This allowed participants to clarify their answers, provide more details, or give specific examples to support their comments (Baimyrzaeva, 2018).

Informal observational data was also collected using field notes during classes, club meetings, and informal conversations. The amount of observation was dependent on researcher and participant availability, and ranged from around three hours to 30 hours per participant during the fall semester. The fifth participant only participated in one semi-structured interview, and no observational data was collected from him because he became interested in participating in the study shortly before the second round of interviews as a product of the snowball sampling method used to find volunteer participants.

Atlas.ti was used to code the interview transcripts according to pre-determined themes, which included perceptions of academic support, perceptions of social support, and perceptions of online learning. The coding also included themes that spontaneously emerged from the data. Using a thematic analysis approach, field notes and observational data were organized into emerging trends and categories (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). However, within the scope of this study, only data related to perceptions of online learning were drawn upon.

Findings from the study at hand represent a small portion of a larger ethnographic inquiry that documents four of the participants' academic and social experiences during their first three years at their university. Online learning was not originally intended to be a major focus of this research; however, due to COVID-19 and the widespread switch to online learning, a considerable portion of the qualitative data collected during the participants' third semester was related to Zoom classes or online education in some respect, as each of the participants were enrolled in three online courses during this semester.

## Findings and Discussion

### Enhanced English Difficulties

Although each of the participants reported notable improvement in their overall English ability between their first and second year, it seemed that the switch to online learning as a result of COVID-19 enhanced language barriers for some international students. Hyuk recounted how the transition to online classes was difficult to adapt to:

... for the international students ... I assume it (online class) is very demanding because it is harder to understand what other people are saying, and it's harder to express speaking English. ... last semester I was frequently under stress whenever I speak something, because I couldn't deliver my intention properly. So anyway, online format is even worse.

When another participant, Shin, was asked about his overall experience with online courses during his second (Spring 2020) and third (Fall 2020) semesters, he cited English listening as his greatest barrier. Referring specifically to these comprehension difficulties during class lectures, he stated, "It's very unilateral. I barely understand anything, so I can't participate." Research related to international students' perceptions of online learning indicates that academic and informal English pose unique barriers to some members of this population (Tan et al., 2010; Zhang & Kenny, 2010). This was found to be somewhat true for at least Hyuk and Shin.

Hyuk moved back to Korea as a result of COVID-19 during the Fall 2020 semester, and although he recounted feeling more comfortable being in a familiar context and having a stronger support network, he expressed concerns about not remaining in the U.S., especially regarding his English development. By leaving an English-dominant context and immersing himself in a setting dominated by his first language, Hyuk effectively lost opportunities to interact in English. Hyuk's preoccupation with developing his English skills also contributed to his feelings of being "left behind," which shows how the connections he maintained with his university through online coursework and meetings left much to be desired in terms of both improving his English and fulfilling his socioemotional needs in general.

### Importance of Social Cues

Three of the participants noted how the lack of social cues, such as eye contact and body language, made it difficult to engage in course discussions and understand the course content. Shin commented, "I had no idea how important social cues are for communication before we had Zoom classes." These reports can be corroborated with other research showing that the lack or a reduced number of social and verbal cues in the online setting is a source of difficulty for all students (Tichavsky et al., 2015), but particularly for international students who heavily rely on these cues to process instructions and engage in discussions (Zhang & Kenny, 2010).

This lack of social cues seems to be connected to both English ability and motivation, in that the lack of these cues can result in miscommunications, which, in turn, can cause disengagement in terms of listening actively. The accountability that comes with social cues, and especially eye contact, is also lost in the online format. As Hyuk put it, "there is no push" to pay attention because it is impossible to tell who the instructor is looking at during a Zoom class. Additionally, as Ana noted, it seemed like the lack of social cues has caused various "awkward" silences. It is possible that students who speak English as a second or third language may be less likely to be the first to fill these silences because of uncertainties regarding social etiquette and expectations during such scenarios.

These findings regarding the importance of social cues indicate that instructors of online classes need to be aware of the importance of these cues and utilize strategies that mitigate ambiguity of instructions and promote engagement. For instance, instructors should provide explicit instructions, signal transitions in the lesson, and provide both written and audio descriptions of course content.

### Limited Social Interaction

Ana, Eunbi, and Shin thought there was limited social interaction during Zoom classes, and Hyuk noted feeling "completely disconnected" from the campus community despite regular engagement in online courses and meetings. Shin felt that the lack of interaction was hurting his social networking, and both he and Eunbi explained that this lack of interaction has led them to feeling socially isolated and unfulfilled at times. Similar reports of isolation in online settings in the literature confirm that many international students perceive interaction in general to be lacking, or that they have difficulty engaging during online classes (Leem et al., 2018; Phirangee & Malec, 2017; Tichavsky et al., 2015). Interestingly, Shin also expressed that a barrier to interaction was potentially being perceived as homosexual or flirtatious by domestic students if he attempted to build relationships through the private messaging function in Zoom. This comment serves as an example of how sociocultural characteristics of the host country can shape an international student's perceptions of and experiences with online education.

Overall, cases like these highlight the importance for instructors to engage students during synchronous lessons by utilizing strategies that promote active learning; however, it seems like this is an area that is still in its developmental stage.

### Reliance on Passive Learning

In a diverging finding, some forms of online teaching appeared to cause some students to disengage in synchronous class lectures and rely on other available learning strategies. Hyuk described on how he was constantly distracted by other things on his computer during class, saying, "I never know when activities start or what we are supposed to be doing. But I can't stop! It's like I am drunk!" He reflected that his lack of focus was likely due to the lack of accountability and English difficulties caused by the online interface. He continued, "It is much easier for me to catch the English if I am in a class" and "I am less motivated to interact because it is online. ... I feel like I can just understand everything better by reading the PDFs." Similar sentiments were expressed by Shin, and such findings indicate that reading asynchronously is a more effective way for students to acquire content knowledge rather than listen to synchronous class sessions, even to the point of deeming the synchronous lessons useless.

These findings are concerning because if such students are allowed to fall back exclusively on their strengths in passive learning and asynchronous participation, they will not be motivated to develop critical listening and speaking skills. This makes it likely that they will be at a competitive disadvantage once they graduate and enter the job market. Both Hyuk and Shin have aspirations of working in the U.S. and were well aware of this potential outcome, citing it as a source of anxiety.

### Positive Perceptions

Despite the many difficulties reported, each of the participants provided examples of beneficial online teaching approaches and strategies they had experienced during their second (Spring 2020) and third (Fall 2020) semesters. Guo and Hyuk mentioned how they appreciated it when their professors were meticulous with the organization of their class time and materials. Guo noted that organization made the lesson seem "fluid" and that it helped him stay focused. He also explained how the instructor's "responsiveness, attitude, and availability" helped him concentrate and that the professor being motivated to engage him in conversation was "highly important for me, for making me feel like I am improving my English." Ana and Guo also mentioned that they found structured opportunities to interact with their classmates to be very helpful for their engagement, which again hints at the central role the instructor plays in facilitating structured interactional opportunities among all students (Leem et al., 2018; Phirangee & Malec, 2017).

## Conclusion, Limitations, and Implications

In addition to reported difficulties with both productive and receptive aspects of English, the data indicated that the lack of social cues enhances informal language barriers and discourages participation in online synchronous sessions. Also, the lack of formal and informal social interactions can lead to feelings of isolation and present potential barriers to improving English skills and building social, academic, and professional networks. However, ultimately, the participants' perceptions of online education need to be considered in light of the wider context and circumstances. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to discuss in detail, the political climate in the U.S. at the time, COVID-19, and physical separation from friends, family, and colleagues all shaped the participants' experiences. While the discussions in this paper were limited to findings that are specific to language-related experiences with online learning, there was undoubtedly a consensus amongst the participants that "everybody seems sick and tired of online learning right now because of COVID," as Eunbi described.

Besides limitations related to generalizability, a crucial limitation of this study is that it is difficult to claim that certain findings are attributable to the online medium of instruction or are specific to international students.

In addition to contributing to the growing body of literature regarding international students' perceptions of online learning, the timely and candid reports from this study's participants may help to better understand the diverse lived experiences international graduate students have with online learning. Given the uncertainties that come with the continued prevalence of COVID-19 on U.S. campuses, it seems likely that Zoom classes will remain the norm for many international students. While many instructors teaching online for the first time in 2020 have been able to quickly adapt to the new format and implement various activities that facilitate student participation, the findings of this study suggest that some international students feel more marginalized than ever before. This points to the need for instructors to continually innovate their online pedagogical approaches to encompass strategies which help international students navigate the contemporary challenges and ambiguities they might face in the online interface.

Instructors can start by unambiguously articulating transitions during lessons and by providing explicit written and verbal instructions for class activities. This has the effect of mitigating uncertainties derived from the absence of social cues and language-related miscommunications. It is also vital for instructors to be cognizant of the fact that some international students who have been 'forced' to take online courses because of COVID-19 may have fundamentally different educational expectations than those who consciously enrolled in online courses in the past. Even though each of the participants in this study identified positive aspects of online learning and has shown great resilience by performing well in their classes since the switch to online instruction, there is still room for pedagogical improvement. As Hyuk said, "I did not sign up for cyber [university]," and allowing such students to fall back on passive learning skills and overreliance on asynchronous learning can have detrimental effects on their language development and socialization, and limit future opportunities.

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Adam Valentin Agostinelli spent the past decade as an English language instructor in the U.S. and Korea in elementary, secondary, and higher education settings. His passion for teaching has led to an interest in researching and writing about multilingualism, identity, language education, and student mobility in international contexts. He is currently pursuing his Ph.D. in Teaching, Curriculum and Society from Boston College.

## Resilient Optimism Through Uncertainty in the Development of Virtual Professional Development for EFL Teachers in Tajikistan

Feature article by Elise Brittain, The University of Texas at San Antonio

Despite the struggles brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2020-2021 academic year, there were possibilities for graduate students to put their vast experience to use and engage in skills development. The ingenuity of people's responses to social distancing has facilitated a rise in awareness of virtual opportunities beyond students' university programs. One such opportunity that I participated in was the U.S. Department of State Virtual Student Federal Service (VSFS) Internship program, in which I supported English teacher preparation initiatives of the U.S. Embassy in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. From September 2020 to May 2021, I leveraged the online space in which the instructors and I collaborated during the program to develop and conduct English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher training.

The VSFS Internship program is an opportunity for U.S. citizen undergraduate and graduate students to develop their skills and gain professional experience. The program website, [vsfs.state.gov](https://vsfs.state.gov), says the program offers students the chance to contribute to "projects that advance the work of government on multiple fronts," including "helping counter violent extremism, strengthening human rights monitoring, developing virtual programs, engaging in digital communications, mapping, economic and political reporting, data analysis, graphic design, and app building." With projects designed to provide flexibility but also make a meaningful contribution, selected interns in this program work virtually for a maximum of ten hours a week from September to May. The application period for the 2020-2021 academic year introduced 776 available project postings which represented a wide range of government offices, project goals, and fields. The variety of projects includes multiple options for graduate students in applied linguistics and related fields, depending on their skills and background, including projects associated with English teaching, cultural exchange, or social media engagement.

My background as an ESL teacher and teacher trainer led me to educational and cultural exchange projects. My previous experience providing teacher training in Central Asia also influenced my interests. My first choice, and the position for which I was selected, was titled "Help Teach Tajikistan's English Faculty Through the English Resource Center." Later, I learned more about the English Resource Center, or ERC, which is supported by American Councils and the U.S. Embassy, and is housed in the pedagogical university in Dushanbe. Its purpose is to provide training, resources, and engagement for the English faculty at the institution. My role allowed me to interact with English teachers, provide methodology training, and offer opportunities for teachers' English proficiency development.

Because a virtual internship had not previously been conducted in conjunction with the newly opened ERC, the project began with uncertainty of the outcomes. It was difficult to project the possibilities available in an environment in which many obstacles hindered participation, such as institutional policies related to COVID-19 precautions and limited internet connectivity. For instance, a rule was instituted limiting the number of teachers allowed in the ERC space to 6-7 at one time, based on the room's square footage. However, in the institution where the ERC is housed, restrictions regarding social distancing or wearing protective masks had been removed. This discrepancy between the policies of the institution and the policies of the ERC caused some dissonance. Although teachers who were not in the group of 6-7 could participate in sessions in the ERC by joining via Zoom from a different physical space, those who attempted to connect on other devices faced challenges of limited internet data or speed. Although these were challenges that could not be solved during my internship in the ERC, they revealed areas for continued development in future virtual programming.

One of my main concerns as a teacher trainer which persisted throughout the project was building rapport with participants through online interaction. The ERC had already secured a furnished room, set up a Zoom account, mounted a large monitor on the wall for presentations, and installed internet access. Thus, Zoom became the medium of interaction with the teachers. Compared to my previous experience conducting face-to-face trainings, there were many obstacles to developing rapport through Zoom. For instance, I had typically relied on seeing facial expressions, listening in on group work, reading body language, and controlling my physical proximity as strategies to understand participants' experience. This "reading" of participants had always allowed me to adjust my approach to training sessions and adapt my engagement strategies and feedback.

However, during the sessions I facilitated in the ERC, I could only see on my small laptop screen that there were people sitting at tables because the webcam was attached above the large monitor where my face and PowerPoint presentation were prominently displayed in the room. I could recognize some of the participants' body language but could not clearly view their facial expressions because of the video distortion. I was able to hear clearly when only one person spoke out at a time, but when multiple people were speaking at the same time, it was difficult to hear. Being in proximity and exuding a calm and kind presence is a way I had traditionally engaged with trainees, but in this case, distance was an unavoidable factor. During these sessions, I had to accept some uncertainty about what the participants were comprehending and relied on them to communicate their needs.

Without knowing exactly how to make it work, it was clear that alternative strategies were required in this training environment. Not only did I want to establish rapport with participants, but I also wanted our sessions to provide engaging activities that modeled what participants could apply to their face-to-face teaching contexts. The following strategies contributed to the achievement of these goals:

- *Including opportunities during each session for teachers to share their own experiences from their teaching and personal lives:* This enabled me to learn about them and their teaching context, especially since I could not be there to observe it myself.
- *Incorporating a regular activity asking participants to provide the translations of key words from sessions and discuss how their uses differed across languages:* This activity facilitated culture and language exchange.
- *Creating a shared WhatsApp group as an established communication channel that reached beyond our Zoom sessions:* This provided ongoing engagement for participants and myself to report on learning, ask questions, share resources, and make announcements.
- *Instituting a Teacher of the Month award which encouraged participants to record a video and write a reflection demonstrating how they had applied their learning from ERC professional development sessions in their teaching practice or how they had shared new teaching ideas with their colleagues:* This provided a cascading effect in which participants shared their learning with students and colleagues, who then also benefited from the sessions.

Ultimately, uncertainty fueled the development of a variety of teacher training sessions and shared commitment among myself, the participants, and the coordinators to face challenges with resilient optimism. Interestingly, informal feedback from trainees suggested that this model of teacher training increased the amount of engagement participants had in teacher trainings compared to previous in-person long-term programs on their campus. This may be due to the ERC itself, which provided a dedicated space for these activities and a motivated coordinator. The most important success was our collective mindset of experimentation and adjustment.

The following list of suggestions is based on my experience facilitating these types of virtual workshops:

- **Start a shared online group with participants.** Use a platform such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook, or other central hub that is most familiar to participants.
- **Schedule content for the shared group.** Make plans to post questions, resources, and announcements regularly for ongoing engagement. Examples include sharing PDFs of open-source books or materials, requesting photos of teachers' classrooms, sharing photos of your own teaching, and posting regular reminders about upcoming sessions.
- **Plan for different types of participant interaction.** If some participants are in one room together and others join via Zoom, use breakout rooms to give everyone opportunities for pair or group work.
- **Engage with participants' culture.** Gather information about language, culture, context, daily life, etc. and make notes to remember and extend what you learned.

Finally, for U.S. citizen graduate students who are interested in learning more about or applying for the VSFS Internship program in the future, the following information and suggestions are provided:

- Note that applications open during July and require submission of a resume, a 3500-word statement of interest which describes your interest in up to three different projects, and an unofficial transcript.
- View the previous year's projects before applications open to get a sense of the types of projects available.
- Focus on how the projects you apply for can contribute to your area of expertise.
- Be specific in your statement of interest about what draws you to each project.

*The opinions stated in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Department of State or American Councils.*



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## It's Okay Not to Be Okay: Detecting Suicidal Signs in Online Communication

Feature article by Tetiana Tytko, University of Maryland, College Park

### Introduction

How are you? – Good, how are you? This everyday greeting people have at work, at school, or at the checkout in the supermarket is routinized in the English language, reflecting the cultural norm that everyone is expected to be OK. Coming from Ukraine, where people ask, "How are you doing?" only when they want to hear the real answer, when I relocated for my Master's degree, I wondered how to let people in the U.S. know how I actually feel. After experiencing American culture first-hand, I realized that the American image of always feeling fine is just a facade. Many young adults living and studying in the U.S. are constantly stressed, lonely, or suffer from depression. Sadly, as few as one third of youth with moderate to severe symptoms of depression seek help while others suffer silently (Mental Health America, 2021). This silence results in shocking statistics on suicide rates.

### The Crisis of Suicide

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (2020), suicide is the second leading cause of death among individuals in the U.S. whose age ranges between 10 and 34, and the fourth leading cause of death among people 35 and above. These already disturbing statistics have escalated due to COVID-19 as many adults in the U.S. have reported "elevated levels of adverse mental health conditions, substance use, and suicidal ideation" since the beginning of the pandemic (Czeisler et al., 2020, p. 1053). Graduate students can be considered to be one of the most vulnerable groups given the stress, workload, and expectations they have to live up to in this challenging time (Woolston, 2020). So, how can we be resilient in the face of this suicide crisis? Some people choose to seek ways to investigate the issue of suicide from different fields (e.g., psychiatry, psychology, medicine, linguistics) to shed light on the reasons behind suicide and the ways it can be recognized and prevented.

### A Brief Overview of Suicide Discourse Research

While research on suicide discourse was initiated in the last century, it has been infrequent. The modern field of applied linguistics has begun researching suicide discourse relatively recently. Nonetheless, these initial findings have already contributed to the development of instruments effective in identifying suicide warning signs. An extensive analysis of the language of suicide notes (e.g., Osgood & Walker, 1959) and literary works (e.g., Baddeley et al., 2011) resulted in the following salient suicidal signs: the augmented use of the first personal pronoun in the suicidal state, self-reference, extensive use of words with a negative connotation, and absolute terms. Sadly, this research was focused on studying the writing left behind by people who committed suicide. However, to really help predict and prevent suicide, we need to extend previous findings and test if suicidal thoughts are detectable in modern communication, which is accessible to most people and may allow the detection of suicidal thoughts.

### Why Are Texts Important?

On average, Americans send and receive 94 text messages every day. These messages can serve as an excellent source of reflecting genuine feelings, especially when they are sent under heightened emotions (Xie & Kang, 2015). Compared to social media posts that can be deleted, texts cannot be unsend; thus, they can serve as evidence of the actual emotional state one experienced at the time of sending a text. Given how accessible text messages are and how often people communicate online these days, studying them can yield valuable results for local and national suicide prevention programs. These insights can help create and inform campaigns similar in importance and scope to established ones like the National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI), Lone Survivor Foundation, Suicide Prevention Lifeline, and others.

### Applying a Corpus Approach to Text Messages

Responding to this urgent need, Tytko and Augstkalns (2020) conducted research examining whether features of suicide notes can also be found in the online communication of a suicidal person. If so, this would allow people to detect early signs of depression, which is one of the main causes of suicide.

Using corpus analysis and a machine learning algorithm, my colleague and I looked at the frequency and saliency of negative and positive emotion words, first-person singular pronouns, and absolute terms in a graduate student's writing who is a suicide survivor. We compiled two corpora that consisted of the participant's personal correspondence with family and friends over the course of five months. Corpus 1 included the text messages sent in September, when the participant reported having no suicidal thoughts, whereas Corpus 2 contained her personal communication from January after a suicide attempt during a depressive episode. After the two corpora were equalized, the researchers used AntConc (Anthony, 2019) as the concordance software to find the frequencies of the measures in each corpus. Additionally, the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) program (Pennebaker et al., 2001) classified the person's emotional and psychological states and tracked the change of the parts of speech use.

### Findings

Our findings show that there are some prominent features reflecting suicidal ideation in a graduate student's text messages:

- First personal pronoun: *I, me, my, myself* (e.g., *I have to do all my own work myself*).
- Dichotomous thinking and extreme mood swings from negative emotion words: *sad, bad, terrible, tired* (e.g., *It was terrible, and I was like 7 and had insanely low standards*) to positive emotion words: *fun, happy, glad, nice* (e.g., *I'm extremely happy that after all this happened to me*).
- Contrastive conjunctions: *however, but, although* (e.g., *But sometimes I don't have anyone else to talk to*).
- Absolute terms: *ever, never, definitely, everything* (e.g., *Nothing's helping. Nothing in particular is happening*).

Obviously, encountering these words in text messages cannot guarantee that an individual is considering taking their life. However, if combined with the overall negative coloring of the message along with the themes of blame, guilt, loneliness, and hopelessness, this can be a serious indication that someone is starting to develop depression and experience suicidal thoughts.

Another interesting finding of our research was that individuals who are suicidal cannot objectively evaluate their emotional states, but their language can reflect suicidal ideation. In other words, there was a significant number of suicide markers in text messages sent right before the suicide attempt as well as five months prior when no suicidal thoughts were self-reported by the participant. Therefore, the responsibility of noticing and evaluating the sender's feelings, emotions, and thoughts lies on the part of the receiver. Once the warning signs are detected in personal communication, a receiver should take immediate action that requires dedication, perseverance, and fearlessness. While asking someone directly about their intentions to commit suicide can be difficult, this is the first step. This question may not guarantee a truthful answer, but it will be the start of an open dialogue.

### Available Resources

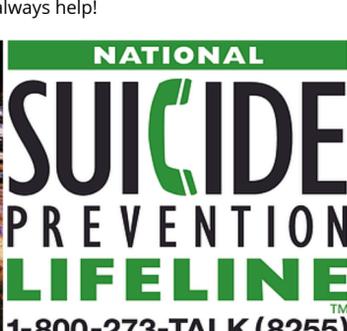
According to the American Psychiatric Association, "predicting when someone will commit suicide has been nearly impossible" (2003, p. 3). Still, there are numerous resources available for people seeking help for themselves and others:

- The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available 24 hours in two languages, English and Spanish, at 800-273-8255. Suicide crisis hotlines help millions of people by offering the option to speak with a trained specialist, either via phone or text message. More than 150 local centers offer 24/7 free and confidential emotional support to those who are in crisis. Their online chat is available at <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/>
- The Crisis Text Line is a free text messaging resource offering 24/7 support to anyone experiencing a crisis. Simply text HOME to 741741. There are trained people on the other end who will help you!
- If you are having extreme thoughts of ending your life, calling a therapist or suicide hotline may not be an option. In this case, you should go to the nearest Emergency Room. Going there doesn't necessarily mean you are going to be admitted to the hospital, but qualified specialists will assess you and make necessary referrals if you are safe to leave.
- In addition to suicide hotlines, there are a great number of online forums and support groups offering help to people who need emotional support in a crisis but do not want to tell others out loud (e.g., [IMAlive](#), [BetterHelp](#), [7 Cups of Tea](#), etc.). More resources, online support networks, and apps can be found here: <https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/suicide-resource-guide#Online-forums-and-support>
- Resisting suicide takes bravery and requires perseverance. There are many people who have already managed to overcome this crisis. Survivors' stories about hope and recovery can be found here: <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/stories/>
- #BeThe1To is the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline's message which helps spread the word about actions we can all take to prevent suicide. Their main five steps are: *ask, keep them safe, be there, help them connect, and follow up*. More information can be found if you follow the link <https://www.bethe1to.com/>
- You can also get involved by joining the [Active Minds](#) movement. This is a non-profit student organization aiming to improve young adults' mental health. Active Minds centers exist on 800 U.S. campuses; annually they reach around 600,000 students through events such as [Send Silence Packing](#), campus awareness campaigns, conventions outreach, and more.

As recommended by many counselors and therapists, to resolve ambiguity if someone is thinking about taking their own life, the first step is to ask them directly about their intentions. The question "Are you thinking about suicide?" communicates your desire to help. It also demonstrates that you're willing to speak about suicide in a non-judgmental and supportive manner (#BeThe1To, n.d.). Asking this direct question can be uncomfortable, but this can create a productive dialogue revealing their emotional pain and suicidal intentions.

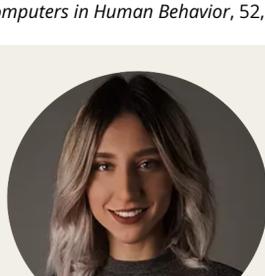
### Concluding Remarks

The bottom line is that research on suicide highly benefits from applied linguistics instruments. But most importantly, my goal was to emphasize that you don't have to be an applied linguist to recognize depression and suicide signs. Nowadays, it is crucial to be vigilant to each other's emotional shifts reflected in the text messages which currently are one of the main methods of communication and staying connected with each other. I'm hopeful that this article showcased that while we all are physically separated from each other, online communication can be a valuable source for people to check in on each other's thoughts and feelings. When you talk to your family, friends, or classmates, spend some time to actually let them know how you feel and be the first one to open up so that your loved ones know you really care. You can never be sure of what other people think, so trust your gut feeling and ask directly if they have suicidal thoughts. And if you are the person who is depressed or hopeless, and you feel like you may hurt yourself, seek help fearlessly! It's never too late to ask for help. And always remember, it's okay to let people know you are not feeling fine or raise a concern about others' emotional state. Remember, if you or other people you know are in crisis, there's always help!



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## Being a Doctoral Mom

*"Creative Corner" contribution by Ji Ma, Georgia State University*

Being a doctoral student,  
In the United States,  
Majoring in language and literacy,  
Is her dream,  
Until the pandemic starts...

As an international student,  
She felt the pressure of  
Discrimination,  
Visa restrictions,  
Job limitations...

She was in fear of  
Getting sick,  
Losing funding,  
Losing her parents...

She is  
A non-traditional student,  
Studying abroad in her 40s,  
In a new country,  
With uncertainty,  
Financial instability,  
Family responsibility.

She is also  
A mother,  
A translator for her family,  
A caregiver of two little children,  
The primary source of family income,  
An educator who loves learning, teaching, languages, and cultures.

She questioned,  
Why language education is less valued than STEM majors.  
Why tensions between countries change people's relations.  
Why the curriculum discusses diversity but excludes international students' voices.  
Why her spouse is not allowed to work, to contribute his values at the best of his lifetime.  
Why her alien kids are excluded from affordable insurance.

She wondered,  
If it was worth quitting their jobs, selling their house, spending their savings, leaving their parents to pursue her education.  
If it would be easier to quit and do what they told her to do, "go back to your country!"

Then she realized,  
She can either endure the pandemic and social movements with fears and tears,  
Or she can use the time to reexamine and position herself with reading and writing.

She will not see herself as a guest, an outsider,  
A checkmark to represent diversity, equity, and inclusion of an institution.

She saw her responsibility as an international educator,  
A mother with beliefs, a wife with courage, and a student with commitments,  
To advocate equity,  
To promote diversity,  
To persist and carry on,  
Because being a doctoral student is her dream.  
Because the pandemic is only part of life's journey.



Ji Ma is a doctoral student in Language and Literacy at Georgia State University. She had 15-year teaching and educational leadership experience in China before she came to the United States to further her education. Her research lies at the intersection of language learning/teaching and intercultural communication, which reflects her experiences as an English language learner and educator, a non-traditional and international Ph.D. student, and mother of two young children who speak two languages. Currently, she studies female Chinese students' overseas experiences, U.S. pre-service teachers' cross-cultural teaching practices in China, and Chinese teachers' intercultural competence development in the dual-language immersion programs. Her goal is to prepare linguistically and culturally competent students and teachers.

## Letter to Younger Self

*"Creative Corner" contribution by Elisabeth L. Chan, George Mason University*

Dear Younger Me,

Wow, it's been a minute. I'm a professor now... Can you believe it? Oh, and I decided to go back to school and get my Ph.D. Crazy, right? I know this is not what you had in mind for us. Haha... This is a little awkward, but I need to say...

*I'm sorry.* I hated and rejected many parts of you. I had some misguided notions about what you were supposed to be-- how you didn't fit inside dominant white norms of society. I didn't accept you for who you were, and that's my bad. I now draw strength from us as a whole, less fractured person.

I remember you denying your heritage, refusing to say you were Chinese when people asked where you were from, saying instead you were from Tennessee (which you are), your mom was from New Jersey (which she is), and your dad was from Britain (well, a British colony).

*Years from now, you'll learn there's nothing wrong with your Chinese-ness. It will become a source of pride in family and in yourself. You'll be able to say the words "I'm Asian American" and eventually even "I am Chinese"... aloud... without hesitancy.*

*The loss of your heritage culture and the struggle and journey to regain it will fuel and shape your Ph.D. studies and your teaching philosophy. Rooting yourself in your culture will help you find your way to critical narrative methodologies. Knowing yourself and accepting yourself-- your epistemological and ontological commitments-- will lay a strong foundation for your identity as an activist-researcher and critical educator.*

*I honor your memory.* You've been gone for many years now. I still hear a whisper of you, catch a shadow of you, here and there. I actually think about you often. I reflect on the lessons you taught me and how I have grown.

Schooling was painful. You hardly saw yourself represented. Well, last year we got our first Chinese version of Little House YA novel, so it's just decades too late for you. I mean, I still read it, though, and thought how great it would have been for you.

You made yourself sick over grades. I'm sure it started when that white teacher called you and a white student to the side only to tell you that she beat you for top score in the class by like a point. I know you were thinking, "What was the point of calling you over in the first place just to tell you that?"

*I know school has always been super important to you. Don't worry. It still is. You are an educator now after all... but you problematize schooling now. All. The. Time.*

*You'll learn about the forms of systemic racism infused in schooling and academia, and engage in ways of problematizing your own role within it as an educator and educational researcher as you continue building networks and exploring ways to transform schooling. Education has roots in white supremacy with a controlling, punitive-focused lens, of which grades are a part. Grades are often arbitrary and place unnecessary institutional stress and pressure on nonconformers. Grades don't represent your self-worth. The letters that will matter more for you are B.S., M.A., Ph.D. In the end, you'll realize grades aren't as important as the network of people you know.*

*Thank you.* You endured many hardships because of the uncertainty that you felt about who we were-- racially, ethnically, culturally. These blows hardened you and strengthened us-- we became resilient.

Remember when that guy asked if you could speak Chinese, and you were like, "no," and he was like, "What a shame"? You got mad because you didn't feel that you should feel shame for speaking English and not Chinese. Well... I have to say, I kind of agree with him, not because you should feel shame, but because the ways that the hegemony of English and societal structures, including schooling, robbed you of that piece of your heritage is shameful. I wish you didn't wait until your late twenties to learn about your history of Chinese Americans in the U.S., the Chinese Exclusion Act, but especially the Mississippi Delta Chinese. It's your history. It's our history.

*Maya Angelou\*\*\* said, "The more you know of your history, the more liberated you are." Knowing there was a community with a history where you and your family fit would have tempered your resilience sooner, more evenly, less damaging-ly than the discriminatory, challenge-laden path you eventually wound your way down, getting closer to realizing your full potential.*

Some say they wouldn't trade all the pain and struggle because it made them who they are. You would probably agree with that, but I disagree with you. I would trade some of the trauma. The ends do not justify the means. You are already the great/grand/daughter of immigrants = strong. You would still become stronger, but you would draw your strength from different sources, like your heritage.

*One of your strengths has been just taking chances and opportunities as they arise without overanalyzing the uncertainties that lie ahead. As you do that, surround yourself with good people. It will be harder for you to find mentors, so seek them out. Practice being confident, asking questions, and speaking up to find your voice.*

With love,  
Your older, somewhat wiser self

\*\*\*Norman, C. (2012). *Maya Angelou public radio special: Award-winning poet on why Black history month still matters.* The Huffington Post. [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/maya-angelou-radio-special-\\_n\\_1276463](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/maya-angelou-radio-special-_n_1276463)



Elisabeth L. Chan has over 15 years of experience as an English language educator. She has advocated for, presented, researched, and published on social justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion in TESOL, where she draws upon her lived experiences as a second/fourth-generation Chinese American from the U.S. South. She is currently ABD and 'dissertating' at George Mason University, specializing in Multilingual/Multicultural Education with a secondary in Interdisciplinary Critical Perspectives and Social Policy. She strives to center intersectionality, criticality, and relationality in her research.

## Inspired by Sea Lions That Make Their “ibasho” on a Beach: A Hint for a Happy Survival

“Creative Corner” contribution by Yoko Mori, University of Otago



With the outbreak of COVID-19 leading to border closures, many people have been stuck outside their home countries. They are not only stuck outside their physical homes but also their academic ones—many teachers and researchers have been forced to abandon their original professional time and space. This includes not being able to commute to workplaces, working irregular hours at home, or even having to spend a large amount of time working on other areas outside their disciplines in order to adapt to this new situation. Ambiguity and uncertainty now seem to be the foundation on which to build a meaningful life, at least for the foreseeable future.

Pondering ambiguity and uncertainty, I find that they are not entirely new concepts for me. I was brought up in an environment where my family moved between my home country and overseas multiple times, and so I would often live in ‘liminality’ (in-between space) between different cultures. Currently, I am, again, living in a liminal space between two cultures: Japan and New Zealand. The concept of liminality was coined by anthropologist Arnold van Gennep (1960) and has often been applied in faculty development (FD) scholarship. For example, Manathunga (2007) depicts faculty developers (or teacher educators) in higher education as struggling to perform their liminal roles “between teachers and students, between academic staff and management, and between teaching and research” (p. 25), which often makes them “unhomely.” For me, whether I have lived in Japan or overseas, I have sometimes been perceived as ‘a visitor,’ sometimes ‘almost a local,’ and at other times, ‘a local.’

Has this made me unhomely? In fact, no. This has not made me feel culturally displaced or led me to experience an identity crisis. Rather, in retrospect, I believe these experiences have created an identity capital enriching my life with a hybrid sense of self. Though this was not always without struggles, the new places have become an additional ‘home.’ Moving between different worlds has empowered me to make *ibasho* (“a sense of belonging” in Japanese) and to enjoy liminality, whatever form it may be.

The concept of *ibasho* is comprised of *i* (“to stay”) and *basho* (“place”), which may be interpreted as “a place where one wants to stay.” In Japanese culture, creating an *ibasho* is widely understood to be inherent in us by realization of “how we are intimately connected to all other living beings” (Murphy-Shigematsu, 2018, p. 99). In this context, Murphy-Shigematsu’s (2018) reference to Einstein’s sense of connectedness that “A human being is a part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space” (p. 98) is very insightful. I believe the sense of belonging and reassurance derived from *ibasho* is what supports us in being strong and resilient, freeing us from what Einstein describes as ‘prison’ of ‘separateness,’ especially in challenging times.

Now, as a student of higher education studying FD and continuing my journey as a teacher and researcher in applied linguistics, I explore my academic *ibasho*. So far, I have found that the two fields of higher education and applied linguistics largely overlap. Since they are not two distinct areas, I don’t feel like I migrate between the two. For instance, when I teach English, FD knowledge, such as about the effectiveness of active learning, allows me to interact well with students. At the same time, the interdisciplinary approach in teaching English or studying applied linguistics informs my FD research. I am fascinated to find how the two fields work in synergy. Accordingly, though living in a liminal space, I do not feel a lack of sense of belonging. In fact, I feel my *ibasho* developing and the roots growing in an intertwining way.

Creating an *ibasho* could be a strategy for overcoming ambiguity and uncertainty. Living in a liminal space requires much effort, patience, and courage—effort, in the sense that one has to constantly pursue knowledge of multiple fields; patience, due to higher possibility of an unclear career path; courage, for seeing challenges as opportunities. If these requisites could be embraced, the concept of ‘liminality,’ with its implications of ambiguity and uncertainty, may not be so bad after all. As much of the work on ‘liminality’ claims, it also includes ‘openness’ for transferring to another world (Stewart, 2020). Referring to the FD literature, Knapper (1998) characterizes the ambiguous and uncertain condition of the FD field as ‘no bad thing.’ I interpret the ‘openness’ and ‘no bad thing’ as leading to hope—hope for encountering innovative ideas beyond one’s home field/discipline and hope for seeing a world one has never experienced before.

Now, let me explain a little about the attached photo. In between my studies, I often stroll along beaches. The sound of waves and the immeasurable scale of nature help me to refresh my body and mind. It was on one of these occasions that I happened to encounter this Hooker’s sea lion.

In normal times, I probably would have passed by with sheer amusement of bumping into this creature of approximately 3.5 m. However, in this period of change to a ‘new normal,’ I was inspired in another way, feeling, “What a wonderful *ibasho*! You made your own sand blanket and pillow and lie there seeming so comfortable as if this has been your home for a long time!” In this moment, I received a lesson from a content-looking sea lion.

The encounter with this sea lion has given me a hint that in life’s most uncertain times, it may be worth going back to the basics of how to survive happily—to appreciate one’s time and space whatever form it may be, and to make the most of the opportunity to create a unique and comfy *ibasho*.

The pandemic has brought us many challenges that we have never experienced before. In a sense, every one of us is currently in the same liminal space—between the past and the new ‘normal.’ Ambiguity and uncertainty in this transformative period may indeed be daunting. However, I am learning that these can also provide us with the joy of creating a new *ibasho*, whether it be our physical or academic home (field/discipline). As long as we each have our *ibasho*, I believe that we can feel that we are not alone and continue to live with much hope and warmth.

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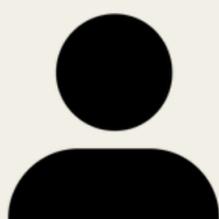
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## Synthesis of Resources: Self-Educating to Become Savvy Digital Information Consumers

Resource review by Huan Gao, University of Florida

In today's internet era, seeking information on search engines and social media has become commonplace in everyday life for people around the world. While we have easy access to vast quantities of information, the current information landscape in the age of algorithms is the most complex in human history, and the need for information literacy has never been greater. Particularly amid the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an unprecedented production of online information from both organizations and individuals. While social distancing measures are in place, social media use has increased dramatically to substitute in-person social gatherings (Koeze & Popper, 2020), which, in turn, exposes people to more information without traditional gatekeepers. Hence, it is crucial to enhance our critical awareness in assessing the credibility of information while navigating the digital environment.

To empower graduate students and the community of applied linguists to be savvy digital information consumers, I reviewed six major organizations working on issues of digital, media, or information literacy. These resources are rich in ready-to-use educational materials that can benefit people of all ages, but especially educators, parents, and students, in becoming digitally literate individuals.

### **National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE)** (<https://namle.net/>)

NAMLE is a leading nonprofit membership organization dedicated to advancing media literacy education in the United States. It is a professional association for educators, academics, activists, and students who are passionate about understanding how the media we use and create affect our lives and the lives of others in our communities and the world. The organization's mission is to highlight the power of media literacy education and its essential role in education across the U.S.

- NAMLE runs the *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, an online, open-access, peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary journal supporting the development of research, scholarship, and pedagogy of media literacy education.
- NAMLE hosts a biennial conference that brings together voices and creates possibilities to advance media literacy education. The information of previous conferences is available on the NAMLE website, and this year's conference theme is "Media Literacy + Social Justice."
- NAMLE hosts an annual U.S. *Media Literacy Week* that calls attention to media literacy education by bringing together hundreds of partners for events and activities around the country.
- Under its "Resources" tab, NAMLE lists rich resources such as a parents' guide to media literacy, ways to spot COVID-19 misinformation, and an international research initiative to assess the current state of media literacy education in the United States and Australia.

### **News Literacy Project (NLP)** (<https://newslit.org/>)

NLP is a nonpartisan national education nonprofit. It provides programs and resources for educators and the public to teach, learn, and share the abilities needed to be smart, active consumers of news and information and to be equal and engaged participants in a democracy.

- NLP hosts an annual *National News Literacy Week* that underscores the vital role of news literacy in a democracy and provides audiences with knowledge and tools to become more news-literate. Throughout the week, NLP will engage educators, students, and the public with quizzes, tips, and tools featured through its social media channels and NLP's landing page. A series of events such as professional development activities, Twitter chat, and edWeb sessions will be held.
- Through informative conversations with experts working to combat misinformation, NLP's news podcast informs listeners about news literacy issues that affect their lives.
- NLP's free mobile app, *informable*, tests one's news literacy know-how. Everyone can practice four distinct news literacy skills in a game-like format, which include *Checkable or Not? Evidence or Not? Ad or Not? News or Opinion?*
- *Checkology*, NLP's e-learning platform, is designed for students in grades 6-12 to learn news literacy. There is also a customized version for the public.
- NLP offers a resources library that includes lesson plans, classroom activities, posters and infographics, quizzes, and more for educators teaching news literacy.

### **Project Information Literacy (PIL)** (<https://projectinfolit.org/>)

This nonprofit research institute conducts scholarly studies about the information literacy of college students.

- PIL offers 12 groundbreaking research reports that examine how college students interact with information resources. 21,000 U.S. college students were surveyed and interviewed in the past decade to generate these reports.
- PIL offers *Smart Talks*, an occasional series of informal conversations with leading thinkers about new media, information-seeking behavior, and the use of technology for teaching and learning in the digital age.

### **Civic Online Reasoning (COR)** (<https://cor.stanford.edu/>)

COR is a project of the Stanford History Education Group (SHEG), which is a research group based in Stanford's Graduate School of Education. COR seeks to measure civic online reasoning.

- Based on their research studies, COR offers a curriculum with free lessons and assessments that help educators teach middle school and college students to evaluate online information. The three questions at the heart of the COR curriculum are: *Who is behind the information? What is the evidence? What do other sources say?*
- COR offers short educational videos about their research findings that elucidate the information evaluation practices of factor checkers.
- COR runs a blog that features the latest updates, tips, and new ideas around civic online reasoning teaching and learning.

### **Common Sense Media (CSM)** (<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/>)

CSM is the nation's leading nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of all children and families by providing the trustworthy information, education, and independent voice they need to thrive as media users in the 21st century.

- For parents, CSM rates movies, TV shows, books, and more so parents can feel good about the entertainment choices they make for their children.
- For educators, CSM supports K-12 schools with everything educators need to empower the next generation of digital citizens. They offer a free digital citizenship curriculum and EdTech ratings. Under the "Digital Citizenship" tab, there are ready-to-teach media literacy lesson materials for K-12 students that are backed by research and inspired by real life.
- For advocates, there is a list of their recent work that advocates for children's well-being in the digital age.

### **Crash Course (CC)** (<https://thecrashcourse.com/courses/medialiteracy/>)

CC produces educational videos to accompany high school and college level classes in a variety of subject areas, from humanities to the sciences. Their "Media Literacy" courses are a 12-episode, high-quality educational video series.

- The "Media Literacy" course series explains how we should use media literacy to explore our media-saturated world.
- The episodes cover 12 topics ranging from the history of media literacy and different approaches to media literacy to the relations between media and the mind, money, persuasion, advertising, policy, or propaganda.
- The episodes provide essential skills for navigating the media landscape and discuss how technological change impacts the future of media literacy.

As we strive to reach our informational goals, these digital and media literacy resources can potentially equip us with the critical awareness and competencies necessary to manage the torrent of information flow. For example, scholars associated with Stanford History Education Group (Wineburg et al., 2016) have indicated major practices that fact-checkers engage in when establishing the reliability and credibility of information, such as *taking bearings* (charting a plan for moving forward before diving deeply into unfamiliar content), *lateral reading* (leaving a site after a quick scan and opening new browser tabs to judge the credibility of the original site), and *click restraint* (evaluating the list of search results to understand the digital landscape before clicking on any one result). In addition to learning these hands-on strategies, it is also essential to develop the information-seeking identities of expert generalists, including the knowledge practices, habits of mind, and dispositions that motivate us to willingly fact-check (Kohnen & Mertens, 2019). It is hoped that these knowledge resources, strategies, and heuristics can help us combat misinformation and become wiser and more informed individuals in the digital age, which holds great promise for upholding a democratic society.

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## Pandemic Conferencing: Implications for Future Virtual Exchange

Resource review by Michael D. Winans, Blanca Romero Pino, & Xiaomeng Zhang, Arizona State University

The Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) Club at Arizona State University (ASU) hosts AZCALL (Arizona CALL), an annual conference “that brings together computer assisted language learning enthusiasts from around the state and region to share ideas, network, and receive valuable feedback on scholarly research, academic papers, and major conference presentations which are in progress or preparation” (AZCALL, 2020).

With the uncertainties brought on by the pandemic, the CALL Club hosted a virtual AZCALL in 2020, which featured recorded presentations, live plenary speakers, and a networking event. The benefits from this virtual exchange included:

- Recorded presentations for lasting impact from continued viewing
- Minimal to no funding required to host a virtual conference
- Feasibility of conference hosting by graduate students
- Greater geographical diversity of presenters and attendees
- Wider ‘net’ for networking connections

This article presents an analysis of freely-available digital tools that contributed to a successful conference using Thorne’s (2003, 2016) culture-of-use framework, which is defined by the iterative use of digital tools, causing them to be “inscribed with variable meanings, values, and conventionalized functions for different communities” (2016, p. 185). We describe these meanings, values, and functions, as they relate to the digital tools used to organize and execute AZCALL 2020, for the applied linguistics and CALL community. Below, we detail the culture-of-use for each tool in the context of digital exchange for academic conferences.

### Google Docs: Document agenda and tasks for conference planning

Google Docs has become a common fixture for online collaboration. It provided space for conference organizers to interact synchronously and asynchronously while exchanging ideas to plan for AZCALL. During planning meetings, it was used to track the agenda and record minutes. Additionally, using the comment function allows someone to be tagged and assigned a task, which in turn sends the tagged person an email. When they complete the task, Google Docs allows it to be marked complete.

### Google Forms: Submit presentation proposals and post comments and questions for presenters (links directly to Google Sheets – below)

Google Forms allowed conference organizers to collect presentation proposals and presenter information. Forms were also used during the conference and embedded into presentation webpages to facilitate interaction between attendees and presenters. Attendee feedback, questions, and comments were exported to an embedded Google Sheet on the same page. Presenters could use the same Google Form to respond – some presenters even submitted links to video responses.

Image 1. The embedded Google Form (left) submits to the embedded Google Sheet (right)

(Shin & Winans, 2020)

### Canva: Design flyers, programs, and newsletters for social media promotion

This graphic design platform offers a wide array of templates suitable for academic events, and it was used to generate the conference program and promotional newsletters and flyers. The program was embedded in the AZCALL website and distributed in pdf-format with hyperlinked presentation titles, allowing for direct access to the pre-recorded presentations.

### Mailchimp: Email promotional materials to attendees and stakeholders

Mailchimp is an email marketing platform that allowed us to create visually appealing, professional emails. It further allowed for mass contact without being tagged by spam blockers. We upload a list of contacts and associated email addresses, which can contain names and institutions, so emails could be personalized with <first name> and <institution> by using mail-merge functions.

### Facebook: Promote the conference and attendee interaction

This social media platform was used to promote the conference to a wide audience by posting AZCALL information on public pages of academic groups. It also facilitated direct interactions among conference organizers, attendees, presenters, CALL Club graduate students, and other interested parties.

### Eventbrite: Register attendees

This event manager allowed us to distribute event tickets, register attendees and presenters, and keep a record of the number of conference attendees. Since AZCALL is a free event, there were no fees related to ticketing services.

### YouTube: Host recorded presentations

The ubiquity of YouTube allowed presentations to be pre-recorded and uploaded. Presenters then supplied conference organizers with links to their videos, which could then be easily embedded into Google Sites (see below). Video creators control the privacy settings of their presentations, where they can make it private, delete their intellectual property after the conference, or, conversely, let people from around the world find, watch, and comment on it.

### Zoom: Host live webinars, the networking event, and AZCALL planning meetings

Zoom was used by the AZCALL organizing committee to hold monthly meetings and plan the conference. ASU's University Technology Office allowed the club to host two live webinars for the plenary speakers (usually a paid Zoom service). The networking event was held on Zoom, and breakout rooms allowed invited speakers and presenters to interact with attendees and share information, answer questions, and network.

### Google Sheets: Organize proposals and presenter information and display comments/questions from Google Forms on the AZCALL Website (Google Sites – below)

Connected to the Google Forms, Google Sheets provided a collaborative online environment for organizing presentation proposals and presenter information. During the conference, when attendees submitted questions or comments, they were displayed in an embedded Google Sheet on the same webpage as the presentation. It further displayed presenters' responses that were submitted on the same Google Form.

### Google Sites: Develop and host the AZCALL conference website

Google Sites is a free tool that hosts the AZCALL website and the digital program with relevant information about the conference. Individual webpages were created for each presenter with a YouTube video of their talk, a Google Form (to ask questions/comment), a Google Sheet (to display questions/comments), and presenter biographies, institutions, and contact information. The AZCALL website also has a history section where you can still access conference materials and presentations today, available at <https://sites.google.com/view/azcallconference/home>.

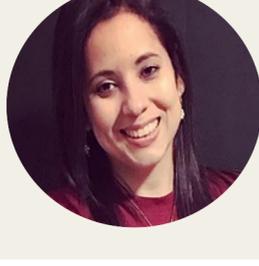
The resiliency of the CALL Club graduate students transformed the conference into a valuable virtual exchange during a pandemic – a model worth replicating post-pandemic. Adapting these tools for virtual exchange requires time, effort, and internet literacy since they are far from plug-and-play, but it is a task worth accomplishing for the benefit of the organizers, attendees, and the field. This model is just one culture-of-use iteration, but it is shared with the hopes that others will forge new paths and connections by hosting virtual conferences in their own interest areas of applied linguistics.

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## Learning How to Navigate Doctoral Supervision

"Professional Development Corner" article by Tatiana Becerra Posada, McGill University

As Grant (2010) points out, choosing a supervisor is a determining decision for the success or failure in the relationship between student, supervisor, and thesis. Having to make this choice before being admitted to my Ph.D. program was one of the first and biggest challenges I have faced in my Ph.D. experience. As I searched for information about admission in my desired Ph.D. program, I was very surprised to learn that having secured a supervisor was one of the prerequisites to start the application process. Therefore, finding a faculty member that would accept me as supervisee was the first task for my application.

Although I knew some faculty members' work, I was not sure if I really wanted any of them as my supervisor; I knew their work, but I did not know them! I felt completely lost and insecure since I had no prior experience contacting a prospective supervisor. I didn't have any colleagues or friends with a similar experience to ask for help either, nor did I have any acquaintance at this university that could advise me on best ways to reach out to faculty.

I relied on tutorials and blogs on how to contact a prospective supervisor and then found myself scrutinizing the faculty profiles. I thoroughly read each professor's profile on the department's faculty webpage and selected the ones I shared some common background or research interest with. After choosing the two professors with the "most potential," I embarked on an extensive search of their academic careers on academic and social networks (Research Gate, Google Scholar, Academia, Twitter, Facebook, etc). After reviewing their profiles, I read their latest academic work and had the wonderful feeling of being inspired by their ideas—this was a moment of joy since I felt this Ph.D. program would be the ideal place to develop expertise in my area of research and grow academically.

After having two potential supervisors in mind, it took me several days to compose a first email. Although I had followed a very formal and academic style, it was not effective; I had been waiting for the professors' replies for almost a month! Their silence made me fear I had not met their expectations. Despite feeling vulnerable, and with the deadline for applications a month away, I persevered: I contacted the program director, who advised me to write a briefer and more direct email, just a paragraph long, where I explained my interest, summarized my experience and research proposal, and asked my potential supervisors directly whether they would accept me as a mentee. The reply came the next day! One of them accepted me, and so I could continue with my application to the program.

My Ph.D. application was successful. However, at the very beginning of my first year, I could not avoid feelings of ambiguity, uncertainty, and vulnerability due to the remoteness enforced by the COVID-19 pandemic. Contrary to my expectations, I had to start my Ph.D. from home, thus limiting in-person contact with professors, classmates, and my supervisor. This lack of connection made me wonder whether starting my Ph.D. had been a good idea at all.

Feeling vexed by the novel and complex nature of the supervisory experience, I read guidelines, attended workshops, and asked classmates about their experiences. However, I did not find "the secret recipe" to a successful student-supervisor relationship. With limited opportunities to experience conventional supervision, I felt I was failing at understanding the dynamics of doctoral supervision, especially how to get to know my supervisor.

Getting to know each other is an essential part of the supervisory relationship (Grant & McKinley, 2011) since it lays the foundation to receiving the most appropriate help from one's mentor. Despite the physical distance imposed by the pandemic, my supervisor and I were able to establish new avenues to learn about each other. By corresponding through email and having phone calls and Zoom meetings, I have felt my supervisor's support.

He has supported me in important academic endeavors such as writing grant proposals, requesting reference letters, obtaining university funding, developing my leadership profile, guiding my candidacy plan, encouraging me to pursue scholarly writing, and answering essential questions about my doctoral research. Beyond just giving me feedback, he has also shown appreciation and trust in my work and in my abilities to succeed in all these endeavors. He has become a mentor who has been willing to share his knowledge with me—his work has continued to inspire me and further my understanding of my research area.

As pointed out in recent research on doctoral supervision (Sverdlik et al., 2018), supervisors have a supportive role which is essential to a student's well-being and sense of success. In my case, throughout this first year, I have gained confidence in dealing with a supervisory relationship. I have learned that close contact and clear communication will allow me to continue navigating doctoral supervision. I have especially understood that there are no one-size-fits-all guidelines for a successful supervisory relationship; it is such a unique experience, coloured and shaded by the complexities that encompass the student's and supervisor's identities.

Having a supervisor from the start of the Ph.D., especially knowing that there is an expert who will guide me in every milestone of this path, has been comforting. I am aware of the key role my supervisor will continue to play in the building of my doctoral career, thus also exerting direct influence on my identity and agency as a doctoral student and future scholar.

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# Readers Respond: White Ignorance

In Fall 2020, the Graduate Student Council Steering Committee and newsletter team decided to create a new newsletter format allowing readers and authors to engage in constructive dialog and exchange of ideas about the articles published in AAALGrads. In this section of the newly introduced "Reader Response Form," Zakaria Fahmi (University of South Florida) and Di Liang (The Pennsylvania State University) respond to Nicholas Subtirelu's (Georgetown University) Fall 2020 piece on white ignorance. Below you will find the original article, followed by the two responses and a reply by Nicholas Subtirelu.

## Original Piece: White Ignorance and the Struggle for an Anti-Racist Applied Linguistics

Feature article by Nicholas Close Subtirelu, Georgetown University

George Floyd was murdered by a white police officer who knelt on his neck for over eight minutes while Floyd struggled and called for relief and mercy. A teenager named Darnella Frazier recorded the incident, and her video has been viewed by millions of people. That video and others capturing incidents of anti-Black racism helped reignite protests against white supremacy and police brutality across the United States and elsewhere this year. Many in the field of applied linguistics have responded in kind asking what we can do to reshape our communities to be more racially equitable.

I believe we are right to ask ourselves what we can do, but I also believe that, for many of us, especially my fellow white folks, the answer must start with reflecting on ourselves, our ignorance, and our inaction. We should never forget what happened to George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and the many other men and women who have become the victims of police brutality directed disproportionately at Black people (e.g., Scott et al., 2017). However, I believe we should go a step further and ask ourselves why it took many of us until well into the twenty-first century to start noticing or caring about an injustice that, for Black folks, has been a central and horrifying part of their experience since people from Africa were enslaved and brought to the United States and other parts of the Americas several centuries ago.

The philosopher Charles W. Mills (2007) has written about what he calls "white ignorance," a concept that I believe is relevant for the ongoing discussion (e.g., Anya, 2020; Bhattacharya et al., 2019; Gerald, 2020; Motha, 2020) about how to challenge white supremacy in applied linguistics and build a field that can contribute to fostering racial justice in other spheres of life such as educational systems. Mills developed the concept of white ignorance as a way of pointing to socialization into whiteness and the privileges this grants white individuals as a mechanism for ensuring and maintaining ignorance about the realities of white supremacy. In part, he was motivated to offer an epistemological accounting of what many scholars of race accept as true, that most white people are profoundly ignorant about the realities of racism in the United States. Mills argued that

white ignorance has been able to flourish all of these years because a white epistemology of ignorance has safeguarded it against the dangers of an illuminating blackness or redness, protecting those who for "racial" reasons have needed not to know. Only by starting to break these rules and meta-rules can we begin the long process that will lead to the eventual overcoming of this white darkness and the achievement of an enlightenment that is genuinely multiracial. (p. 35)

What does this concept have to offer graduate students who are pursuing their training in applied linguistics? I hope that by focusing specifically on whiteness and understanding how it both passively and actively maintains its own ignorance, we can begin to unpack how our own scholarly practices may reflect this very ignorance. I know that my own thinking has at times reflected white ignorance. In the story that follows, I play the role of the privileged white student who fails to see the full extent of white supremacy, in part, because I refuse to accept the forms of evidence that are presented to me and instead insist that my ways of knowing are better. I, as a young white man, act out of the toxic combination of arrogance and ignorance characteristic of people with unexamined and unacknowledged privilege. I present this story in the hopes that my missteps can serve as a fruitful source of learning for others.

In my first year of college, I enrolled in a course called "Introduction to Ethnic Studies" to fulfill my university's requirement that all students take a class focused on diversity in the United States. It was my second semester of college. During my first semester, I had been empowered by a course called "Introduction to Critical Thinking" which had exposed me to ways of dissecting and analyzing arguments. Hence, I arrived in my ethnic studies class believing I was ready to critically scrutinize the ideas and arguments presented in the class. However, my prior education had not challenged me to think about my own positionality and how it affected the way I saw the world. In particular, it had not prepared me to scrutinize my own racial positionality and how it shaped my beliefs and thinking.

One of our first assignments in the course was to read sections of the widely acclaimed book *A Different Mirror* by Ronald Takaki (1993) and write a reflection about it. In *A Different Mirror*, Takaki offers a narrative account of different ethnic groups' experiences in what is now the United States. The book is mostly focused on the time period following European explorers' and settlers' arrival on the continent. While constructing his historical account, Takaki provides the reader snippets of primary historical texts such as song lyrics and newspaper articles to help illustrate the painful experiences of oppressed groups and the inhumane motivations of their oppressors. Takaki's scholarly approach favors vivid, emotionally stirring, and richly contextualized description over the detached, supposedly 'objective' writing that many white scholars produce. Like many ethnic studies scholars, Takaki does not aim to 'prove' that white supremacy exists; rather, he aims to illustrate its historical workings for his readers—readers he anticipates will come to his book having been profoundly influenced by white supremacy and white ignorance.

After engaging superficially with the book, I dismissed it as not methodologically rigorous. In particular, I felt that Takaki had failed to 'prove' the existence of white supremacy due to the approach his scholarship took. I wish I had reflected on what it means to 'prove' that white supremacy exists and why I felt like I, a young white man, should be the arbiter of this question. Instead, I headed to the library and found some experimental psychological research on implicit racial bias that better conformed to the beliefs I held at the time about what constituted 'proof' of racism. For my assignment, rather than engaging with the ideas in *A Different Mirror*, I wrote an essay about how experimental methods provide a better basis for documenting the presence of racism in U.S. society. For example, I cited social psychological research demonstrating that people are more likely to see 'ambiguous objects as weapons when they are held by Black people than when they are held by white people (e.g., Payne, 2001). In Payne's study, participants were shown pictures of faces and objects, and Payne found that pictures of Black faces primed participants to 'see' the object as a weapon, suggesting that the participants were biased toward seeing Black people as violent. I argued that such experiments provided a superior way of 'proving' racism than that offered by Takaki in *A Different Mirror*. I failed to recognize that, despite its strengths and clear relevance to explaining the disproportionate violence enacted on Black people by the police, scholarship like Payne (2001) does not do the important work of placing individuals' actions in a broader historical context in the way Takaki's does. The instructor of the course, a woman of color, handled my arrogant refusal to engage seriously with the work she assigned magnanimously; she gave me a "B" and asked that, in future assignments, I engage more directly with the assigned reading material.

Several years passed before I came to realize that I deserved an "F" on this assignment. Even though I articulated what I felt was the "right" position (i.e., affirming the presence of racism in U.S. society), I did so by rejecting the voices, experiences, and ways of knowing of people who are directly affected by white supremacy and who have developed a field of inquiry (ethnic studies) designed to develop and disseminate exactly these voices, experiences, and ways of knowing. I, a young white man, had not yet learned to listen, and, indeed, I had been trained to systematically ignore the ideas of racialized people when they did not conform to white ideas about what constitutes good scholarship. I judged the extensively documented narratives about the realities of racialized people's experiences with white supremacy presented to me as inadequate in much the same way that Black people's concerns about the police have historically been dismissed when not accompanied by a viral video. Indeed, even when it is confronted with video evidence of horrific crimes, white ignorance has found a way to prevail with disturbing regularity.

I am embarrassed and ashamed of the way I behaved in my ethnic studies class. I regret the harm that my dismissiveness caused the instructor as well as the students of color in the class. The incident is rendered all the more embarrassing when one considers that racism and white supremacy are central to my scholarship today. I raise this embarrassing experience because I believe it highlights an important point about the connection between epistemological beliefs and white privilege. I did not see my ways of seeing the world as connected to my whiteness, my maleness, or other aspects of who I was. I believed that I was simply applying the scientific method and logic to arrive at 'truth.' I thought that I could be of service to those advocating against racism by teaching them the 'correct' way of knowing, through, for example, rigorously designed experiments. I was stupendously and arrogantly wrong, and had I been willing to listen and to engage with the arguments of others on their own terms, I would have found this out much earlier and spared others harm.

I hope that other applied linguists who hold white privilege will take this story and the lesson it offers to heart. I hope that students who find themselves confronted with readings that challenge their beliefs consider that those beliefs may reflect the white ignorance that they have been socialized into and approach opportunities to learn from Black, indigenous, and other people of color humbly and respectfully. Undoing our own white ignorance is not glamorous, but I believe it would go a long way toward helping us build an anti-racist scholarly community.

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## Response 1: Decentering and Unlearning: A Response to "White Ignorance and the Struggle for an Anti-Racist Applied Linguistics"

Article response by Di Liang, The Pennsylvania State University

I appreciate that Dr. Subtirelu shed light on such a timely topic. His critical epistemological examination of self reminds me of the importance of *decentering and unlearning*.

From a decolonial perspective, I understand *decentering* as the practice used to release oneself from the perspectives prescribed and accepted by one's community of practice that has been closely clinging to (see Byram, 1997; Walsh, 2015). As the White-centric matrix of power has permeated many aspects of our society, whether it be sociocultural, sociopolitical, or socioeconomic, it becomes rather difficult for us to detach ourselves from such a dominant ideology.

Dr. Subtirelu spoke to this reality and used Mills' (2007) concept of *White ignorance* to accentuate the defensive mentality adopted by White people to preserve their privileged position by suppressing the thoughts or acts that might disrupt the established social order. This defensive mechanism could also manifest as the following:

1. *White emotionality* (Matias, 2016), which refers to the emotions expressed by White people when discussing race and racism, such as guilt, shame, anger, defensiveness, denial, sadness, dissonance, and discomfort; and
2. "happy talks" (Tuitt, 2016) and "good intention" (Gorski, 2008), which refer to the talks and actions that exhibit surface-level racial-cultural understanding while intentionally hiding any tensions or conflicts caused by racial or cultural differences behind seemingly positive interactions.

All of these convey empty verbalism. It is, thus, important that we as applied linguists be able to see through these performative behaviors, decenter ourselves from privileged positions, develop intercultural sensitivity and awareness, engage in critical self-reflection, and embrace decolonial, anti-racist pedagogy.

Reading Dr. Subtirelu's account of his past experience gives me the idea that *storying* could be a useful tool for embarking on this journey of critical self-reflection. For example, McCausland (2020) used *storying* to reflect on his experience as a White man participating in a science lab where learning "real science" was the core mission. Through this reflective process, he realized the prevalence of Whiteness in the field of science education. As he was writing down his experience, McCausland was able to closely and critically reexamine the instances where he or his White peers exhibited White-privilege-informed language or behaviors to teach or learn science. While *storying* his experience in group projects, McCausland remembered his unease of working with students of Color, as he felt "threatened with isolation" in a space with "people who were not as 'scientific' as me" (p. 12). He had, however, a smooth experience working in an all-White group, as he and his White colleagues shared the same "scientific" understanding and training. He acknowledged that seeing students of Color as being less "scientific" was not because of their lack of scientific knowledge; rather, it was their different understanding of what it meant to do science and their communicative behavior in the English language.

Along the epistemological, emotional, and critical nexus, McCausland realized that the so-called "real science" were in fact the scientific principles accepted and acknowledged by the White, English-speaking scholarly community. As a result, students or scholars of Color entering this White space of science would always be held to unfair standards, be it regarding content or language, and consequently be marginalized. Upon arriving at a new institution, McCausland credited *storying*, which is derived from autoethnography (see Ellis & Bochner, 2006) and narrative inquiry (see Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), as a powerful tool because it provided him with "an avenue" (p. 2) to describe, theorize, and analyze his experiences and feelings, to question his thinking, and to confront his privileges.

Similar to McCausland's approach, Johnson (2017) employed "a racial storytelling" (p. 478) to examine how his past racial encounters have shaped his current identity as a Black male professor. In a similar vein, Linsmire (2008) analyzed how he made "better sense of becoming white with black materials" (p. 313) through a performance he did in high school where he insensitively used stereotypes about Black people to entertain the White audience. By way of *storytelling*, Linsmire was able to investigate why he had decided to do the performance at the time and how he became aware of his White racial self. In another example, Tanner (2019) discussed ways of confronting White supremacy in English education through *storying* his experience as a White male scholar in English education.

I hope to show from these scholarly works that through critical self-reflection, we can examine our positionalities, identities, and beliefs as applied linguists. As we are taking a close look at our ways of talking, reading, writing, teaching, and researching, it is possible that we may come to question or critique the things that we have registered as true, as untouchable, and therefore we would have to *unlearn* those knowledge. *Unlearning*, hence, could be seen as indicative of "questioning, opening and self-critiquing" (Walsh, 2015, p. 13). As suggested by Johnson (2017), such a critical stance would enable us to "work against our own miseducation while moving toward liberation and self-actualization" (p. 479). Simply put, it is through *unlearning* that we would have the space for *relearning*. We need not be terrified, discombobulated, or embarrassed by it. As teachers, researchers, and learners in the field of applied linguistics, we are committed to lifelong learning, to the ongoing process of *unlearning* (see Zembylas, 2003). That is, we signed up for a journey where we may jettison, develop, or change our understandings about what we know and what we do. Dr. Subtirelu's article brought to the fore the need of building an anti-racist scholarly community, of *becoming* equity-minded. To achieve this goal, we may have to experience a wealth of *unlearning and relearning*. To end my response, I would like to say that I hope Dr. Subtirelu's advocacy for an anti-racist scholarly community will not be a soliloquy but be taken up by many members of our community.

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## Response 2: Revisiting Subtirelu's Article "White Ignorance and the Struggle for an Anti-Racist Applied Linguistics"

Article response by Zakaria Fahmi, University of South Florida

"Washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral." (Freire, 1985)

Human experience is more than just the cumulative knowledge exclusively available to those in positions of power. By its very nature, human experience entails the eternal uniqueness of voice and the vivid omnipresence of the self. For instance, every war mirrors a communal turmoil, only every survivor bears the burden alone. Every refugee carries a profound, untold story, internalized via personal lenses and intimate meanings. In fact, human experience remains the very familiar product of the self, and thus the irrefutable marker of its own legitimacy. We cannot silence or delegitimize the others' experience simply because they do not conform to our expectations. It would be wildly senseless to expect the oppressor to feel the agony of the oppressed, let alone underestimating the damage of such ignorance.

Subtirelu's spirited, personal account shines an interesting light on the connections between white privilege and epistemological belief. His early college experience and transition from critical thinking to ethnic studies, admittedly, did not grant him ample critical tools to grasp the realities foreign to him due to race or ethnicity. His eloquently and bravely expressed failure to recognize the hardships and susceptibilities of minoritized voices not only, in part from his monolithic conceptualization of 'objectivity' as a lifeless view of otherness. Subtirelu's stemmed at the best briefly, isolates the distinctions between Takaki's (1993) and Payne's (2001) different ways of 'proving' racism, but also clearly offers a personally contextualized deconstruction of white ignorance within his conscious responsibilities as "a privileged white student." Importantly, his account reminds us of the significance to interrogate the systemic institutional structures that govern our societies. More constructively, his account should offer an exemplary incentive for other white scholars to retreat to their personal narrative and experience as a reflexive, transformative means to combat issues related to racism and bigotry.

Aligning my view with Subtirelu's thesis of 'proving' racism, I take my responsibility, not as a privileged 'white' voice, but as someone on the opposite side of the spectrum. I arrived in this country on an F-1 visa, questioning my potential as an international student for such an opportunity. Prior to my arrival, I had never been able to understand the deeply hidden realities of ethnic and racial inequalities. Naive and insensitively consumed by the power of pop-culture, I later came to realize that such an indulging distraction was important in disguising parts of this unpleasant truth.

It did not take long to see that I, too, can be subject to workings of racism and attempted silencing in ordinary ordeals, simply based on my name, my look, and/or my assumed religious beliefs. As an international student, there were times when my voice was debased and rejected to *creatively* criticize the divisiveness of a political climate, solely because of my race or ethnicity. There were times when I was called racial slurs, unashamedly in broad daylight, by those with whom I always thought I had shared fruitful conversations. It was a deception, rather the backfire of their defense mechanism that could not hold any longer. There were occasions when I did not know the exact social or cultural meanings of those derogatory names. I had to resort to other friends for their meaning or horribly find them out myself. These incidents slightly distressed my social interactions in the sense that I downplayed my interlocutions to meet the demands of a foreign culture.

The interactional dynamics I had with white ignorance were predetermined by a quest for power. Essentially, the racial slurs stroke in their attempt to censor my different, nonconformist voice that was deemed menacing to the comfort and normalcy of white ignorance. Such normalcy lies in part in the persistent monopolization of formal and informal devices of power (Fairclough, 1989), often attended when repeatedly exercised by the same interlocutors, namely white interlocutors. In essence, white ignorance thrives collectively on a mythic manifesto fixated in a monochrome reality that disqualifies the complex experience of the racialized and their legitimate ways of knowing. Racism exists. Sadly, it exists in various forms, but if we continue to zealously assert we are not racist, the social discourse of denial (see van Dijk, 1992) becomes the most damaging force of white ignorance.

I share parts of my personal experience in this response not to spark sympathy or generate apology, but to call out the blatant workings of bigotry and upset the white imagining, reaffirming that minoritized experiences matter, too. I have never doubted the generous virtue of human nature, but I have also always believed in the power of collaboration over isolation. It takes more than just one camp to dismantle these unjust workings, regardless of their sources or actors.

Mitigation efforts to battle forms of racism and discrimination in applied linguistics mandate ceaseless, conscious diversification of perspective and practice. Such efforts should expose the colorblindness ideologies, which preach pro-diversity intentions on the surface but in practice only accelerate sameness. Our disciplinary culture should steer away from the prevalent racism-evasive rhetoric that fails to address the realities and the real costs of racism. Subtirelu's account, for instance, exemplifies the significance of the malicious workings of white ignorance and its systematic silencing. Failing to prove racial privilege would only embolden discriminatory practices and empower racialized structures. Together, we can structurally and unapologetically honor the pledge of instilling egalitarian and democratic principle within our disciplinary culture, sustained by the very diversity of its countless voices, interests, and scopes.

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## Follow Up: On Becoming Antiracist Racists: Author's Response

Nicholas Close Subtirelu, Georgetown University

I wish to first thank Zakaria Fahmi and Di Liang for their thoughtful responses, as well as the editors, for opening up space for us to continue this important conversation about white ignorance and the ways in which it acts as a barrier to an antiracist applied linguistics.

Fahmi and Liang's responses both stress the potential usefulness of reflective work on the part of applied linguists who hold white privilege. Fahmi explores white applied linguists to attend to our "personal narrative and experience as a reflexive, transformative means to combat issues related to racism and bigotry," while Liang ends his piece artfully expressing his hope that my reflection "will not be a soliloquy" but will inspire others to wrestle with their own white ignorance. Echoing their recommendations, I offer here four pieces of advice for white applied linguists struggling with their own complicity in white supremacy.

First, as both Fahmi and Liang emphasize, white ignorance is not simply a matter of absence of knowledge but is also characterized by an emotionally driven resistance to the realities of white supremacy (Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013; Mills, 2008). Hence, in thinking about how to combat white supremacy in our field, I believe white applied linguists should start by looking inward and considering how our understanding of the world, and especially racial disparities within it, may reflect a commitment to white ignorance. I invite white readers to consider, for example, how they responded to Fahmi's account of his experience as an international graduate student. When you read that his colleagues used racial slurs against him, whose side did you find yourself leaning toward? Did you find yourself doubting Fahmi's reporting of the events? Did you rush to defend his interlocutors? Did you wonder whether it might have all been a very unfortunate misunderstanding? Were you worried about how his account might sow discord in the field or harm the reputations of 'innocent' white people? If so, then you may be engaging in the same kinds of knee-jerk responses that I did when, as I reported in the original piece, I skimmed and dismissed Ronald Takaki's book *A Different Mirror* many years ago. I invite white readers to read the accounts of scholars of color in our field (e.g., Khan, 2020; Kubota, 2020) and to learn to hear their concerns about our profession for what they are: the informed perspectives of reasonable, competent, and honest people who are doing their best to tell you what they have lived through.

Second, and related to my first piece of advice, I recommend that white readers shift from an understanding of racial prejudice as individual moral failing to a view of white supremacy as structural domination. White applied linguists would do well to accept that our whiteness makes us inherently complicit in white supremacy and to view this complicity as the inescapable starting point from which we can choose to engage in antiracism. Leonardo and Zembylas (2013) write about what they call "white intellectual alibis." In criminal investigations, an "alibi" is a fact about a person that demonstrates that they cannot be the perpetrator (e.g., they were out of town when the crime was committed). Leonardo and Zembylas use "white intellectual alibis" to discuss the many ways in which white people attempt to construct identities for ourselves that position us as unconnected to white supremacy, as 'good white people' or 'nonracist white people' (e.g., that we have friends or family that are not white, or that we write about antiracism). As the authors point out, this pursuit of an alibi is problematic precisely because

it does not consider the possibility that one could be racist and anti-racist in one place at the same time. Being an anti-racist racist is not a contradiction in terms and is likely to be a more realistic appraisal of Whites who struggle with the push and pull effects of white privilege (Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013, p. 156).

Thus, if we are committed to an antiracist applied linguistics, we white folks will have to abandon our intellectual alibis, accept our complicity in white supremacy, and begin the real antiracist work of dismantling and undoing all of the ways in which our field privileges white people and white thought.

Third, we need to recognize that our journey to becoming antiracist racists (Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013) should ideally not be one that prescribes additional pain or uncompensated labor for our racialized colleagues. We should aim to listen to their voices and create without demanding more labor from them or putting them in uncomfortable or difficult situations. Hence, we should read their words carefully and closely when they choose to offer their thoughts on white supremacy in our field. What we should not do is ask them to serve as our unpaid white supremacy tutors or ask them to 'help' anyone who downplays or denies white supremacy. I suggested that white applied linguists come together to debate support each other in undoing our own white ignorance, as recommended for example by Michael and Conger (2009), especially as a way for preparing us for necessary but potentially fraught interracial dialogue.

Fourth and finally, I believe it is important that anyone wishing to learn about and pursue antiracism do so with a clear understanding of how we are positioning ourselves. As I mentioned above, I consider white people's positioning of ourselves as 'not racist' to be incompatible with a genuine commitment to ending white supremacy. If we take seriously the antiracist task of undoing white supremacy in our field, however, we will quickly find that we are positioning ourselves in opposition to many of our white colleagues who are committed to defending themselves, their work, and their institutions as 'not racist.' While there exists a superficial consensus in public discourse that racism is bad, we should not be fooled into expecting that genuine antiracism will be welcomed in academia, particularly by white scholars, the academic organizations we dominate (including AAAL), or the institutions we control (Melaku & Beeman, 2020). Indeed, if we seek to undo white supremacy in our field, then we should recognize that we are taking stances against ideas and practices that have long histories and many supporters. If we are to become antiracist racists, then we must learn to choose strategically between calling out and calling in these colleagues, and to take calculated risks to undo and undermine the ways in which our field harms racialized peoples. Thus, white applied linguists need to understand the risks antiracist action might pose to us, but we must also understand that, ultimately, these risks are preferable to continuing the reproduction of white supremacy in our field.

The task of becoming an antiracist racist is time consuming and emotionally arduous. It requires careful reflection, learning, and unlearning. For white people, the task ultimately requires us to develop an understanding of ourselves as complicit in white supremacy while actively resisting it. While this perspective can be difficult to accept and contend with emotionally, it opens up the space for us to think and act differently, for us to challenge a system that both privileges and constrains us. Hence, it is important that we keep in mind that in working toward becoming antiracist racists, we aim not only to be in solidarity with people of color but also to bring about our own liberation from whiteness and its demands that we conform.

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Di Liang is a Ph.D. candidate in Second Language Education at the Pennsylvania State University. He holds an M.Ed. in Foreign Language Education from the University of Pittsburgh. He currently teaches a language teaching method course and supervises World Languages student teachers. Prior to Penn State, he taught undergraduate-level Chinese language classes at the University of Pittsburgh. His research interests include second language acquisition and instruction and language teacher education.



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## Readers Respond: Diversity Statement

In Fall 2020, the Graduate Student Council Steering Committee and newsletter team decided to create a new newsletter format allowing readers and authors to engage in constructive dialog and exchange of ideas about the articles published in AAALGrads. In this section of the newly introduced "Reader Response Form," Ashley Moore (University of British Columbia) responds to Ahmad Alharthi's (University of Washington) Fall 2020 piece on writing diversity statements. Below you will find the original article, followed by the response.

### Original Piece: How to Write a Diversity Statement

"Professional Development Corner" article by Ahmad A. Alharthi, University of Washington

Separate from the teaching and research statements, the diversity statement is a document explaining the extent to which one is able to contribute to a culture of equity and inclusion. It functions as one piece of evidence for one's effort to address diversity issues regarding teaching, research, and service. To help you get started with your statement, I will explain below the possible sections of a diversity statement and what each section might entail. When writing this statement, considerations typically revolve around certain keywords, including the words making up the title of this issue—"race," "equality," "justice," and "allyship"—along with others that I will also mention below.

Before we go into each section, two important points need to be sorted out. First, you may want to spend some time thinking whether you would like your statement to be **past-oriented** or **future-oriented** (or some combination of both). In other words, are you going to highlight your commitment and contribution from past experiences, or are you going to discuss your growth and awareness about diversity, thus primarily explaining your future plans? The guidelines for writing a diversity statement published by the University of California at San Diego allow both options, as applicable to the respective candidate, but state that "a demonstrated record of past effort is given greater weight than articulating awareness of barriers or stating future plans" (University of California, San Diego, n.d.). No matter which option you choose, the key is authenticity. So, in your discussion, make sure that you talk about real involvement (from the past) and/or realistic projects (for the future).

Second, make a decision as to whether you would like to mainly discuss **your personal identity or your engagement with disenfranchised groups** (or some combination of both). If you decide to talk about your personal identity, you can do so in terms of either acknowledging your own privileges (Golash-Boza, 2016) or, as applicable, by discussing your own disadvantages. On the other hand, if you decide to talk about your relation to historically underrepresented groups, you can focus, as appropriate, on racial/ethnic minorities, immigrant/first-generation students, women in higher education, or multilingual/international students. With that said, Beck (2018) points out that not disclosing one's personal identity might be preferred by some universities. For example, at the University of California at San Diego, attention is given to specific efforts related to diversity on the part of the applicant "regardless of personal demographic characteristics" (Contributions, n.d., as cited in Beck, 2018).

Now, for the actual statement, you may begin by explaining your understanding of the notion of "diversity" before you discuss your commitment to diversity in relation to the three major goals of higher education: teaching and pedagogy; research and scholarship; and service and leadership. When asked her opinion about the diversity statement, Tabbye Chavous, director of the National Center for Institutional Diversity at the University of Michigan, explains that while there is no one-size-fits-all approach to writing a diversity statement, "every faculty member's work connects to at least one of these goals" (Smith, 2019). So, the decision is yours as to which of the three goals to highlight most. Your decision can be based on your past record and on what the institution applied to values the most among these three goals. Note that you will likely be asked to provide a separate document for your teaching philosophy and another one for your research. Therefore, your discussion of teaching and research in the diversity statement will not only be less detailed, but also be exclusively concerned with how diversity features in those two areas.

In the case of **teaching**, this is where you should discuss how you are able to create an accessible learning space for your students. Give examples of and provide a rationale for decolonizing your teaching practices and diversifying your curriculum, where a variety of voices and a range of perspectives are represented in your course content. Notions relevant to this section might also include "access," "inclusive teaching," and "anti-racist pedagogy." Indeed, even the notion of "active learning" can be linked to diversity in that it promotes various teaching methods which can serve different learning styles and help students with diverse educational backgrounds. If not already, familiarize yourself with some of those terms and see what each one entails. You would be surprised with how you might be already implementing some of those ideas without even realizing.

As for your **research** section, discuss to what extent your research addresses social justice issues. For example, does it engage with civil rights and/or human rights issues? Reflect on how your research is focused on one or more of the "big eight" social identifiers: age, ability, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, and religion. If you have a dissertation chapter that addresses any of those issues, this section would be the place to summarize your chapter.

Finally, with regard to **service**, this can include anything that is neither teaching nor research, from programmatic work and administrative experience to leadership opportunities and service on relevant committees and task forces. Have you participated in tutoring or mentoring programs targeted towards underserved groups? Did you take part in designing curricula or compiling resources with diverse writers (e.g., international students) in mind?

Willis (2017) talks about probing yourself as a strategy, where you would examine who you are, where you stand, what you did, and what you really believe in with regard to diversity issues. Just as importantly, remember to ask for feedback on your statement from colleagues, your advisor and, if applicable, the career center at your institution. As language professionals, we are already in the midst of efforts to promote issues related to diversity, including, among others, respecting students' home languages, ensuring fair assessment practices, and reducing stereotype threats. To me, that is a huge component of what we do in applied linguistics and language studies in general. So, it is crucial to reflect on your past and try to translate that mindset into words.

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### Response: Are Diversity Statements Nonperformative? A Critical Discussion

Article response by Ashley R. Moore, University of British Columbia

Most graduate students are keeping one eye on the conditions of the job markets we will have to navigate upon graduation, and for those hoping to stay in academia, the increasing number of job postings requiring a diversity statement as part of the application package will not have gone unnoticed. Given this trend, Alharthi's (2020) recent guide to understanding this emerging genre is timely and practical, and will no doubt be used by many graduates across the field of applied linguistics as they attempt to secure employment.

Alharthi's piece also offers us a chance to think critically about the intentions behind diversity statements and how they actually circulate and function within institutions of higher education and the wider systems of power in which they are entrenched.

The practice of institutions requesting diversity statements seems to have gained traction around the mid-2010s (Kelsky, 2014). As Alharthi notes, the genre's ostensible function is as a form of evidence that hiring committees can use to judge an applicant's ability to contribute to an institution's professed equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) work. But could there be other potential uses of the text? I've found Sara Ahmed's (2006) concept of *nonperformativity* to be a useful tool for thinking about the uses of diversity statements.

For Ahmed, a nonperformative text "works" precisely because it fails to bring about its declared purpose. Ahmed gives the example of the Macpherson report (1999), the result of a public inquiry into London's Metropolitan Police Service and its mishandling of a racially motivated murder. The report concluded that the police force was institutionally racist, and offered 70 recommendations for reform. However, Ahmed argues that the report was nonperformative because it failed to consider individual racism, implicitly absolving individual officers perpetrating racist acts and thus allowing racism to continue to poison London's police force.

In her exploration of the trajectories and uses of various EDI-related policies and documents in UK higher education, Ahmed shows convincingly that many such texts, especially those that purport to "do" antiracist work, in fact do just the opposite, leaving systemic and individual racism unchallenged. And although we graduate students will be writing our diversity statements individually, it's fair to consider them institutional texts, since it will be institutions that demand we write them. Indeed, I hope that the following arguments are not read as a critique of Alharthi's guide to writing diversity statements, but of the very systems that require them.

#### Diversity statements can reduce social justice work to buzzy keywords.

Critical applied linguists know that such work is a restive process (Pennycook, 2001). Oppressive power pools and disassembles, even seeping into the critical project itself, meaning that it requires lifelong commitment and reflexive action. The quickly coalescing genre of diversity statements encourages us to think of EDI in terms of acronyms and keywords, strung into formulaic sequences (Henry, 2015). The more mundane diversity statements become, the more they obscure the actual ongoing work they claim to represent.

#### Diversity statements can fetishize equity-seeking groups.

Alharthi's invocation of the "big eight" social identifiers (age, ability, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, and religion), with its echoes of the "big five" pursued by safari game hunters (lion, leopard, rhinoceros, elephant, and Cape buffalo), usefully highlights the ways in which equity-seeking groups become fetishized within diversity statements. The statements act to transform experiences related to equity-seeking groups into forms of cultural and symbolic capital that will hopefully be converted into economic capital in the form of a job offer (Bourdieu, 1986). Through this same process, diversity statements encourage us to commodify such experiences and the real individuals involved, carefully inserting references to Indigenous, queer, and disabled people like so many trophies hung on a wall.

#### Diversity statements can perpetuate an oppressive status quo by uncritically rebranding it as "already doing" EDI work.

Not everyone will have a wealth of EDI-related work to draw on as they write their diversity statements. However, the demands of the genre encourage us to come up with something to fill the required 1–2 pages, and it seems likely that activities that actually have nothing inherently to do with the pursuit of equity, diversity, and inclusion are desperately "rebranded." Ultimately, this will likely have the effect of perpetuating the status quo in applied linguistics, a status quo that has been critiqued for its complicity with epistemological racism (Kubota, 2020), the reification of standardised language practices (Flores & Rosa, 2015), and opportunity gatekeeping (McNamara, 2010), among other troubling practices.

#### Diversity statements can promote nonperformative effects for both institutions and individuals.

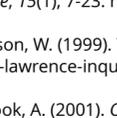
Ahmed (2006) argues that EDI-related documents "might ... perform a lie insofar as they represent the university as if it has principles that it does not have" (p. 114). It could be argued that, in requiring applicants to submit diversity statements, universities are constructing themselves as already-equitable, already-diverse, and already-inclusive. The same effect might be a consequence of writing a diversity statement; As we construct ourselves as "already-EDI," the likelihood of us actually believing that our work is done increases, and the text fulfills its nonperformative function—undoing the very work it describes.

Despite the concerns I've shared here, diversity statements might still prove to be tools for transformative work. A first step, Ahmed (2006) instructs us, is to exercise a healthy skepticism regarding diversity statements' capacity to do anything that actually promotes EDI. A second step might then be to use them as critical lenses, "exposing gaps between words and deeds" (p. 125). Each time a job advertisement is crafted and sent out into the world, individuals involved in sustaining the institution could use the occasion to measure the gap between the positive image it creates for them and the reality that will meet the successful applicant. In a similar vein, we graduate students might write two diversity statements, one on paper that celebrates our work to date, and another on our conscience that also records the work we haven't done but must. If we find ourselves with limited or no experience in enacting EDI, we might do better to follow Alharthi's (2020) suggested strategy of writing a future-oriented statement, rather than dressing up in superficial keywords past activities that do not specifically realize the enactment of EDI.

As for the tension that emerges when our genuine efforts to support equity-seeking groups become entextualized in a diversity statement and, in turn, fetishized within the social practice of finding employment, this is not easily resolved. One strategy can be to use each occasion to write a diversity statement as an opportunity to first listen again to those groups and renew our understanding of how we can become better accomplices to their flourishing. Better informed, we can act to close any gaps that may have opened up between our commitments and our practices. Lastly, our diversity statements, looming in the not-too-distant future, compel us to pursue equity, diversity, and inclusion in everything we do today—and if we can do that, the gap between our words and deeds might not be so wide when we finally come to put pen to paper and conscience.

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Ahmad A. Alharthi is a doctoral candidate in English Language and Rhetoric at the University of Washington, Seattle. His research interests include critical applied linguistics, composition studies (with a focus on second language writing), and the implications of the global spread of English.



Ashley R. Moore is a Ph.D. candidate and International Doctoral Fellow in the Department of Language & Literacy Education, University of British Columbia, which occupies the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the x̱m̱əθḵw̱əy̱əm (Musqueam) people. His empirical and theoretical work on research explores a plurilinguistic construct, first language dissociation, among Japanese late learners.

## INTERVIEW WITH THE 2021 DISSERTATION AWARD WINNER

**Dr. Brittany Frieson**

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Dr. Brittany Frieson is an assistant professor of literacy and anti-racist education at the University of North Texas in Denton, TX. She is an interdisciplinary scholar whose works traverses applied linguistics, literacy, and bilingual education. Her primary research interests center on exploring the language and literacy practices of young Black American children in dual-language bilingual education programs from critical perspectives. She currently teaches language and literacy courses on culturally and linguistically diverse youth in the undergraduate and graduate programs at UNT. She is a 2020-2022 NCTE Cultivating New Voices Scholar Fellow and her dissertation was recently honored with the 2021 AAAL Dissertation Award (1st place) and the 2020 ILA Outstanding Dissertation Award (3rd place). Her work is published in *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *Understanding Critical Race Research Methods and Methodologies: Lessons from the Field*, and *Multimodal Literacies in Young Emergent Bilinguals: Speaking Back to Print-Centric Practices* edited volumes.

**Could you tell us a little bit about yourself?**

I'm an interdisciplinary scholar whose critical research traverses across multiple disciplines, including applied linguistics, literacy, and bilingual education. My work is primarily reflective of an intersectional lens on race, language, identity, and power. As a Black woman and a Black language speaker, I am particularly interested in the multilayered and intersectional relationships between Black language, race, identity, and power in various social contexts with young children in bilingual settings. In my scholarship, I primarily utilize critical race theory and raciolinguistics as entry points into critical dialogue about equity concerns in bilingual education.

**Why/how did you pursue a Ph.D.?**

Pursuing a Ph.D. was never in the plans until I was a little over halfway through my Master's program at North Carolina State University. For my Master's, I completed a thesis where I explored a topic that deeply resonated with me, African American teacher burnout. My main sources of data were interviews, and it was through hearing my participants' stories about their experiences with racism and microaggressions in the workplace that I knew I wanted to pursue a Ph.D. This is also where I started to take a deeper look at critical race theory. I loved digging into the literature, talking with my participants, analyzing data, and even writing it up—I loved conducting research! From there, I had a conversation with my advisor at the time, Dr. Jessica DeCuir-Gunby, who wholeheartedly supported my plans to get a Ph.D. She mentored me throughout the application process, encouraged me to apply to several Ph.D programs, and put me in contact with scholars at various institutions. After an extended campus visit at the University of Illinois through a program for scholars of Color called Community of Scholars, I knew for sure that this is what I wanted to do for my career. I haven't looked back since, and without Dr. D-G's support and guidance, I know I wouldn't be where I am today.

**Why/how did you decide to focus on the literacy practices of African American Language speakers in your dissertation? How did you decide on method, design, and participants?**

From very early on in the program, it was a given that I would always focus on the language and literacy practices of Black Language/African American Language speakers in my dissertation. As a Black language speaker who had a lot of Black teachers who encouraged and used Black language in the classroom, Black language has always connected me to my family, my community, and my identity as a Black woman. It wasn't until I did a few observations in a dual-language bilingual education classroom where Black children were using their language repertoires in complex ways while resisting languaging norms of the program that I knew I wanted to further explore this topic in bilingual contexts.

Prior to collecting data for the dissertation, I completed a pilot study where my advisor and committee members made suggestions for methods and design. Collaboratively, we decided that ethnographic methods worked best for this study due to the need for examining structural factors related to race, language, and power that further needed to be unpacked. It was through this process that I learned a great deal about my participants and the situated contexts they were in, the community, the school, their families, etc.

**What was rewarding about your dissertation and the process of writing it?**

There were a lot of rewarding things about writing my dissertation. I am one of those quirky people who couldn't wait to get started with the write up because the topic was (and still is!) so personal for me. Some of my favorite memories would be trekking through the snow-filled roads in Illinois to get to my favorite coffee shop. I would always order a coffee, put on my headphones, and would stay there until it was dark out just writing and reading. I loved the serenity of just sitting with my work and trying to make sense of it.

Another part that was really rewarding is when I would have a breakthrough with data analysis. In my apartment, I had several pieces of chart paper on my walls with chunks of many transcripts and analytic memos. As a result of working with several theoretical frameworks, sometimes it was a challenging task to construct assertions from an interdisciplinary lens. However, once I wrapped my mind around the complexity of it all, it was an honor to be able to share the 'straight brilliance' of Black children's ways of knowing and being in bilingual programs with their teachers and the field.

**What would you say were the biggest challenges you encountered while working on your dissertation? Could you tell us a little bit about how you built resilience throughout the process (e.g., support system, self-care practices)?**

The biggest challenge that I encountered while writing my dissertation was deciding how to disseminate the data into various findings chapters. I remember at some point being so overwhelmed because my project could have gone in various directions as a result of the enormous amount of data collected. It was very overwhelming at times, and there were many moments where I just wanted to pack up my bags and go back home to North Carolina. However, every time I would call my mama with that idea, she would tell me to quit that foolishness and that moving back home with her was not an option...so I had to finish (thanks mama!). Throughout this time, I was enrolled in an advanced qualitative methods course with Dr. Anne Dyson, and a big part of that class was sharing our work. It didn't matter if your draft was halfway done or if you wanted to think through a theoretical framework or if you needed help with analyzing a vignette, you had to present something. It was in that class where I shared the struggles of deciding on which pieces of data to include in each chapter, and a classmate said to me, "Brittany, what story do you want to tell? What excites you the most about your project?" I remember taking a deep breath and saying to the class, "I want to share stories about the children." And boom...the chapter about the biliteracy practices of African American Language speakers was born. Once I started writing that one, the rest just flowed on to the pages.

I built resilience through the support system of that same group, my family, and group fitness. In the methods group, we trusted each other with our work. So we would show up every week, completely vulnerable, and would provide helpful feedback to one another. This group was also the place where my confidence as a scholar was nurtured. I noticed that each time I presented, my anxiety decreased and my ability to accept critical feedback increased. I think what was most important to me is that I knew that everyone in our group wanted to see the next person succeed. It was truly a magical and uplifting space. As for my family, I relied on my mama and my granny a lot. I would call them and share pieces of my project and ask them if it made sense. Most of the time when they said no, I knew it was time to go back to the drawing board and strengthen my argument. Other times, I would call my mama when I had a bad day and asked her to tell me a funny story. Those moments are ones that I look back on and cherish the most. In addition, I also made sure to never skip a workout if I could help it. I always took classes at 6am so once I got my workout in, it provided me with a nice start to the day.

**What has been the impact of your dissertation project on you as a scholar (e.g., your views, commitments, priorities), the participants in your study, and/or the research contexts that you navigated?**

My work has always been and always will be for my community, the Black community. Pursuing this work is very personal for me and went much deeper than the culminating milestone of getting a Ph.D. I once heard a senior scholar say, "Justice is personal. It's a praxis that is full of liberatory action, truth tellin', 'living love,' and reflective of the totality of personhood." For me, that is exactly what the impact of my work is for myself, my community, the participants, and the research contexts that I navigated throughout this process. Historically speaking, institutions have always had something negative to say about the way Black folks spoke and I noticed how Black children were being overlooked in bilingual education programs. From my perspective, that was adding to the chorus of the dominant narrative about Black language, so I made it my business to disrupt that narrative with my scholarship.

**How did you hear about the AAAL dissertation award? What was that process of applying like?**

My advisor, Luz Murillo, told me about the AAAL Dissertation Award during my last year of my doctoral program. She told me that we never know what will happen but encouraged me to apply regardless because she thought that my dissertation would be a strong contender. At the end of my first year as an assistant professor, I decided to submit the application, as the process of applying was very straightforward. After a few months, I was invited to submit my full dissertation in August. I was very excited about being invited to the next round but was careful not to get my hopes up too much. Then December rolled around, and I got an email from Dr. Kendall King telling me that I was selected as the dissertation award winner. I remember just staring at the screen for a brief moment and then tears of joy came rushing down my face. After that, I screamed and ran a lap around the inside of the house because I was so hyped about it!

**Where are you headed now professionally? What research projects are you working on?**

Right now, I am an assistant professor of literacy and anti-racist education at the University of North Texas, where I primarily teach literacy and theoretical courses from critical perspectives in both the undergraduate and graduate programs. As far as research projects go, I'm currently working on a few different ones. I'm continuing to disseminate my Ph.D. research in multiple journal outlets that represent the interdisciplinary areas that I'm interested in, including journals with a focus in applied linguistics, literacy, bilingual education.

I'm also currently working on strengthening collaborations with various scholars for different projects in teacher education, literacy instruction, and bilingual education. One project that I'm particularly excited about is thinking more deeply about how we can be more intentional with preparing bilingual teachers to teach Black students who speak Black language. I'm hoping to extend this work into a book manuscript in the future!

**Do you have any advice that you would want to leave with grad students, Master's or Ph.D.?**

A very wise Black femtor once told me to surround yourself with a very good hype squad. For me, my supportive squad consists of graduate school friends, current colleagues, and colleagues at various universities who I previously met through networking at conferences. As Black women, we are often encouraged to reduce ourselves for the sake of others' comfort. Let me be the first to tell you that academia is a really challenging place to be, emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and at times physically, especially for Black women. It's full of a lot of rejections that people do not often share and invisible labor that can take a toll on you and the people you love. To combat this, I celebrate every single win with my squad...even when that don't feel like you are the beginning. For example, in academia we often wait until journal articles are accepted to announce and celebrate. I know this because I'm guilty of it, too. However, we have flipped this narrative of what institutions want us to believe about "achievement." We celebrate when we submit manuscripts, survive another meeting that could have been an email, or say no to a request that is not conducive to our personal and professional lives. We show up for ourselves and each other. Get you a hype squad that will do the same!

## Congratulations to the 2021 Design Competition Winners

Each year, the GSC calls on graduate students to share their artistic talent in the AAAL design competition. Winners have their designs featured on apparel and accessories sold on [Teespring](#). All proceeds are used to support graduate students and the [Fund for the Future of Applied Linguistics \(FFAL\)](#). The selected artists are also publicly recognized at the AAAL conference, and the GSC typically sponsors up to \$100 towards the registration fees for the annual conference if the selected artists plan to attend.

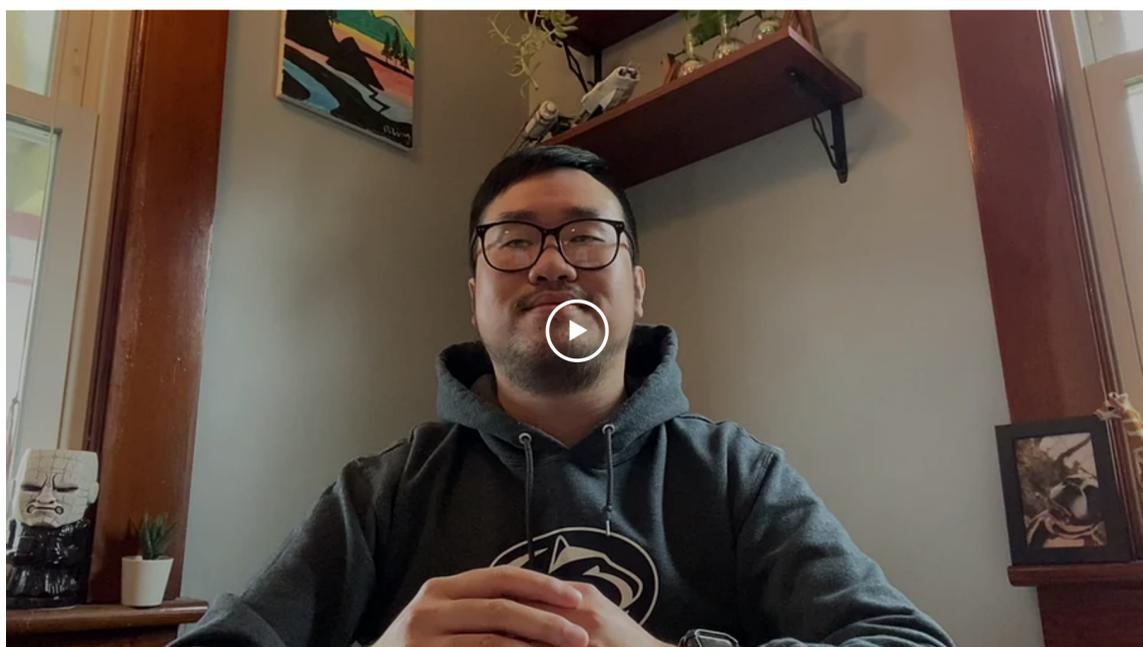
This year, our winning designs were created by Di Liang (The Pennsylvania State University) and Lynn Zhang (University of Wisconsin Madison). Congratulations! Below you will find their bios and designs, as well as a video from each winner explaining their design.

Do you need a video transcript? Both videos are available on YouTube as well:

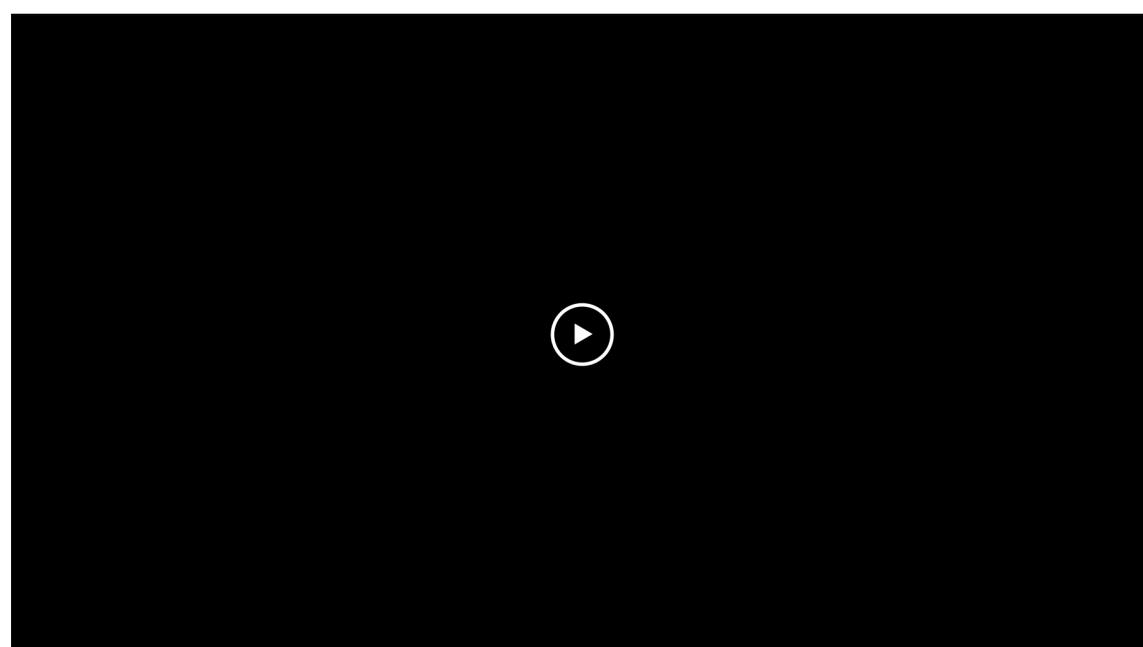
- [Di Liang's design \(YouTube\)](#)
- [Lynn Zhang's design \(YouTube\)](#)



**Di Liang** is a Ph.D. candidate in Second Language Education at the Pennsylvania State University. He holds an M.Ed. in Foreign Language Education from the University of Pittsburgh. He currently teaches a language teaching method course and supervises World Languages student teachers. Prior to Penn State, he taught undergraduate-level Chinese language classes at the University of Pittsburgh. His research interests include second language acquisition and instruction and language teacher education.



**Difei (Lynn) Zhang** is a Ph.D. Candidate in English Language and Linguistics at University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her dissertation topic is using corpus-based approach to analyze the digital transformation of news writing, specifically focusing on the change of certain syntactic features. Her research interests include but not limited to: applied English syntax, register analysis of digital news, and corpus-based syntactic analysis of English written texts.



## Congratulations to the 2021 Graduate Student Award Winners

The Graduate Student Award is a merit-based award that supports the attendance of AAAL graduate student members at the annual conference. You can find the abstracts of their presentations below. Recordings of the talks are available on the [AAAL 2021 conference platform](#).

This year's winners are:

- Nathan Thomas, UCL IoE, University College London, Wilga Rivers Award
- Paul Meighan, McGill University, Multilingual Matters Award
- Ryo Maie, Michigan State University, ETS Award
- Jeremy A. Rud, University of California, Davis
- María Díez-Ortega, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa
- GoMee Park, The University of Iowa



### Nathan Thomas

Nathan Thomas is a Ph.D. candidate in Applied Linguistics and a postgraduate teaching assistant in TESOL at the UCL Institute of Education. He also works on several funded research projects within the institute and as a Course Tutor in Applied Linguistics for Language Teaching at the University of Oxford. His research interests are wide ranging but current projects mainly relate to language learning strategies, self/other-regulation, and English medium instruction. He has published on these and other topics in leading academic journals such as Applied Linguistics, Applied Linguistics Review, ELT Journal, Journal of Second Language Writing, Language Teaching, System, TESOL Journal, and TESOL Quarterly. He is also a regular reviewer for these and other top journals in the field as well as a frequent conference presenter, having given more than 50 presentations in 14 countries around the world. Before moving to the UK for his doctoral studies, Nathan completed an M.Sc. in Teaching English Language in University Settings, M.Ed. in International Teaching, M.A. in Applied Linguistics, B.A. in English, and various teaching certifications, all while working full time for 10+ years in China and Thailand. He considers this practical experience crucial for guiding his scholarly work.

#### *Revisiting the Revised Theoretical Framework: An Integrated View of Strategies, Strategic Processing, and Strategic Behavior*

Early discussions of language learning strategies materialized as practical treatises, giving birth to influential publications that were, nevertheless, criticized for their lack of theoretical rigor. Some researchers situated strategies in cognitive theoretical frameworks that were soon complemented by those taking sociocultural, and later, complexity theory perspectives. Yet, only Macaro's (2006) revised theoretical framework, which assumes an unabashedly cognitive position, has attempted to account for learner-internal processing components and attend to longstanding theoretical-conceptual issues. It has been nearly 15 years since his proposal, and despite being widely cited, few researchers have utilized Macaro's framework in their studies. It may be that his lack of engagement with the social turn in applied linguistics more broadly has dissuaded researchers from operationalizing his framework, despite its sound theoretical base. This presentation takes the view that both social and cognitive perspectives must be accounted for in any theory attempting to describe strategic behavior.

Taking what is a necessarily integrated perspective, this presentation will revisit existing theoretical frameworks such as Macaro's and attempt to align them with recent developments in theory and research. It will take the first steps in outlining the skeleton of a theoretical model that attempts to mitigate existing theoretical-conceptual issues by distinguishing between strategies, strategic processing, and strategic behavior as part of a framework that exploits the potential of distributed cognition, co-/shared-regulation, and mediated learning/decision-making. The presentation will conclude by progressing stepwise through each stage of the proposed model, exploring links between learner-internal and external factors, and harnessing shared/distributed cognition within the scope of what are traditionally viewed as individual cognitive processes. In viewing strategies as the result of distributed networks of knowledge and strategic behavior as the overt or covert operationalization of strategic processing, the framework illuminates previously unaccounted for processes and presents a host of new perspectives for future research.



### Paul Meighan

Paul J. Meighan (Miadhachàin)-Chiblow is a Gàidheal (Scottish Gael) from Glasgow, Scotland. He is a Ph.D. candidate in Educational Studies and SSHRC Bombardier scholar at the Department of Integrated Studies in Education (DISE), McGill University. He has a B.A. (Hons) in European Studies and Spanish (2002) and Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) in Modern Foreign Languages (2009) from King's College, London, England. He also has an M.A. in TESOL (2019) from Trinity Western University, Canada. Paul has an extensive background in translating and teaching languages (ESL/EFL/EAP, Italian, Spanish and French) internationally since 2001. Paul's research focuses on decolonizing language education and Indigenous language revitalization. His community-led, SSHRC-funded doctoral research will explore the connections between Indigenous language revitalization, Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and decolonizing technology. He is honoured to be named the recipient of the AAAL GSA Multilingual Matters award this year. For more about Paul and his research, visit his website at : [www.paulmeighan.com](http://www.paulmeighan.com) or his Twitter [@PaulJMeighan](https://twitter.com/PaulJMeighan).

#### *(Re)viewing Our Relationships With the World: Foundations for Decolonial and Equitable English Language Learning*

The mainstream English as a Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) classroom can silence a rich tapestry of voices and identities through an imposition, either forced or covert, of a monolingual and monocultural learning environment. The dominant use of the English language carries a colonial legacy and a eurocentric, human-centred worldview characterized by: (1) linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992) and cognitive imperialism (e.g., Battiste, 2013), (2) the view that humans are superior to nature (e.g., "human exceptionalism" [Haraway, 2008]), and (3) white (epistemological) supremacy (Gerald, 2020; Minde, 2003). The negative impacts of this imperialistic worldview can already be seen and felt in the human-caused climate and humanitarian crises. This paper contends that a more equitable and sustainable way to use language would be to question the dominant human-centered worldview that informs ecologically and culturally destructive assumptions (Pennycook & Makoni, 2020; Stibbe, 2018; wa Th'iongo, 1983). This paper will conceptualize ways in which the "past", "present" and "future" aspects of a learner can be more fully validated and embraced in order to foster a more decolonial, respectful and relational worldview in the ESL/EFL classroom. Heritage languages and cultures (the "past" of the learner) possess a wealth of knowledges and ways of knowing and being which should be incorporated and acknowledged in our "present"-day classroom for a more equitable, culturally- and environmentally-responsive "future" (Meighan, 2019, 2020). By way of example, the "World (re)viewer" log is introduced to exemplify how heritage language pedagogy could be implemented in our classrooms in a way that (1) addresses the cognitive and linguistic imperialism of the colonial monolingual English classroom, (2) validates heritage, non-dominant knowledge systems and languages (such as those which are Indigenous), (3) fosters discussions and orientations for a more environmentally- and culturally-responsive sustainable future, and (4) promotes positive identity formation for all multilingual and multicultural learners.



### Ryo Maie

Ryo Maie is a third-year doctoral student in the Second Language Studies program at Michigan State University. He received his M.A. in Second Language Acquisition from University of Maryland, College Park. His research interests include cognitive psychology of second language acquisition, usage-based and cognitive linguistics approaches to language development, task-based language teaching, and applied statistics in L2 research. Ryo is currently working on his dissertation study on testing and validating skill acquisition stages in L2 learning under supervision of Dr. Aline Godfroid.

#### *Arbitrary Choices, Arbitrary Results: A Multiverse Analysis of L2 Reaction Time Data*

Quantitative analysis begins with researchers processing raw data into a form (i.e., dataset) ready for statistical analysis. This data processing, however, typically involves making decisions among equally reasonable options of how to remove, transform, and code data. For instance, should one remove data points lying outside the area 2SD 2.5SD, or 3SD away from the mean? This openness creates room for researcher degree of freedom (i.e., inherent flexibility in designing and conducting a study and in preparing and analyzing data), and when exploited, leads to questionable research practices including p-hacking. Inspired by Steegen, Tuerlinckx, Gelman, and Vanpaemel (2016), this presentation recommends a multiverse analysis to circumvent this problem and provides a demonstration using existing L2 reaction time data. In multiverse analysis, one performs the same analysis across a whole set of datasets, that is, a multiverse of datasets. This idea is important because the arbitrariness in reaching a particular dataset is inevitably inherited by its statistical result, and hence, the data multiverse implies a multiverse of statistical results. Here, I reviewed previous studies that used a word-monitoring task as an implicit knowledge measure and extracted all previous options of how to process raw data. This procedure created 108 datasets. I fitted generalized linear mixed models to each dataset to see how results change across them. Results showed that 64 (59.25%) produced regression coefficients (of interest) that were statistically significant, with a mean p-value of 0.048 (SD = 0.027). An inspection of the p-values revealed that they could not only be well below 0.05 but also be as high as .129, with their 95% confidence interval [.044, .052]. The presentation shows that different choices made by analysts can sometimes lead to conflicting conclusions and recommends that one conduct a multiverse analysis and take an average over a multiverse of statistical results.



### Jeremy A. Rud

Jeremy A. Rud is a Ph.D. student in Linguistics at UC Davis. His research broadly focuses on language in contexts of migration and asylum and addresses issues of asylum seeker credibility at intersections of public policy, narrative performance and entextualization, and speech perception. In his work he uncovers and challenges taken-for-granted notions of language held by institutions that act as gatekeepers to asylum seekers. Some of his studies have included a critique of a nonprofit's narrative portrayals of former refugees, published in Narrative Inquiry, a caution against states' uses of algorithms to evaluate asylum applications, a micro analysis of listeners' politicized judgements of credible fear in asylum seekers' narrative performances, and a review of language integration policies for immigrants and refugees, forthcoming in the Handbook of Educational Linguistics (2nd ed.). His university profile can be found at <https://linguistics.ucdavis.edu/people/jarud>

#### *Can AI Determine Credible Fear? Challenging the State's Use of Text Analytics in Asylum Adjudications*

In line with the long history of scholarship on language in contexts of migration and asylum (Canagarajah, 2017), in this study I bridge European and North American discussions of language analysis in asylum policy (Patrick, Schmid, & Zwaan, 2019) and artificial intelligence (AI) in migration management (Beduschi, 2020) by examining the use of "text analytics to look for boilerplate language" to detect "fraud" in asylum applications. This practice, a planned function of the United States Asylum Vetting Center currently in development by US Citizenship and Immigration Services, is just one example of the increasing use of AI at borders around the world. In order to preemptively unpack this black-box process, I apply both narrative critical discourse analysis and lexicon-based sentiment analysis, a method of text analytics that numerous scholars across Europe applied to media data in response to the 2015 "refugee crisis" (Nerghees & Lee, 2019, inter alia), to a corpus of 20 former refugee narratives in order to compare human and algorithmic readings of these high-stakes linguistic performances. Specifically, I examine how credible fear in an entextualized asylum seeker narrative could be (mis)determined by AI and conclude that the nature of the training data, the composition of the sentiment dictionary used, the accuracy of sentiment scores, and the ideologies of the practitioners all raise serious concerns for the use of sentiment analysis for automatic decision-making in asylum proceedings. Overall, I argue for greater international coordination of applied and theoretical linguistic scholarship that takes an active, rather than reactionary, stance against the unchecked entrenchment of AI in asylum policy and I advance the line of inquiry of the politics of listenership that extends the borders of linguistic anthropological analyses of asylum to concerns of aural, listening, and artificial intelligence.



### María Díez-Ortega

María Díez-Ortega is a Ph.D. candidate in Applied Linguistics at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Her research interests include task-based language teaching, computer-assisted language learning, corpus research, and L2 teacher education. María holds an M.A. in Spanish from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, and Advanced Graduate Degree in Spanish Linguistics also from UH, and degrees in TESOL and Early Childhood Education from Universidad Complutense in Madrid. She has over 10 years of teaching experience; she has taught courses in L2 pedagogy, second language acquisition; English for academic purposes, and Spanish and English as foreign languages. María is currently a graduate assistant at the Language Flagship Technology Innovation Center.

#### *Peer-Interaction of Beginner L2 Learners During Collaborative Gaming*

Research in peer-interaction has been shown to promote L2 development from interactionist (Long, 1996) and sociocultural perspectives (Lantolf, 2000). Interactionist approaches suggest that this type of dialogue provide opportunities for negotiation for meaning, noticing, corrective feedback, and processes facilitative of L2 learning (Gass & Mackey, 2015). There is a growing body of research on how technology impact peer-interaction, but few studies have investigated L2 beginner learners. Little is known about whether face-to-face findings transfer to technology-mediated tasks, or how task features affect interaction (Plonsky & Ziegler, 2016). Digital games fit the definition of technology-mediated task (González-Lloret & Ortega, 2014), but research on gaming from an interactionist TBLT framework is scarce, with few longitudinal studies. The study addresses these gaps by investigating collaborative gaming of L2 Spanish beginner learners at a university program (9 classes, n=156). There were two experimental conditions: 1) learners played the game individually (n=53); 2) learners played in dyads sharing one computer (n=49), and a control group (n=54). The experimental conditions engaged on five gaming sessions of an educational task-based digital game, Practice Spanish: Study Abroad. All learners completed a pre/post vocabulary and grammar test, and a pre/post survey on willingness to communicate. Dyads' interaction while gaming was audio and screen recorded, further analyzed quantitatively by measuring type and resolution of Learner Related Episodes (LREs, Swain & Lapkin, 2001), and in-game triggers. Lastly, LREs were analyzed longitudinally by tracking subsequent use and learning of LRE-implicated forms. Qualitative data of students' perceptions in the experimental conditions were collected. Preliminary results indicate the dyads outperformed the other groups and displayed a more positive attitude towards the game. LRE analyses of two dyads showed a large number of lexical triggers, inter-dyad variation, and the degree to which task features (e.g., game question, quest difficulty, corrective feedback) impacted interaction. Pedagogical and game design implications are briefly discussed.



### GoMee Park

I am a doctoral candidate in Foreign Language and English as a second language (ESL) Education Program at the University of Iowa. Through the firsthand experience as an ESL student in California, I became drawn to English language education, which became my lifetime career path. Returning to South Korea, I received B.A. in English Language and Literature and M.A. in Applied Linguistics while teaching English to various student groups. With my own experience as an ESL student and ten years of experience as an English teacher, I have helped develop and operate professional development workshops for educators in local school districts to support English learners during my 5 years of graduate study. I will obtain my Ph.D. and another B.A. in Teaching Korean as a Foreign Language in July 2021. My research interests include ESL/EFL teacher education, educators' agentive role in school settings, language policy, assessment literacy, and language assessment.

#### *Testing and Language Policy: The Social Impact of State-mandated Assessments on a Dual Language Program*

This study investigates how educators at a dual language elementary school perceive, interpret, and use state-mandated tests to make instructional decisions, particularly in terms of language policy. Educators are powerful language policy agents whose interpretation of educational language policy makes differences in actual implementation of the policy at the school and district levels (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007; Palmer & Lynch, 2008, Paciutto & Delany-Barmann, 2011). Despite their importance, there have been few studies on language policy practices, especially in rural school districts that have experienced an influx of Latino students. By conducting an ethnographic study of language policy, I paid attention to the impact of state-mandated assessments on emergent bilingual (EB) students and their teachers. To investigate how educators' interpretation of assessments informs their instructional decisions, I conducted semi-constructed interviews with educators, and audio and video recordings of classroom instruction of three bilingual classroom teachers were collected along with fieldnotes and meeting notes for three months. Qualitative data analysis (Saldana, 2014) and critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2015) were utilized for analysis. Preliminary findings reveal that the state-mandated standardized test puts much pressure on all educators as it was used as a report card for the educators while the teachers—the end-user of the tests—had limited (and sometimes wrong) information about the test and test results. Also, although it was a dual language program, often it was Spanish strand teachers who had the responsibility to "bridge" two languages for students, although time allotted for Spanish literacy was much shorter than its counterpart. While the administrators at school and district levels open up an "ideological and implementational space" (Hornberger, 2002; Hornberger & Johnson, 2007) for EBs by operating a dual language program, space seems to be narrowed due to the impact of state-mandated testing.

# Crowdsourced Resources and Funding Opportunities Related to “Ambiguity, Uncertainty, and Resilience”

In our [summer 2020 needs analysis survey](#), many graduate students indicated wanting the GSC to provide resources relevant to their graduate careers. In response to this request, each newsletter issue features resources, incl. grants and funding opportunities, related to the theme of the current theme. We also include relevant grants, fellowships, and scholarships for which this cycle's deadline has passed so readers can keep them on their radars, should they wish to apply in the next round.

## News Articles

- [Internationalization of Higher Education](#) (The Chronicle of Higher Education)
- [How the Pandemic Has Highlighted the Struggles of Community Colleges](#) (The Chronicle of Higher Education)
- [Who's Responsible for a Ph.D. Student's Success?](#) (The Chronicle of Higher Education)
- [How to Manage Through Emotional Exhaustion](#) (The Chronicle of Higher Education)
- [Could Fall Bring Some Return to Normalcy? These Colleges Say Yes](#) (The Chronicle of Higher Education)
- [Scientists Want Virtual Meetings to Stay after the COVID Pandemic](#) (Nature)
- [The Impact of COVID-19 on Linguists and Their Mental Health](#) (OpenLearn)

## Academic Publications, Special Issues, Webinars, and BIPOC Mental Health

- [Linguistic Diversity in a Time of Crisis: Language Challenges of the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) (article in *Multilingua* by Ingrid Piller, Jie Zhang, & Jia Li)
- The ["Reports" section of the Second Language Research and Practice journal \(vol. 1, issue 1\)](#) features various recounts of ambiguity, uncertainty, and resilience by applied linguistics professionals and administrators
- [Call for Papers, Special Issue "Post-Pandemic Technology Enhanced Language Learning"](#) (Education Sciences)
- [MLA Webinar on Post-Pandemic Graduate Education](#) (Modern Language Association)
- ["Linguists at Work Speaker Series" on industry jobs in linguistics outside of academia](#) (Department of Linguistics, University of Colorado Boulder)
- [Mental Health Issues Facing the Black Community](#) (Sunshine Behavioral Health)

## Funding Opportunities, Grants, and Fellowships

- [Call for Dissertation Grant Proposals \(AERA\)](#): "Dissertation Grants are available for advanced doctoral students and are intended to support the student while analyzing data and writing the doctoral dissertation. Proposals are encouraged from the full range of education research fields and other fields and disciplines engaged in education-related research, including economics, political science, psychology, sociology, demography, statistics, public policy, and psychometrics. Applicants for this one-year, non-renewable award should be advanced doctoral students at the dissertation writing stage, usually the last year of study. Applicants may be U.S. citizens or U.S. permanent residents enrolled in a doctoral program. Non-U.S. citizens enrolled in a doctoral program at an U.S. institution are also eligible to apply. Underrepresented racial and ethnic minority researchers as well as women, individuals with disabilities, and veterans are strongly encouraged to apply."
- [The Laura Bassi Scholarship for Editorial Assistance \(Editing Press\)](#): "The Laura Bassi Scholarship aims to provide editorial assistance to postgraduates and junior academics whose research focuses on neglected topics of study, broadly construed, within their disciplines. The scholarships are open to every discipline and are awarded three times per year."
- [Mellon Fellowship Program for Humanities and Humanistic Social Sciences \(Columbia Global Centers\)](#): "The goal of the program is to create opportunities for scholars to reintegrate into academia and resume their academic pursuits. Fields may include literature, linguistics, philosophy, archaeology, cultural heritage and historical preservation, museum studies, religious studies, musicology, history, and criticism and theory of the arts. Scholars working on interdisciplinary projects in the fields of social sciences that have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods—such as anthropology, sociology, gender and ethnic studies are also welcome. Eligible candidates are scholars in the humanities and humanistic social sciences who have been forcibly uprooted from their home countries and respective academic institutions. They could be graduate students who have had their education disrupted or post-doctoral scholars in the early stages of their careers. Creative writers, artists, and curators may also apply."
- [Language Legacies Grants \(The Endangered Language Fund\) \(deadline passed\)](#): "The Endangered Language Fund provides grants for language documentation and revitalization, and for linguistic fieldwork. The work most likely to be funded is that which serves both the native community and the field of linguistics."
- [Numerous fellowships and grants are available from the American Association of University Women \(deadline passed\)](#): "We seek a diverse pool of applicants who represent the full spectrum of ethnicities, religions, sexual orientations, gender expressions, socioeconomic backgrounds, disciplines and perspectives. For more than 130 years, AAUW has funded the educations of countless women so they could follow their dreams. From astronauts to zoologists, the recipients of AAUW's fellowships, grants and awards represent nearly every imaginable field of endeavor."

**We would like to thank Sally Ren and June Williams for contributing to this list.**

**Editorial note:** The information posted on this page includes resources, organizations, companies, products, and/or services that the AAAL GSC believes you might find of interest. The AAAL GSC provides these resources solely for informational purposes. The presence of resources, organizations, companies, products, and/or services does not imply endorsement. Despite careful vetting and review, we do not guarantee completeness or accuracy of the information, and site visitors should always consult the original source. When site visitors select a link to an outside website, they are leaving the GSC site and are subject to the privacy and security policies of the owners and sponsors of the outside website. All liability for improper reproduction of copyrighted material lies with the individual who submitted the resource.



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## Follow-Up to Our January GSC Webinar

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to significant changes and disruptions in higher education, which is particularly pertinent to human subjects research. As a result of physical and other constraints, many graduate students have had to rethink their approach to research design. To address this issue and support our fellow graduate students, the Event Planning Subcommittee organized a webinar on the topic of remote research with Dr. Camilla Vasquez, University of South Florida, which Rong Ren is summarizing here.



### Camilla Vasquez

Camilla Vásquez is Professor of Applied Linguistics at the University of South Florida, where she directs the Ph.D. program in Linguistics and Applied Language Studies (LALS). In her research, Camilla applies discourse analytic, sociolinguistic and pragmatics-based approaches to explore naturally-occurring language in a wide range of (mostly digital) contexts. She has been studying the language of online reviews for over a decade, and published a monograph on this topic (*The Discourse of Online Consumer Reviews*, Bloomsbury, 2014) as well as numerous articles in journals across multiple disciplines (*Journal of Pragmatics*, *Intercultural Pragmatics*, *Narrative Inquiry*, *Current Issues in Tourism*, *Food & Foodways*, *Visual Communication*). In her latest book, Camilla examines linguistic humor and creativity in several online genres (*Language, Creativity and Humour Online*, Routledge, 2019). She is currently editing a book designed for graduate students, which focuses on research methods for digital discourse analysis. Camilla serves as Associate Editor for *Discourse, Context & Media*.

On January 15th, 2021, the AAAL GSC Event Planning Subcommittee hosted its second webinar titled “Meet a Scholar,” featuring Dr. Camilla Vasquez, who is a professor of applied linguistics at the University of South Florida. This webinar focused on students’ concerns about research design during the pandemic and discussed the possible ways for applied linguists to conduct research during adverse times like this.

Dr. Vasquez started her talk with a brief self-introduction, where she traced and reflected on her trajectory of studying digital discourse. She first began researching online hotel reviews over a decade ago due to personal interest and has since published a monograph on this topic as well as numerous articles in journals across multiple disciplines. After the start of the pandemic, Dr. Vasquez shifted her focus to YouTube videos related to COVID-19 and online Airbnb reviews.

After introducing her research, Dr. Vasquez provided some practical tips for conducting digital research. She noted that YouTube provides useful tools for linguists, including rough transcripts of video data. Dr. Vasquez also recommended that participants read existing research, practice formulating research questions to guide online data collection, and collect working sample data that contains around 100 samples. She also touched upon how to deal with ethical issues in digital studies. At the end of her talk, Dr. Vasquez shared with attendees some recent digital discourse studies and her students’ interesting research topics. The readings mentioned by Dr. Vasquez are listed below.

Attendees were very interested in this topic and asked a lot of questions during the Q&A session. The questions covered aspects like popular data collection tools and platforms, the implications of studying online reviews, and analytical tools or frameworks commonly utilized in digital discourse studies. Dr. Vasquez kindly answered all the questions and brought more thought-provoking ideas into the conversation. For example, she mentioned that programming languages (e.g., Python) can help to scrap online data efficiently, or that we should utilize analytical frameworks appropriate for our research questions.

Suggested Readings provided by Dr. Camilla Vasquez:

1. **EMPIRICAL RESEARCH.** Some recent digital discourse studies to read for inspiration:

- Bou-Franch, P., & Blitvich, P. G. C. (2018). Relational work in multimodal networked interactions on Facebook. *Internet Pragmatics*, 1(1), 134-160. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ip.00007.bou>
- Bridges, J. (2017). Gendering metapragmatics in online discourse: “Mansplaining man gonna mansplain...” *Discourse, Context & Media*, 20, 94-102. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2017.09.010>
- Creelman, V. (2015). Sheer outrage: Negotiating customer dissatisfaction and interaction in the blogosphere. In E. Darics (Ed.), *Digital business discourse* (pp. 160-185). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dynel, M. (2021). COVID-19 memes going viral: On the multiple multimodal voices behind face masks. *Discourse & Society*, 32(2), 175-196. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0957926520970385>
- Paulus, R., & Roberts, K. (2018). Crowdfunding a “Real Life Superhero”: The construction of worthy bodies in medical campaign narratives. *Discourse, Context & Media*, 21, 64-72. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2017.09.008>
- Vessey, R. (2021). Nationalist language ideologies in tweets about the 2019 Canadian national election. *Discourse, Context & Media*, 39. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2020.100447>

2. **METHODOLOGY.** Currently, the go-to methodology text for digital discourse analysis is:

- Page, R., Barton, D., Unger, J., & Zappavigna, M. (2014). *Researching language and social media: A student guide*. Routledge.
- Vásquez, C. (Ed.) (forthcoming). *Research methods for digital discourse analysis*. Bloomsbury.

3. **ETHICS.** The [Association of Internet Research’s \(AOIR\) most recent set of ethical guidelines](#) provide important food for thought and all kinds of useful information.



Rong Ren is a Ph.D. candidate in Linguistics and Applied Linguistics from Arizona State University. She is a member of the 2021-2022 GSC Event Planning Subcommittee. Her research interests lie in English varieties in China, ESL learners’ self-perception, and speech production. She can be reached at [rren11@asu.edu](mailto:rren11@asu.edu).



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