

AAAL Grads

The AAAL Graduate Student Council Newsletter



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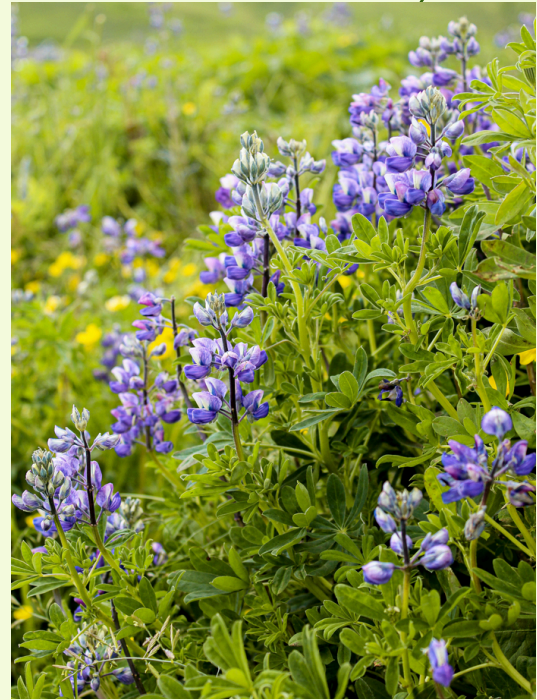
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New Blooms of Hope by Sarah Howard

As we linger in the uncertainty of changing tides, it is essential to seek out symbols of hope through each new season. Even in the darkest of times, a spring will emerge, bringing new blooms of advocacy and hope with them.



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LETTER FROM THE CO-EDITORS

Dear AAALGrads Readers,

Welcome to the Spring 2025 issue of AAALGrads! We are delighted to share some exemplary work within the field of Applied Linguistics from our fellow graduate students. Our newsletter consists of all categories in this edition – insightful research, reviews of relevant resources, trending topics, creatively critical reflections, and professional development suggestions. As co-editors, it's our privilege and honor to guide you through this edition by offering a glimpse into the diverse voices and narratives that shape our field from the graduate student perspective.

For our featured articles, we have an incredible range of relevant topics to share. To start this issue, we begin with a critical examination by Jerry Romero Jr. on “Queer Necropolitics in Education and the Politics of Erasure: The Silencing of Queer and Trans Scholars in the Era of Anti-LGBTQ Policies in Academia.” In this article, Jerry Romero Jr. calls to attention the systemic erasure of queer and trans voices in academia through his lived experience. We continue with a riveting piece by Esua et al. in their discussion on “Enhancing cultural schemata and L2 writing through virtual reality literary simulation.” The authors propose important strategies for implementing a virtual literary stimulation, such as ensuring the simulation is authentic and emphasizing active collaboration.

Transitioning to our resource reviews, Victor Adedayo walks us through A Practical Guidebook for Students in Applied Linguistics, Education, and TESOL by Kessler and Casal (2025). More specifically, the author overviews each chapter and provides key takeaways relevant to the graduate student experience. In our next resource review, Gaia Oikawa shares their take on Second Language Research: Methodology and Design by Mackey and Gass (2022). This review provides valuable information on how the book supports readers in developing a strong methodological understanding of research in Applied Linguistics.

For our highlighted trending topics article, Nilima Hakim Mow walks us through her article “Excluded at the Table: Halal Food Accessibility Challenges for Muslim PhD Students at Academic Conferences.” In this discussion, the author provides us with a timely reminder based on her personal experience of the importance of creating conferences where every attendee, regardless of their dietary needs or cultural background, feels that they have a seat at the table.

Jumping to our creative corner submissions, we have two wonderful poetry entries for you to enjoy. Mark Sullivan first presents us with four short pieces – “A Queen Stationary,” “Grimalkin Has Made an Offer,” “Brady in Triumph,” and “The Lily, the Holly, and the Rose.” The author uses a variety of stylistic maneuvers to share creative thought. Yanyan Li then brings us to “Conversations and Connections Through Poetry,” showing us how to use poetry as a lens for reflecting on everyday conversations and as a bridge between Applied Linguistics research and lived experience.

Finally, our newsletter rounds off with professional development insight from Samah Dulli on “Navigating the Ph.D. Journey.” The author walks us through insights from her journey as an International Ph.D. Student and provides recommendations for graduate students to succeed and make the most of the program.

As we flip through the pages of this issue, we're yet again reminded of critical thought and perspectives in Applied Linguistics, which is especially important given the current political climate here in the United States. Our participation as graduate students is not siloed to research or coursework, but also introspection on the nature of the field and how we can all strive for a more equitable professional environment. We hope these articles resonate with your experiences and provide valuable insights for your journey within the graduate context.

To conclude, we'd like to express our gratitude to the authors, reviewers, and the AAAL GSC for their dedication and hard work in making this issue possible. As co-editors, we're excited to continue bringing you engaging content that reflects the dynamic and ever-evolving field of Applied Linguistics. We look forward to hearing your feedback, suggestions, and, of course, your contributions for future issues.

Happy reading!

Warm regards,
Ifeoluwa Awopetu, Sarah Howard, Rickey Larkin, Harriet Olulo, and Minghui Sun
Co-Editors, AAALGrads

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Queer Necropolitics in Education and the Politics of Erasure

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Introduction

The recent surge of anti-LGBTQ+ laws and educational restrictions in places like my home state, Texas, has intensified the systemic erasure of queer and trans voices in academia. As a genderqueer researcher, I do not simply witness these policies from a distance—I live them. Indeed, the bans on discussing LGBTQ+ topics in schools, the legislative assaults on trans rights, and the censorship of books and curricula are not abstract political issues; they are direct attacks on my existence, my scholarship, and my community. Consequently, these policies operate as mechanisms of control, reinforcing what Achille Mbembe (2003) terms "necropolitics," the governance of life and death, and more specifically, how societal structures establish and enforce conditions of death upon populations that are determined unworthy of life. Furthermore, within academia, necropolitics manifests in the suppression, dehumanization, and exclusion of queer and trans scholars, effectively policing whose knowledge is deemed legitimate, whose voices are silenced, and how our identities and scholarship face both symbolic and physical death within the academy.

As the political climate grows increasingly hostile, the effects are not just theoretical—they are deeply personal. Queer and trans scholars are being pushed to the margins, forced to navigate a landscape where their work, their identities, and even their safety are constantly under threat (Spade, 2011). Furthermore, these challenges reflect broader systemic mechanisms of administrative violence that disproportionately impact BIPOC, LGBTQ+, disability scholars, reinforcing institutional precarity (Spade, 2011).

The Weaponization of Language in Erasure

Language is one of the most powerful tools used to erase queer and trans identities. Every time LGBTQ+ narratives are stripped from curricula, every time a trans identity is misrepresented, pathologized, and vilified in public discourse, and every time discussions on gender and sexuality are banned from classrooms, the message is clear: our voices are dangerous, our knowledge is unwelcome, and our existence is expendable—rendering trans and queer scholars not only invisible but disposable (Halberstam, 2011). Indeed, these are not just instances of censorship—they are forms of epistemic violence, strategically employed to render queer and trans people invisible and illegitimate (Puar, 2017). Moreover, today's political rhetoric, although not new to our community, continues to frame trans and queer identities as threats in a deliberate strategy of linguistic violence that fosters both social exclusion and institutional erasure (Borba, 2019).

Furthermore, as a queer scholar of applied linguistics, LGBTQ+ studies, and education, I have seen how linguistic erasure manifests in our fields, and I fear that the worst of this erasure is still around the corner. With growing threats issued through political action, I anticipate that graduate students researching queer and trans scholarship will face institutional barriers: denied funding, met with skepticism, and struggling to find mentors who will support their work. In contrast, we are often told that our research is "too political" while others freely study topics that reinforce normative ideologies. The implication is that our perspectives are not worthy of scholarly inquiry—that our existence itself is somehow a disruption. The ways in which language constructs and reinforces normative sexual and gender identities further marginalize trans and queer individuals, positioning them outside of what is considered valid discourse (Cameron & Kulick, 2003).

The Psychological Toll on Graduate Scholars

Significantly, the consequences of these policies extend far beyond academia and into our daily lives. In particular, the constant need to self-censor—to question whether speaking about our identities or our research will make us targets—takes an immeasurable mental and emotional toll. Many of us carry the weight of our work with a profound sense of urgency, knowing that our ability to speak and exist in these spaces is not always guaranteed.

Moreover, the psychological burden of navigating institutions that are complicit in our erasure is compounded by the threat of real-world violence. In fact, for many trans and queer scholars, our visibility is a double-edged sword. The same systems that push us to silence ourselves also subject us to relentless scrutiny and attacks when we refuse to disappear (Butler, 2009). Ultimately, the lack of institutional protections leaves us questioning whether academia is a place where we can strive, let alone survive.

Resistance and the Power of Critical Hope

Despite these challenges, resistance is not just possible—it is necessary. In particular, critical hope, as Paulo Freire describes, is not naive optimism but a radical refusal to accept systemic violence as an immutable reality. It is the belief that even in the face of overwhelming adversity, change can be forged through collective action (Freire, 1970).

For example, I have seen resistance take many forms: graduate students organizing against discriminatory policies, faculty members advocating for inclusive curriculum, and scholars finding ways to challenge institutional constraints while continuing to produce groundbreaking research on gender and sexuality. These acts of defiance may seem small in isolation, but together, they constitute a movement—one that asserts our legitimacy, our worth, and our right to exist in academia.

Similarly, in applied linguistics and education, resistance must also take shape through methodological and theoretical innovation. We must continue to use radical forms of theory and analysis to uplift queer and trans voices, adopt intersectional frameworks that challenge dominant paradigms, and create spaces for knowledge production that do not rely on institutional validation. Ultimately, by embedding resistance into our scholarship, we not only challenge systems of oppression—we build new worlds where our voices are indispensable.

A Call to Action for the AAALGrads Community

Firstly, our AAALGrads community is in a unique position to challenge the necropolitical structures that erase queer and trans scholars. Specifically, academic institutions must take a firm stance against anti-LGBTQ+ policies and actively work to protect students and faculty from discrimination and erasure. Additionally, we must establish mentorship programs and academic opportunities that provide queer and trans graduate students with community and affirmation. Conferences, journals, and academic spaces should acknowledge and amplify our research to address gender and sexual diversity while actively engaging in public scholarship that combats the spread of anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric.

Furthermore, scholars must use accessible language to mobilize against anti-LGBTQ+ legislation, pushing universities to take meaningful action rather than performative gestures of inclusivity. Holding institutions accountable requires sustained pressure, ensuring that they do not quietly comply with political silencing tactics. Ultimately, by fostering networks of support, advocating for policy change, and integrating intersectional and inclusive approaches into our research and pedagogy, we can resist erasure and work towards a more just academic future.

Conclusion: Will Academia Stand With Us or Against Us?

In summary, the landscape of higher education is at a crossroads. As political attacks on trans and queer individuals intensify, academic institutions must decide where they stand. Alternatively, will they actively fight alongside those of us facing erasure, or will they capitulate to political pressure and protect their economic interests by eliminating LGBTQ+ representation?

Undoubtedly, for trans and queer professors and researchers, the fear of erasure is not hypothetical—it is an ever-present reality. Our institutions have a choice: to resist alongside us or to remain complicit in our silencing. If academia is truly committed to intellectual inquiry and liberation, it cannot selectively decide which lives and voices are worthy of recognition. Clearly, the time for action is now, and therefore, the question remains: Will our institutions rise to the occasion, or will they perpetuate the ongoing harm against our community?

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Enhancing Cultural Schemata and L2 Writing through Virtual Reality Literary Simulation

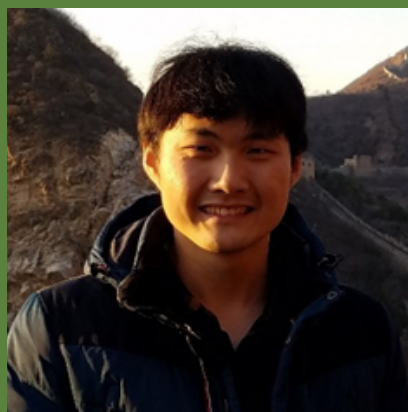
Kaiso Esua, Sheyuan Wang, and Victor Adedayo
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The integration of literature as a tool in enhancing L2 writing has been a topic of debate for several decades. Historically, discussions have centered on two broad camps: one advocating for exposure to culture through literary text and the other arguing that emphasis should be placed on mastery of communication rather than cultures. Shanahan (1997) argued that literature was too difficult to teach, suggesting that students should focus more on improving their practical writing skills. This implies that the inherent difficulty of integrating literature reduces any potential value added. However, recent studies have suggested that careful adaptation of literature can foster deep cognitive engagement and enhance writing skills in L2 learners (Hassan, 2022; Hadiyanto, 2019; Leal, 2015; Pardede, 2011).

Initially, literature's cultural and cognitive complexity may seem overwhelming; however, Gajdusek (1988) noted that literature can activate a student's cultural schema, allowing them to scaffold their linguistic limitations while supporting their ability to organize ideas and express themselves. Yet, the diversity of literature makes it difficult to appeal to any individual student's cultural schema.



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Victor Adedayo is a doctoral student in applied linguistics. His research explores how language is used to reinforce or challenge racial inequities. Specifically, he utilizes corpus-based critical discourse approach to investigate racial discourse in media, higher education, and technology.



To complicate matters, today's L2 classrooms are highly heterogeneous, composed of international students, EFL students, resident immigrants, and generation 1.5 learners, each with varying levels of reading and writing proficiency, linguistic competence, and identification with their primary culture (Ferris, et al., 2023). From this diversity arises the potential "mismatch between what the writer anticipates the reader can do to extract meaning from the text and what the reader is actually able to do" (Carrell, et al., 1983, p. 560). Without the necessary cultural or contextual knowledge to interpret a piece of literature, a student's understanding of both the text and related writing tasks can be hindered. While Carrel posits that schema-building strategies such as previewing the text could prepare students, such a method takes valuable time away from both reading and writing.

To deal with this issue, recent studies have shown that literature can be successfully integrated into an L2 curriculum with minimal difficulty if the material is simple enough. Leal (2015) showed that using children's literature, like different versions of Little Red Riding Hood, with adults in L2 classrooms can help develop critical thinking skills, improve engagement, and positively affect a student's linguistic, cognitive, and socio-emotional skills. Hadiyanto (2019) proposes that Extensive Reading, whereby students read books according to their own interests and linguistic ability, increases student engagement and enhances both vocabulary and writing quality. However, even in both studies, some literature remains inaccessible because of cultural or linguistic differences, and the only reason this literature is acceptable is because of their simplicity and/or cultural connections with the reader.

Beyond traditional methods, technological advancements offer promising solutions to cultural and linguistic challenges. According to Galligher (2006), the fictionality present in literature can create vicarious experiences that enhance cultural understanding. Immersive technologies like Virtual Reality (VR) can serve a similar role, allowing users to, "believe they are instantaneously in another realm" (Feng & Ng, 2023, p.1). Within these multimodal realms, L2 learners can explore firsthand the schemas necessary to process literature and consequently translate this into written responses.

Virtual reality (VR) offers multimodal affordances for learners through sensory engagement. This is important because engagement reflects learners' psychological commitment to stay engaged in the learning process, acquire knowledge, and build critical thinking skills (Dixon, 2015). VR supports this by providing an immersive learning environment that creates interactive, real-world scenarios where learners can acquire knowledge, practice, and experience different situations.

The novelty and interactivity of VR spark curiosity and excitement among learners, making it an ideal tool for various lessons. For example, in a literature class aimed at developing analytical skills, vocabulary, and critical thinking, students could engage in a simulated discussion of a novel's setting or themes. They could collaboratively explore the imagined world of a Victorian-era novel, discussing the social dynamics, character motivations, and moral dilemmas. Alternatively, they could work in small groups to reenact a pivotal scene from a classic work, with each group interpreting the characters' emotions and perspectives. Afterward, students would write individually or collaboratively, reflecting on how the exercise deepened their understanding of the text and its themes. This activates students' prior knowledge, gives them new experiences, and promotes critical thinking as they begin their writing exercises in the *form of their essays and reflections*. These kinds of lessons and experiences enhance language practice, improve cognitive abilities, boost memory retention, and keep learners engaged (Hua & Wang, 2023).

Furthermore, immersive learning environments, such as the Victorian literature scenario described earlier, can significantly boost learners' motivation by empowering them to take charge of their learning journey (learner autonomy). Simulations can serve as judgment-free zones, offering instant feedback that boosts students' confidence and learning (competence). Additionally, interaction with virtual characters or peers from the scenarios in literature classes fosters emotional bonds and enhances motivation (Kim et al., 2006; Gulz, 2004). Leveraging VR can enhance students' writing, and simulations can be a driving factor in this process.

Virtual Literary Simulation and Strategies for Implementation

Simulation-based pedagogy has recently been a central component of L2 instruction. Broadly defined as “an active and immersive experience in a virtual learning environment that recreates a realistic and authentic real-life event or a set of learning situations to solve a problem” (Dai and Ke, 2022), simulation serves as a bridge between reality and educational contexts (Chernikova, et al, 2020). With the incursion of different immersive technologies, virtual simulation has been instrumental in providing opportunities for developing appropriate cultural schema, mirroring authentic real-life experiences, and developing L2 writing skills. Kilmova (2021) found that learners' virtual experience and sense of embodiment positively contribute to writing performance. Online simulation games have also been reported to reduce foreign language anxiety and enhance vocabulary development (Yang, et al, 2024). Many virtual simulation environments encompass literary artifacts that demonstrate the nexus between literature, society, and technology.

Virtual simulation has the potential to facilitate the activation and assimilation of unfamiliar cultural schema by engaging L2 writers in interactive narration that enhances motivation and user autonomy. In a virtual literary simulation, users are immersed in different characters, settings, and storylines which play an active role in constructing knowledge and engaging with the embedded literary artifacts. Rather than spend time reading and making meaning of unfamiliar literary text, virtual simulation can provide experiential and contextualized language learning and cultural orientation to diverse groups of L2 writers.

Virtual literary simulation aligns with the constructivist learning theory as users are constantly creating and negotiating new knowledge within the virtual environment. Following this theoretical construct, we propose seven important strategies for implementing a virtual literary simulation.

Assess previous knowledge of the text - Before engaging in a virtual literary simulation, teachers should evaluate students' knowledge of the text/material to assess individual differences. Students in the L2 class are often from diverse backgrounds. Therefore, it is important to understand their individual abilities and knowledge base before designing the virtual simulation.

Encourage exploration and discovery - Teachers should ensure that the simulation is designed in a way that allows students to explore literary themes and plot dynamics. For example, in designing a simulation based on a fictional or dramatic text, students should be able to engage with and take actions that may influence the outcome of the narrative.

Ensure the simulation is authentic - Just like literature reflects society, the goal of the simulation is to reconstruct a realistic situation. The virtual literary simulation must mirror the characteristics of literary works and their cultural elements.

Emphasize active collaboration - The design of the virtual simulation should ensure active collaboration through interaction with different characters.

Promote Multimodal/Multi-sensory tools - Importantly, teachers should use multimodal tools that engage different senses to cater to individual differences. For example, virtual reality (VR) enhances 3D visual and audio experience.

Support autonomous learning - Virtual simulation should be designed in a non-linear manner to support and encourage self-directed learning where students can choose their plot direction or character.

Advocate for continuous feedback - Teachers should advocate for assessment and feedback at different stages of the simulation.

Combining literature with innovative technologies like VR revolutionizes L2 writing instruction by providing opportunities to engage deeply with texts while overcoming cultural and linguistic barriers. By creating interactive, inclusive, and experiential learning environments, educators can enhance both writing proficiency and cultural competence. With thoughtful implementation, the synergy between literature and technology can create a transformative shift, fostering creativity, engagement, and autonomy in learners. Some popular examples of free VR tools that teachers can utilize are Discovery VR, Google Expeditions, Google Street View, and Google Earth, which can be accessed with or without a headset.

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Making the Most of Graduate School: A Practical Guidebook for Students in Applied Linguistics, Education, and TESOL.

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Making the Most of Graduate School explores different layers of living as a graduate student and the challenges of navigating the terrain of graduate education. Drawing on personal experiences and reflections, the book offers valuable insights from student and faculty perspectives. The book is divided into nine chapters. The content chapter discusses topics ranging from dealing with impostor syndrome (chapter 2), developing study routine strategies, while making time for yourself (chapter 3), carving out your research, teaching and professional interests (chapter 4), working with your advisor (chapter 5), networking (chapter 6), coping with crises (chapter 7), and dealing with failure and rejection (chapter 9). The concluding chapter explores the importance of kindness. I find this book particularly interesting and recommend it to graduate students because of the current relevance of the topics discussed, the positionality of the authors, and the inclusion of diverse perspectives.

Topics such as imposter syndrome portray the reality of many graduate students, especially international students navigating an unfamiliar academic culture. The challenge of adapting to new expectations, teaching styles, and evaluation methods can sometimes amplify feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt, making it easy to feel out of place or undeserving of one's achievements. The authors address this by explaining the decision-making process of graduate admission, faculty expectations, and awareness of graduate student limitations. Specifically, the authors note that "you are not supposed to be a professor-level expert to begin with" (p. 11). The level of awareness shown by the authors and the practicality with which they address many topics make the book a comprehensive and insightful resource for readers. At the end of each chapter, the authors also provide tips to help readers address some of the challenges that may apply to them personally. For example, one of the tips suggested for dealing with imposter syndrome is to remember that feeling like there is room to grow is different from having imposter syndrome. This is particularly important for self-development. A growth mindset can be a motivation for improvement, whereas imposter syndrome could lead to anxiety and burnout.



Victor Adedayo is a doctoral student in applied linguistics. His research explores how language is used to reinforce or challenge racial inequities. Specifically, he utilizes corpus-based critical discourse approach to investigate racial discourse in media, higher education, and technology.

The positionality of the authors also makes the book engaging. The fact that the authors were once graduate students who have now taken faculty positions makes their insights balanced and practical. Throughout the book, the authors draw on their experiences as graduate students and the individual strategies they used to navigate the terrains of graduate education. For example, in addressing finance management, they gave an example of how Elliott and his partner depended on paid summer opportunities, while simultaneously enrolled in doctoral programs. I found this particularly insightful and could relate because my spouse and I are concurrently enrolled in a doctoral program and we have a toddler. Having someone in a similar circumstance share their experience makes the book relatable and assuring.

Moreover, the authors consistently maintain a balanced position when addressing sensitive topics. In chapter 9, dealing with failure and rejection, the authors talked about knowing when to move on from an endeavor. I particularly like how the authors, despite their positions as professors, provide unbiased and practical advice. This perspective may seem unexpected coming from professors. However, they acknowledge the reality that graduate school may not be for everyone and that it is completely okay to move on if it no longer feels fulfilling.

Aside from the perspectives of the authors, the book also includes personal reflections from students from different backgrounds. In Chapter 4, a Nigerian student shared their experience about carving a research interest. The students noted that attending different classes, having conversations with professors, and being open-minded were instrumental in shaping their research interests. The experience shared by this student is compelling. I am at the stage where defining my research and professional identity is essential, and I am actively considering how my research interests can help me develop transferable skills for the job market. Reflecting on the personal account and advice from the authors, highlights the need for intentionality in course selection and research pursuits. Notably, the authors emphasize the importance of not postponing the job search until the final stages of graduate studies. This is important for strategically planning courses and developing skills that align with career goals, ensuring a smoother transition into the job market.

Overall, this book is concise, yet all-encompassing. It offers a valuable guide for students seeking practical strategies to thrive academically and personally. It provides students with knowledge and insights that may not be obtainable in the classroom and diversifies the perspectives of graduate education. However, I am a little disappointed that the authors did not address topics such as the challenges of navigating unfamiliar job markets and employment visas. There seems to be a growing number of international students in many applied linguistics and TESOL graduate programs in the US. Unlike domestic students, international students have unique professional needs. They have to grapple with the reality of cultural shifts, immigration, and hiring bias.

While the authors may not have firsthand experiences that resonate with international students, future editions could benefit from addressing the unique challenges faced by many international graduate students. This could be achieved by incorporating perspectives from international faculty who have successfully navigated the U.S. job market and employment visa processes or exploring topics such as cultural differences. These topics would offer valuable guidance not just to students navigating these complex processes but also to professors seeking to better support their international students.

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Second Language Research: Methodology and Design

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Linguistics researchers and those in related fields commonly employ both qualitative and quantitative methods. To design effective research that robustly addresses research questions, it is crucial to understand the strengths and limitations of each method. In particular, when the perspectives or research methods differ, so do the results of observations (Brewer & Lambert, 2001). This divergence, even when observing the same phenomena, leads to different interpretations, highlighting the importance of understanding how each research method shapes research outcomes. Therefore, to effectively interpret existing literature and develop new studies by building upon the findings of previous research, it is essential for researchers to grasp the underlying principles and methodologies of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Without such understanding, misinterpretations of research findings may occur. For students at both undergraduate and graduate levels, comprehending these fundamental concepts is critical for correctly interpreting and applying research methods.

The reviewed book, *Second Language Research Methodology and Design (3rd ed.)* (Mackey & Gass, 2022), provides a comprehensive foundation for understanding both quantitative and qualitative research methods in language research. The book begins by outlining essential concepts, including the key differences between qualitative and quantitative approaches, as well as the ethical considerations in research, which researchers need to understand and be careful about (De Costa, 2015). Chapters 2 through 5 introduce shared concepts common to both research methods before delving into specific methodologies. Chapter 2 focuses on the components of research papers, helping readers identify key elements when both reading and writing research. Chapter 3 introduces data collection techniques, including example tasks. Chapter 4 discusses the coding process, which is necessary for analyzing data in almost any type of research, providing concrete examples for nominal, ordinal, and interval data. Chapter 5 covers crucial concepts of reliability and validity, offering indices for measuring these factors. Chapter 6 moves on to designing a quantitative study using statistical methods, while Chapter 7 covers qualitative and interpretive research design, emphasizing contextual factors such as region, culture, and individual differences. Chapter 8 introduces classroom research methods, including observation, interviews, and diary studies. Chapter 9 focuses on mixed-methods research, integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The book concludes with a discussion on research reporting, providing valuable support for writing up research findings.

One of the book's greatest strengths is that it offers a solid foundation for understanding both quantitative and qualitative research methods. For students, understanding these research approaches is essential not only for interpreting existing research but also for selecting the optimal methodology when designing their own studies.



Gaia Oikawa is an M.A. student in the Applied Linguistics department at Tohoku University, Japan. His research interests include Instructed Second Language Acquisition (ISLA), with a particular focus on vocabulary learning, teacher cognition, and the role of languaging in vocabulary instruction. Oikawa is currently working on his thesis, which explores the effects of contextual diversity on L2 incidental vocabulary learning. He holds a B.A. in Education from Iwate University.

Additionally, the book includes numerous examples from previous studies, offering practical insights into the materials, results, and designs used in research. For instance, Chapter 8 on classroom research includes examples of materials such as observation schemes, uptake sheets for tracking students' learning, and diary prompts. These concrete examples allow students to better understand how each method works and develop their own materials. Furthermore, each chapter includes sections like "TIME TO DO", "POINTS TO REMEMBER", and "MORE TO DO AND MORE TO THINK ABOUT", which propose questions that are related to the contents of the chapter, engaging readers by encouraging them to consider hypothetical research designs, problem-solving strategies, and interpretations of research results. The inclusion of sample answers further makes reading more interactive where readers can consider how to apply the content to their own research and can deal with similar situations in their own research. Because sample answers from the authors are shown at the end of each chapter, the questions and instructions are not unidirectional, and readers can keep up with the contents.

However, the book has a limitation. While it provides an excellent introduction to the fundamentals of research methodology, it does not delve deeply into advanced topics that are often addressed in current research. As the book's goal is to lay the foundation for understanding research methods (Mackey & Gass, 2022), readers seeking more advanced knowledge may need to refer to supplementary resources. For example, *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in Applied Linguistics* (McKinley & Rose, 2019) offers more detailed explorations of advanced topics across 41 chapters, each written by an expert in the respective methodology. Nonetheless, the foundational knowledge provided in *Second Language Research Methodology and Design* is crucial for understanding more complex concepts in subsequent readings. A good route seems to start from the reviewed book (Mackey and Gass, 2022), followed by more advanced books in specific research realms.

Conclusion

Overall, *Second Language Research: Methodology and Design* (3rd ed.) by Mackey and Gass (2022) is a comprehensive and accessible resource for students and researchers in applied linguistics. By systematically introducing both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, the book provides a solid foundation for understanding research design, data collection, and analysis. The clear structure and practical examples make it particularly useful for graduate students navigating methodological decisions in their own research. One of the book's key strengths is its balance between theoretical explanation and practical application. The inclusion of ethical considerations, as well as discussions for each chapter's content, further enhances its relevance for researchers aiming to conduct rigorous studies. However, while the book effectively introduces fundamental research concepts as the purpose of the book is, those seeking more advanced discussions, specific methodologies such as eye-tracking, or specific statistical analyses may need to consult additional resources. Despite this, the book remains an essential text for anyone engaging in second language acquisition research. By developing a strong methodological understanding through this book, students and early-career researchers can enhance their ability to critically evaluate existing studies and design their own research more effectively while deepening their understanding of research methods.

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Excluded at the Table: Halal Food Accessibility Challenges for Muslim PhD Students at Academic Conferences

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Academic conferences are significant opportunities for professional development for graduate students, offering invaluable opportunities for networking, collaboration, and community-building. Besides the formal presentation and discussions, communal meals and receptions are also essential for many attendees, especially graduate students during these conference events. During this time, one can share a meal with others and engage in conversations in a relaxed and friendly setting. However, for Muslim PhD students like me, these spaces often highlight a troubling oversight: the lack of accommodations for halal dietary needs. While allergies, vegan, and vegetarian diets are frequently acknowledged and accommodated, halal requirements are often ignored or misunderstood. This exclusion not only limits food choices but also fosters a sense of isolation, making it harder for Muslim students to fully engage in these essential aspects of the conference experience.

Halal, which means "permissible" in Arabic, encompasses dietary rules grounded in Islamic principles. These rules prohibit the consumption of certain foods, such as pork and alcohol, and require that meat be prepared in a specific way. Unfortunately, halal is often misunderstood by non-Muslim colleagues and conference organizers. I have frequently encountered situations where my dietary needs are either dismissed or met with confusion. Questions like, "Don't you eat meat?", "Are you a vegetarian?" or "Can you make an exception this time?" are common and reflect a lack of awareness about what halal entails. Sometimes when I ask if halal options are available, I'm met with puzzled looks as if I'm requesting something that I shouldn't have. These experiences often feel like micro examinations of my beliefs, placing an additional emotional burden on me in professional spaces.

Nilima Hakim Mow is a Ph.D. student in Linguistics at George Mason University. Her research primarily focuses on language documentation and the revitalization of endangered Indigenous languages through community collaboration. She is currently working with the Akuzipik language of St. Lawrence Island, Alaska, and the Hawrami language, spoken in regions of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey. In addition to her work in language preservation, Nilima is dedicated to developing pedagogical approaches and materials for teaching English as a Second Language (ESL). She also creates educational resources for Indigenous heritage language learners, ensuring these languages are actively used and passed down to future generations. She serves on the International Student Advisory Board at George Mason University, advocating for international student needs, and is an active representative in the Graduate and Professional Student Association (GAPSA).

Before beginning her Ph.D. program, Nilima earned dual M.A. degrees in Linguistics & TESOL from Ball State University, Indiana. Beyond her academic pursuits, Nilima enjoys traveling. She loves to explore new places, meet new people, and learn about new cultures.



As a Muslim student, I always have to choose the vegetarian option since my dietary needs are not considered or explicitly mentioned while submitting the registration forms. I appreciate the vegetarian options at times but that doesn't always solve the problem. At a recent conference, the only choice for vegetarians was the chef's choice: a meal that was only revealed once it was placed in front of me. I had to wait for the meal to arrive just to see if it was something I could eat. On some occasions, I have had to leave the table and spend my limited lunch break searching for suitable food.

This also creates a financial burden for graduate students like me as I often have to spend extra on food despite having already paid the registration fee. At different conferences, I have noticed food is served without any mention of the ingredients, with the only concern being allergen information. Because of this lack of transparency, Muslim students like myself sometimes have to avoid vegetarian options, because we do not know which ingredients have been used. The serving staff often couldn't provide any answers either.

The absence of halal options is not just a logistical inconvenience, it makes me feel excluded at the table in the first place. Meals at conferences are not merely about sustenance; they are central to building relationships, networking, and fostering a sense of belonging. When I cannot participate fully in these communal moments, I feel distanced from my peers. Instead of engaging in conversations over a shared meal, I often find myself searching for alternative food options outside the event venue. Sometimes I have to starve throughout the day because there are no halal options available nearby. This physical and emotional separation limits my ability to make meaningful connections and undermines my overall conference experience.

To better understand how this issue manifests, I have reflected on my experiences and analyzed the language used in conference communications about meals. These materials often emphasize inclusivity, yet halal needs are rarely, if ever, mentioned. This subtle exclusion reinforces the idea that Muslim attendees are not fully considered in the planning process. It also highlights a broader cultural gap in academic spaces, where diversity is celebrated in theory but not always in practice.

The relevance of this issue to the academic conference communities across the world cannot be overstated. Almost all the conferences highlight their strong support for inclusion, equity, and diversity; thus, these communities have a responsibility to ensure that all members feel welcome and respected. Addressing halal food accessibility is a necessary step toward fulfilling this mission. Moreover, this discussion extends beyond accommodating Muslim students: it opens the door to a larger conversation about how academic spaces can better accommodate the diverse cultural and religious needs of their participants. To create more inclusive conferences, I propose the following steps:

- 1. Include Halal Options in Meal Planning:** Conference organizers should consider halal dietary requirements when designing menus. Consulting with attendees through pre-event surveys can help identify specific needs.
- 2. Educate Event Staff and Attendees:** Providing basic information about halal can help dispel misconceptions and promote understanding.
- 3. Promote Transparency:** Clearly label food items and provide detailed descriptions so that attendees can make informed choices.
- 4. Collaborate with Diverse Communities:** Engage with students and professionals coming from diverse backgrounds to ensure that conference practices align with their needs and expectations, especially their dietary needs.

By sharing my experiences and reflections, I hope to illuminate the challenges faced by Muslim PhD students at academic conferences and inspire actionable change. Halal food accessibility is not just about what we eat, it is about who feels included, respected, and valued in academic spaces. Ensuring that everyone can fully participate in these events is a vital step toward fostering a truly inclusive community. Together, we can create conferences where every attendee, regardless of their dietary needs or cultural background, feels that they have a seat at the table.

Poetry for Thought



Mark Sullivan
Northern Arizona University

1

A Queen Stationary

Late Queen Elizabeth leans into the portal. Feet
Up to thickened hips and magic, dangling hands,
She appears to be a forked stump of memory
Bending from the stage of time to somewhere in half.

Could cold be spoken of, ask to call need, the ends
Are quiet—or better said un hoped like iron,
Which makes of words more life than what meaning bends
To see the present, whole in promises of time.

2

Grimalkin Has Made an Offer

Overlapping circles wind off the paper
As though this were their motive.
On a page in the pad look! there's Grimalkin
Dancing with hungry ghosts.

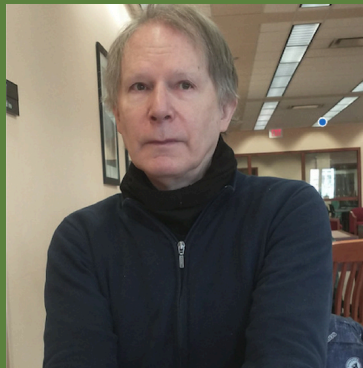
The crippling back and forth of time
Too tempts loss to hand:
Trails scratch an atlas of where
Not why we want to know.

Florid gestures from a barker dare
Attempts to conjure truce
With words our dead have left
To draw them to us.

Such promises hold pale hopes
Up for ale and candy canes
To wrap our bed of lonely rest
In shadowplay.

Author Statement

The four poems fall into the “difficult” bin. Ironically, poets are reluctant to explain their work. Poems one and two were brought about by a preoccupation with time, certain words, and music fashioned into stanzas. The third poem came through many revisions to relate a certain photo of then-Patriots’ QB Tom Brady to Thom Gunn’s perfect poem “My Sad Captains.” Poem four is a lullaby of love lost, modelled loosely on Waller’s “Go, Lovely Rose.” I would add that I feel formal restraints are a must though I seem to want to create works whose mood is grim and as near to nonsense as music can make them.



Mark Sullivan is a third-year Ph.D. student in Applied Linguistics at Northern Arizona University. He taught English in Taiwan and China for two decades. His research interests are written feedback on L2 writing, stylistics, and Chinese as additional language pedagogy.

3

Brady in Triumph

This posture of my helmeted head locked between my knees
 Signals my presence to those I hope to bring to mind. Yet
 Within I stand and wonder if and how I will be seen,
 Ardent, still untranslated to the place in which they wait.

I sense, but do not see, shades gather to listen awhile,
 Shades whose tempers, impulses, regrets, and triumphs
 Have become the fires whose shadows we pose behind,
 However much their echo in whom we are fades from life.

Teammates, coaches, staff, and fans, the pale, wax tableau
 Seem caught in the gravity of wonder by my doubled form
 That I should douse the lights to elegy as though downed
 From blows in outline only here from greater wars.

But grace appears as a circle of the dead in this dark
 Between labor and luck and in whose iris I fear
 Myself as I am: free, yet iron bent to the call
 That will prevails in spite of victory and defeat.

So Unitas, Marino, Tarkenton, and Starr gently clasp
 Mine in their icy hands outstretched and gloved,
 Then seem to turn again into what we know will last:
 Battles won in loss of all that we had loved.

4

The Lily, the Holly, and the Rose

Sleep is the dark under lock no key can open,
 The candle of frost guiding the blind;
 In tumbled dreams of the heart-cracked, silent man,
 Sleep is the hope that no one finds.

Friends are shades of light dyed on this book of faces
 Where I miss you so much will end,
 For words are bait enough to keep as ghosts on these pages
 Friends who will not meet again.

Yet love is not lost in tongueless deeds neglected and unknown;
 The once warm heart that dies still red
 To end in silent heaven of the faceless angels' snow
 Is yet true love but put to bed.



Conversations and Connections Through Poetry

Yanyan Li
University of Warwick

Introduction

Poetry as a lens for reflecting everyday conversations

Our conversation usually goes beyond words. It consists of both verbal and nonverbal cues, such as the pauses between speech, the shifts in gaze, and the unspoken thoughts that await their proper interpretation. As a researcher in applied linguistics and a young poet, I am captivated by the architecture of authentic, everyday interactions, where meaning is co-constructed, and interpersonal relationships are woven in moments of delicacy and joy that transcend the literal meanings of language. My two short poems, *Encounter* and *Shared Laughter*, inspired by my PhD thesis about relationship work in group interactions, stem from my intellectual curiosity about how humans interact to connect. Each poem captures fragments of dialogue, illuminates the dynamics of self-disclosure and laughter in shaping the relational fabric of our exchanges and embeds reflections on how social interactions unfold in lived moments. Through the lens of conversation analysis, they are operationalized as a medium to empower the creative reflection of everyday conversations, transforming the often-invisible mechanics of interaction into vivid, emotionally resonant verses.

The Poems

Poem I Encounter

Wintry air fills the night,
with coffee's aroma.
'Who are you?' I asked.
'Who are you?' You smiled.
We moved closer,
to what comes next.

Pouring rain, wild wind
held us in place,
cups filled.
We talked, we shared -
sprouts of friendship,
growing in spring.



Yanyan Li is a 4th-year PhD student in Center for Applied Linguistics at the University of Warwick. She is an Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and a Fellow of the Warwick International Higher Education Academy. Her research interests cover multimodal

communication, conversation analysis, relationship work, creative research methods and research culture. Yanyan serves as a Senior Graduate Teaching Assistant at the Centre for Applied Linguistics and a Postgraduate Mentor at the Social Mobility Research Hub, supporting students academically and professionally.

'He left, without a word.' I confessed.
 'She left, beyond my reach.' You murmured.
 Both grateful for this rescue,
 a new start, not even a loss.
 'Life goes on,' I believed.
 'The sun still rises,' peace in your eyes.
 A warm hug, a weary day,
 a nodding reply, mutual gaze -
 shaking hands, farewell,
 raindrops, milk dots
 on coffee, meaning -
 an encounter that lingers.



Self-disclosure sparks further sharing for connection

This poem illustrates how strangers forge bonds through the sharing of personal experiences and the discovery of commonalities within them. The café acts as a liminal space where two individuals, burdened by personal losses, engage in a spontaneous exchange of vulnerability that triggers an overflow of emotions concealed beneath words. The rain that 'holds them in place' is not just a backdrop, but creates an interactional space that enables the two people to remain, converse, and connect. Through conversation analysis, the deployment of the interactional pattern here is unveiled. One self-disclosure invites another, whereby a shared membership is woven and uncovered. Their dialogue mirrors the patterns of interactional reciprocity, where a transient but meaningful connection is formed.

Poem II Shared Laughter

I lifted my eyes in confusion,
 gazing at you for clarification.
 You faltered, lost in hesitation,
 silent, without further explanation.
 Then a laugh broke the tension,
 an error, a smile, a subtle connection.
 Another laugh followed, a shared fusion,
 two together, easing my self-protection.
 Why did you laugh? Was it at my flaw?
 Why did he join in? Was it unity they saw?
 Should I laugh too, as a smile had grown,
 Should I be louder, or just let it be known?



Laugh-at turns into laugh-with,
dissolving threats in bursts of mirth.
Let laughter mend and break the ice,
as strained relations find their worth.

Laughter as a resource for building togetherness

Laughter is often considered spontaneous, but its role in social interaction is complex. This poem examines laughter as exclusion and laughter as solidarity. Initially, laughter emerges as a response to a mistake, a moment of potential embarrassment. However, when the person being laughed at joins in, the social dynamic shifts, turning what begins as a 'laugh-at' into a 'laugh-with,' thereby diffusing tension and reinforcing group cohesion.

Through conversation analysis, how laughter operates as an interactional resource for managing social relationships, particularly in building togetherness, is revealed. Presented in poetic form, the interactional pattern in which a first laugh invites a second laugh is brought to life. In professional and educational settings, laughter can cause divisions between in-groups and out-groups. Yet, sharing a laugh can navigate face-threatening moments, serving as a mitigation mechanism to smooth over interactional trouble.

Reflections

Poetry as a bridge between applied linguistics research and lived experience

As an early-career researcher and applied linguist, I am mindful of how I communicate my research on interaction in an accessible way. I sought to bridge the gap between scholarly analysis and everyday experience, offering readers a way to engage with the diverse ways they conduct conversations and manage social relationships in a visceral, intuitive manner. This drive led me to leverage poetry to distil technical analysis and potentially obscure research insights into forms that are both accessible and affective.

I believe that taking turns to talk resembles making line breaks in poetry. Coleridge's compliment to poetry as the best words in the best order inspired me to recognize that the orderliness of conversation, which lies at the heart of my intellectual inquiry, aligns with the structure of poetry. In this way, I am convinced that poetry can offer a creative and accessible means for me to present my research findings in a form that resonates with a broad audience, particularly those without technical knowledge of conversation analysis and those who may not have noticed the subtle ways in which our speech and actions influence social relationships.

As someone who relies on strong social and interactional skills to thrive, the process of doing research and transforming my research findings into poetry has been deeply introspective. Writing these pieces prompted me to reflect on my own conversational habits and the awkwardness I once felt in connecting with others in social spaces. I revisited how I listened, responded, and navigated moments of silence or uncertainty. This process deepened my awareness of the underlying forces at play in social interaction, heightened my sensitivity to the micro-interactional details that shape meaning, and enriched both my academic and personal understanding of social interaction.

Furthermore, I believe that this approach aligns with broader efforts in applied linguistics as an interdisciplinary field to explore creative and accessible methodologies for research dissemination and communication. By incorporating poetic inquiry into our work, researchers can invite a wider audience, including not just fellow scholars from fields beyond our own, but also end users outside academia who use language and other resources to communicate in their daily interactions, to engage with applied linguistics research.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to Yichun Jiang, PhD in Creative Writing from the University of Manchester, for his invaluable editing advice on my poems.



Navigating the Ph.D. Journey: Insights from an International Student's Experience

Dr. Samah Dulli
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Insights from My Journey as an International Ph.D. Student

When I embarked on my doctoral journey in the United States, there were several pieces of advice I wish I had known earlier. As a Saudi woman raising three children and navigating the complexities of life as an international student, I encountered various challenges that required careful thought, resilience, and proactive planning. As a Ph.D. candidate specializing in Applied Linguistics, with a focus on sociolinguistics, my journey also involved not only academic challenges but cultural adjustments and the management of family responsibilities. In reflecting on my experience, I want to share the strategies and insights that helped me thrive as an international student, especially as someone who did not face significant language barriers due to my prior English training in Saudi Arabia.

While this reflection focuses primarily on my personal journey, it includes key takeaways that may benefit other graduate students, especially those navigating similar experiences or cultural transitions. These practical tips can serve as a useful guide for managing the many facets of graduate life while pursuing an advanced degree.

Key Lessons for Success as an International Graduate Student

1. Understand the Importance of Cultural Adaptation

- **Do:** Take time to familiarize yourself with the culture of the country where you'll be studying. While mastering English is crucial for academic success, understanding the cultural nuances of your new environment is just as essential. Culture influences academic practices, social interactions, and even classroom dynamics. Being culturally aware will help you build relationships with colleagues, professors, and the broader community.
- **Don't:** Assume that adapting to a new culture will happen automatically. Cultural adaptation takes time, and engaging with diverse groups can help you feel more integrated.

2. Seek Support and Build Relationships with Your Advisor

- **Do:** Your advisor is a key resource in your academic journey. As an international student, it is especially important to establish a strong relationship with your advisor. Seek guidance and feedback whenever you need it, and don't hesitate to express concerns about academic or personal challenges.
- **Don't:** Underestimate the value of asking for help. Graduate school can feel overwhelming, but building a supportive relationship with your advisor can make a significant difference in your success and well-being.

Samah Dulli is a recent Ph.D. graduate in Applied Linguistics, with a focus on sociolinguistics. Originally from Saudi Arabia, with a full scholarship from her country, Samah completed her doctoral studies in the United States while balancing family life with three children by herself. Her research explores the experiences of female partners of Saudi students, specifically their challenges in acquiring English as a second language. Samah is passionate about bridging cultural and linguistic divides and has presented in many conferences throughout her studying journey. She is planning to present her dissertation and many upcoming research findings at various academic conferences.

3. Master Time Management

- **Do:** Time management is one of the most crucial skills for success in graduate school. As an international student with family responsibilities, it becomes even more important. Learn to prioritize your tasks, set clear academic goals, and establish a routine that allows you to balance your studies, work, and family life effectively.
- **Don't:** Try to juggle everything at once without a plan. Procrastination or poor time management can lead to unnecessary stress and missed opportunities.

4. Engage in Networking and Professional Development

- **Do:** Participate in conferences, workshops, and seminars related to your field. These events not only help you stay updated on the latest research but also provide valuable opportunities for networking and professional development. Building relationships with peers and professionals from around the world can open doors for future collaboration, research, and job prospects.
- **Don't:** Stay isolated or avoid networking opportunities. Conferences and professional gatherings are vital for career growth, and engaging with others in your field can significantly enhance your academic journey.

5. Volunteer and Get Involved in University Activities

- **Do:** Volunteering is a great way to develop skills, build connections, and contribute to the academic community. It can also help you gain practical experience, improve your language skills, and enhance your resume. Whether it's volunteering at university events, assisting with research, or participating in student organizations, getting involved will enrich your graduate experience.
- **Don't:** Stay disconnected from university life. Volunteering not only helps you grow academically but also allows you to form friendships and connections that may support you throughout your career.

6. Communicate and Connect with People

- **Do:** Open communication is key. Engage with people both within and outside your academic circle. Whether it's classmates, faculty members, or community organizations, building a supportive network is invaluable. This network can provide encouragement, help with problem-solving, and create opportunities for both personal and professional growth.
- **Don't:** Isolate yourself. Graduate school can be lonely, especially when you're far from home. Finding your community within the university can provide a sense of belonging and ease the stress of living in a foreign country.

Key Considerations for Multilingual Students

While my own experience didn't involve overcoming language barriers, I understand how challenging it can be for multilingual students to adapt to academic and social environments in the U.S. As my research on female partners of Saudi students demonstrated, mastering English is a significant hurdle for many international students and their families. Here are a few additional tips for multilingual or language learners

- **Do:** Take advantage of any language programs or support services available to you, even if you're not a degree-seeking student. Many universities offer free or low-cost language support services.
- **Don't:** Wait until you are fluent before engaging socially or academically. It's okay to make mistakes, and using English in everyday situations will accelerate your learning process.

Final Thoughts

As I reflect on my time as an international student, I realize how crucial it was to take proactive steps to navigate academic, social, and cultural challenges. By maintaining a balanced approach, seeking support when needed, and engaging in meaningful opportunities for growth, international students can make the most of their graduate experience. The journey may be difficult, but with the right mindset and strategies, it is also incredibly rewarding.

Ultimately, your success as a graduate student is not only determined by your academic achievements but also by your ability to adapt, communicate, and thrive within a new cultural and academic environment.

AAAL Pre-Conference JEDI Survey

Please fill out our pre-conference survey before the upcoming AAAL Conference in Denver. This input helps us foster a more inclusive and equitable AAAL conference experience for graduate student attendees.

You can find the form [here](#).

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Are you interested in pursuing a PhD program in language education and seeking funding for your degree? Come join us at Washington State University (WSU)! Discover exciting graduate student research assistant (RA) opportunities in Spanish-English bilingual teacher preparation through WSU's CAMINOS project. CAMINOS —“Certifying and Advancing Multilingual Teachers by Increasing Numbers Through Grow-Your-Own Strands”— supports underrepresented populations in the U.S. Northwest. A \$3.1 million grant to WSU's College of Education from the U.S. Department of Education Office of English Language Acquisition's National Professional Development program fully funds CAMINOS. Highlights of these positions include potential long-term RA funding, mentorship opportunities, and collaboration in research and community engagement. These positions are ideal for graduate students who are passionate about dual language education and interested in enrolling in a PhD program at WSU. Through these RA positions, graduate students can contribute to transformative language education research while pursuing their doctoral studies.

Compensation: Complete RA package (e.g., competitive salary, tuition remission, benefits, and more).

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