AAALGrads

THE AAAL GRADUATE STUDENT COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

IN THIS ISSUE

MULTIMODAL COMPOSITION IN AN ACADEMIC CONTEXT

- Page 4

REFLEXIVITY IN RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

- Page 7

IDENTIFYING AND REDUCING COGNITIVE BIASES IN RESEARCH

- Page 10

COMPLEXITY THEORY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

- Page 14

MULTICULTURALISM'S EFFECTS ON TEACHING

- Page 19

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CORNER CONFERENCE ORGANIZING

- Page 23

CULTIVATING MENTORSHIP

- Page 25



செம்புலம் - sempulam - fertile copper earth

by Suganya Rajendran Schmura Texas A&M University-Commerce <u>studiosuganya.com</u>

செம்புலம் (sempulam) is the Tamil word for the fertile copper colored earth that is ready to nurture life. This piece represents the season in which your hard work comes to fruition. The seemingly endless months of quiet determination, frustration, failures, and successes all culminate in this joyous moment. After the stillness thaws, you can see the seeds you planted long ago finally begin to break through the copper earth.

PLUS THE CREATIVE CORNER,
TESTIMONIALS, DESIGN AWARD WINNERS,
AND MORE!

Letter from the Co-Editors

Dear AAALGrads Community,

In preparing for the previous issue of AAALGrads, we called for articles that questioned some of the "new normals" that have emerged within our academic communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. We also asked authors to discuss what we could learn from our experiences during that time and what we could/should carry forward. While these are, of course, topics that continue to be relevant to AAALGrads readers, with several themed issues behind us, we felt it was time to broaden the scope (once again) to any and all topics that potential authors felt were relevant to our graduate student community. We hoped to receive a wide range of proposals that would showcase an array of scholarly areas that the community was engaged with at the time.

After shortlisting all of the interesting proposals and reviewing the full manuscripts as they were submitted, we are happy to say now that the AAALGrads Community exceeded our expectations.

In this issue, we have five Feature articles, two Professional Development Corner articles, and one Creative Corner article. Together, they cover a lot of ground. The Feature articles begin with Xiao Tan's discussion of multimodal composition, continue to issues regarding reflexivity (Rowland Imperial), cognitive biases (David Perrodin), and complexity (Sarvenaz Balali) in research, and conclude with Daeun Shin's reflection on multiculturalism in graduate student teaching.

In the Professional Development Corner, Tim Hampson shares tips from his experiences as a conference organizer, and Yoko Mori advocates for cultivating successful crosscultural mentorships. Finally, in the Creative Corner, Katherine Ortolani rounds out the issue with an interesting call for the use of role-playing games in English language teaching.

As always, we are grateful to all of the authors who contributed to the issue and who were patient with us as we co-constructed the final version alongside our lengthy list of other commitments.

This will be the last issue produced by the current team, and as we move on to allow for others to take the newsletter in their own directions, we cannot help but look back with pride and satisfaction. It has been a great run, and we look forward to seeing what the future holds for the newsletter

Welcome to the Spring 2022 issue of AAALGrads.

Sincerely,

Nathan Thomas, Katherine Kerschen, Mariana Lima Becker, and Sooyoung Kang

Co-Editors

Table of Contents

Letter from the Co-Editors2
Letter from the GSC Co-Chairs3
Feature Article – Tan4
Feature Article - Imperial7
Feature Article - Perrodin10
Feature Article - Balali14
Feature Article - Shin19
Professional Development Corner -
Hampson23
Professional Development Corner -
Mori25
Creative Corner - Ortolani28
Testimonials31
Award Winners 202232

Letter from the GSC Co-Chairs

Dear Colleagues,

The 2021-2022 Graduate Student Council (GSC) team has been working hard to fulfill its core mission: to create more service, leadership, and professional development opportunities for our graduate student members. We are heartened by the continued resilience, support, and participation of our graduate student colleagues during these difficult times. We are hopeful that the worst has been over and better days are ahead waiting for us.

As the co-chairs of the AAAL Graduate Student Council, it is an honor and privilege for us to serve our community this past year. Like in previous years, several grad student colleagues joined our events and initiatives this year as we worked together to support the next generation of applied linguists from around the world in their professional development.

We are grateful for the opportunity to serve the GSC and know about the work that many members are doing to help the world be a better place through research, teaching, service, and activism. Please accept our sincere appreciation for all the wonderful work you have been doing.

We would like to thank you all for actively participating in our events. We hope that 2022 will continue to be a productive year full of great experiences!!

Thank you!

Laxmi Prasad Ojha and Svetlana Koltovskaia
Co-Chairs

GET IN TOUCH WITH US!



Twitter / @AAALGrads
Facebook / AAALGrads
Instagram / @AAALGrads
www.aaal-gsc.org
aaalgrads@gmail.com

Composing multimodal texts in the academic context

By Xiao Tan Arizona State University

Several weeks ago, I created a teaching portfolio for the purpose of applying for jobs. I started by designing a personal website on a university-sponsored platform, blindly assuming that this was the preferred format for such portfolios. I spent many hours editing and uploading course materials, curating information, embedding images, and selecting color schemes, until I finally arrived at a satisfying, although far from perfect, <u>site</u>. Shortly before the application deadline, I went through the materials once again and suddenly realized that the teaching portfolio was supposed to be submitted as a single PDF file. How could my digital portfolio—presented as different webpages—meet the submission requirement? In haste, I had to go back and recreate my portfolio as a 70-page document with Times New Roman font, a table of contents up front, and page numbers in the upper right corner.

What I got out of this experience is that although the two portfolios essentially fulfill the same rhetorical purpose of demonstrating my teaching excellence, creating them involved different processes and skills. For example, when building the website, I tried to contextualize the course materials by writing blocks of short explanations on the side. When editing the traditional portfolio, I had to think more carefully about the sequence in which the teaching documents appear.

My experience of creating different types of portfolios is also illustrative of the changing communicative landscape in academia. The increasing use of digital technologies has allowed academic communication to take advantage of multimodal resources (Paltridge, 2020). This is evident in the emergence of online journals like *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology and Pedagogy*, where the content of an article is web-based and typically presented in a way that allows for multiple entries (and exits). Unlike traditional journal articles, with their IMRaD structure, *Kairos* articles can be explored in different orders.

Newer genres, such as visual abstracts and video methods articles, are gradually receiving attention and validation (Paltridge, 2020). In other academic activities, such as conference presentations (Morell, 2015), research pitches (Ruiz-Madrid, 2021), and social media interactions (Luzón & Albero-Posac, 2020), multimodality has become an even more indispensable component, where it is now expected for people to take advantage of the affordances of online content development, including making choices about fonts, colors, layout, images, and even the inclusion of audio and video.

However, this by no means suggests that multimodality is a novel construct that did not exist prior to the digital era. In fact, critical examination of composition history has revealed that even pre-printing press texts in the 15th and 16th century had rhetorically functioning multimodal features (Davis & Mueller, 2020; Palmeri, 2012). The issues of multimodality and multimodal writing were arguably brought to the spotlight by the publications of the New London Group and its members (especially Gunther Kress) in the early 2000s (Lauer, 2014). Common genres that have been studied before are now examined again through theories of multimodality. But beyond these research efforts, academic writing and multimodal composing seem to be somehow pitted against each other (Powell, 2020). (continued on page 5)

(cont.) Such an assumption is even more prevalent among writing teachers, who usually associate multimodal writing with something fun, entertaining, and non-academic (Tan & Matsuda, 2020).

The distinctions are made with understandable reasons. To start with, discourses favoring a free market tend to conceptualize and package modality as discrete, countable entities that feature new and emerging practices (Horner, 2020). That is, modern text types are usually marketed as containing a wider variety of modes. Some modes are allegedly more noticeable and eye-catching than the others, thus creating the impression that certain texts are "more multimodal" than the others. For example, a TV commercial that combines written words, moving images, and sound is deemed "more multimodal" than an AAALGrads newsletter, although the latter also features a nice mixture of various semiotic resources. The understanding of modality as an innate textual characteristic dichotomizes multimodal and alphabetic composition. At the same time, academic writing is often conceived rather narrowly as consisting of only the production of alphabetic texts. Although undergraduate students are indeed tasked with various disciplinary-specific multimodal assignments (Lim & Polio, 2020), it is unclear how general writing courses have prepared students for these writing scenarios.

The false distinctions between academic writing and multimodal composing also give rise to anxiety over the extent to which multimodal assignments should be part of the writing class.

Proponents of multimodal composition have advocated for decades the importance of teaching students how to make meaning with a wide range of semiotic resources (e.g., Yancey, 2004). On the other hand, critics caution that doing so might deprive students of the opportunities to practice language and writing. For students who write in a second or foreign language, the opposing voices are sharper, as these students are assumed to have greater difficulties with mastering the linguistic resources needed to communicate effectively (Qu, 2017).

These are, I believe, legitimate concerns. The ongoing inquiry of the pedagogical potentials of multimodal composition requires many theoretical discussions and studies based on empirical data. One way of reconciling the dispute is to avoid talking about multimodal composition as if it is a homogenous entity that is either done or not done in the classroom. The helpfulness of a multimodal composing project essentially depends on how the activities are designed and how learning is scaffolded through these activities. In some publications, the course/project/activity design is often brushed off in simple sentences like "students are encouraged to use as many modes as possible," which generates the illusion that multimodality itself has the magical power of helping students develop in all sorts of ways. Of course, the curtailed description might be a result of limited publication space, but more details regarding learning outcomes, the genre in focus, and learning sequences would certainly have merits.

Conversely, some critiques of multimodal composing might have committed the strawman fallacy by oversimplifying what is involved in producing multimodal texts. The "multimodal vs. alphabetic" distinction lures many into thinking that multimodal composing is completely free from the use of written language. However, as my experience creating an online portfolio shows, creating a "multimodal text" demands just as much attention to the rhetorical situation, language accuracy, and academic conventions. In writing classrooms, students are usually instructed to produce various types of writing that pave the way for their final multimodal products (see Liang, 2019). These activities create space for students to interact with language in various ways. In my dissertation project, I assigned multilingual students to complete a video project. (continued on page 6)

(cont.) In addition to completing the required assignments, the participants have demonstrated complicated autonomous writing behaviors, creating several documents that helped them organize ideas, integrate online sources, and prepare for the creation of the videos. Throughout the project, the participants also paid constant attention to micro-level writing, such as negotiating sentence structures and word meaning.

I do not intend to argue that multimodal composition is inherently better or more valuable than traditional writing. Rather, with my story and research observations, I hope to invite more discussion on what cognitive processes and skills are involved in composing different multimodal texts in academic settings, and how such experiences can be reproduced in the writing classroom to help students become critical, conscious, and responsible writers.

Xiao Tan is a PhD candidate in Writing, Rhetorics, and Literacies program at Arizona State University. She also serves as the Associate Director of the Second Language Writing program at ASU. Her current research interests include multimodal writing, second language writing and teacher education.



References

- Davis, M., & Mueller, A. (2020). The place of writing on the multimodal page. In P. R. Powell (Ed), Writing changes: Alphabetic text and multimodal composition (pp. 103–122). Modern Language Association.
- Horner, B. (2020). Modality as social practice in written language. In P. R. Powell (Ed), Writing changes: Alphabetic text and multimodal composition (pp. 21-40). Modern Language Association.
- Lauer, C. (2014). Expertise with new/multi/modal/visual/digital/media technologies desired: Tracing composition's evolving relationship with technology through the MLA JIL. *Computers and Composition*, 34, 60–75. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compcom.2014.09.006
- Liang, M.-Y. (2019). Beyond elocution: Multimodal narrative discourse analysis of L2 storytelling. *ReCALL*, *31*(01), 56–74. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0958344018000095
- Lim, J., & Polio, C. (2020). Multimodal assignments in higher education: Implications for multimodal writing tasks for L2 writers. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 47, 100713. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2020.100713
- Luzón, M. J., & Albero-Posac, S. (2020). 'Had a lovely week at #conference2018': An analysis of interaction through conference tweets. *RELC Journal*, *51*(1), 33–51. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688219896862
- Morell, T. (2015). International conference paper presentations: A multimodal analysis to determine effectiveness. *English for Specific Purposes*, *37*, 137–150. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2014.10.002
- Palmeri, J. (2012). Remixing composition: A history of multimodal writing pedagogy. Southern Illinois University Press. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/asulib-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1979892
- Paltridge, B. (2020). Writing for Academic Journals in the Digital Era. RELC Journal, 51(1), 147–157.
 https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688219890359
- Powell, P. R. (2020). Introduction: Writing changes: Beyond the binary of writing versus multimodality. In P. R. Powell (Ed), Writing changes: Alphabetic text and multimodal composition (pp. 1–18). Modern Language Association
- Qu, W. (2017). For L2 writers, it is always the problem of the language. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 38, 92–93. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2017.10.007.
- Ruiz-Madrid, M. N. (2021). A multimodal discourse approach to research pitches. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 52, 101003. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2021.101003
- Tan, X. & Matsuda, P. K. (2020). Teacher beliefs and pedagogical practices of integrating multimodality into first-year composition. *Computers and Composition*, 58. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compcom.2020.102614.
- Yancey, K. B. (2004). Made not only in words: Composition in a new key. *College Composition and Communication*, 56(2), 297–328. https://doi.org/10.2307/4140651

Reflexivity in Research Design and Method Selection

By Rowland Anthony Imperial Jesus College, University of Oxford

Reflexivity is "the process of a continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of [a] researcher's positionality as well as active acknowledgement and explicit recognition that this position may affect the research process and outcome" (Berger, 2015, p. 220). In this article, I underscore the importance of reflexivity in making decisions involving research design and method selection. I draw insights not only from my reading of relevant literature on reflexivity, researcher positionality, and research methods, but also from my ongoing experience of doing a doctoral study of language teaching ideologies and practices in the Philippines' transnational TESOL industry.

I hope to share the value of reflexivity with current and prospective graduate students who may have been thrown or have thrown themselves into precarious and uncertain situations brought about by the global pandemic. I believe that being reflexive allows us to better deal with such situations because we can exert greater control over the research design and process (Berger, 2015). Having greater control of the research also allows us to better understand our relationship with, and treatment of, our data (Bucholtz, 2000), and ensure that we uphold ethical standards in our practice (Sultana, 2007).

Background of the study

For my doctoral research, I am adopting a critical applied linguistics approach to examine the preponderance of normative ideologies and practices that are often tied to Western models of English and also to appropriateness-based approaches to language education (Flores & Rosa, 2015). Situating my study in the Philippines, I aim to reconceptualise how relevant stakeholders from non-Anglosphere backgrounds reify or challenge ideologies and practices in English language teaching. This is a direct response to recent calls for change that have been put forth by several applied linguists and language educationalists. Rose and Galloway (2019, p. 222), for example, have been advocating for "new pathways forward" to transform TESOL into a more adaptable profession.

I am particularly interested in examining the notions of change and adaptability in the Philippines' transnational TESOL industry. This is because Filipino teachers who teach English as a Second Language (ESL) have historically been perceived to be 'inauthentic' sources of English by international students (Jang, 2018) because of their accent, pronunciation, or lack of American or British cultural knowledge (Choe, 2016). Indeed, "idealised, native-speaker oriented visions of English and English language learning" (Llurda, 2016, p. 60) have had a profound effect on Filipinos' self-perception as ESL instructors. Despite this, many of these teachers have found ways to adapt to their students' needs and gradually develop "distinctive curricula designs and pedagogical labor" not only to manage their "assumed inauthenticity" but also to legitimize their classrooms as spaces for learning (Jang, 2018, p. 230). What I am witnessing here is a neoliberal form of adaptation that has allowed a group of minoritized language teachers to thrive in their profession by capitalising on their teaching skills and pedagogical innovations. But we do not know for sure whether such an adaptation is doing anything to challenge or resist normativities in language education that lie at the level of ideology.

(continued on page 8)

Positionality statement

I am a second-year DPhil student in Education at the University of Oxford. I do sociolinguistics and critical applied linguistics research. Previously, I carried out work using mixed-methods and sociophonetic approaches to the study of Philippine English in ESL contexts and sociolinguistic variation among Tagalog-English and Korean-English bilingual speakers. I also worked for three years as an instructor of English academic writing at the National University of Singapore before moving to the UK. Naturally, my research and teaching experiences led me to TESOL research.

Although I have previously done ESL-related research, I am not a trained ESL instructor. I am also not affiliated with the Philippine TESOL industry. Furthermore, despite my Filipino heritage and multilingual background (I am well-versed in Tagalog, Cebuano, and Ilonggo), I have lived away from home for more than 15 years, spending most of my time in Singapore where I received my secondary and tertiary education. Based on my social, academic, and professional background, I cannot claim that I share the lived experiences of Filipino ESL teachers; I am practically an outsider to them. I thus cannot put myself in a position that directly dictates what they should or should not do in their own classrooms. I also cannot allow them to be directly involved in my study in ways that might compromise their profession and livelihood. I believe, however, that I am in a position to create an avenue for ESL instructors and other relevant stakeholders in the field of TESOL to engage in meaningful dialogue and work collaboratively to make transnational language education a more democratic space for teaching and learning.

Self-appraising the research design and method selection

I knew I could not claim membership within the TESOL community, so I made a conscious effort to strategically control the direction of my work so that I could "move from the position of an outsider to the position of an insider in the course of the study" (Berger, 2015, p. 219). I wanted to achieve this by reaching out to a few select English language learning centres (LLCs) and working in close partnership with them. I purposively sampled LLCs by designing a case-oriented comparative approach that adopted a most similar systems design; see, for example, Panke (2018, pp. 150-168) for a detailed explanation of this design. I dedicated the early stages of my fieldwork to building rapport with LLC administrators, programme coordinators, teachers, and students. I wanted the study to be as collaborative as possible, despite my status as an outsider.

Because I am interested in examining both language ideologies and practices, I thought that it would be ideal to gather various sources of qualitative data, such as recordings of online lessons, field notes, lesson materials, and teacher and student interviews. I incorporated ethnographic methods within a case-oriented research design (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017) in order to systematically gather and organise the data. I was initially convinced that by amassing a plethora of data I would be able to effectively identify critical themes related to my research topic. But over time, this has proven to be problematic for a number of reasons. For instance, I have found it extremely difficult to manage huge amounts of qualitative data on my own. I also questioned my approach to data analysis: if my primary goal is to explore critical themes related to language ideologies and practices, will I then achieve this goal by watching and transcribing hundreds of hours of classroom recordings? Wouldn't it be more sensible to just ask teachers and students about their thoughts on language teaching? And if I should insist on analysing the lesson materials used by the participating ESL instructors, then would I not inevitably be making normative judgements about their pedagogical practices? Throwing these difficult questions at myself allowed me to exert greater control over my research. (continued on page 9)

(cont.) For instance, I recently decided to forgo any attempt to evaluate my study participants' lessons, classroom management practices, and teaching materials because this approach to data analysis would go against my positionality. I also felt that this would negatively affect the relationships I have built with the ESL instructors and partner LLCs.

Critical reflections on reflexivity and researcher positionality

While being reflexive has helped me exert greater control over my study, it has brought me much anxiety. I worry about how theories of language ideology and practices would affect my reading and interpretation of data. I doubt my ability to effectively use my data "to think with theory" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2014, p. vii). I fear that the emergence of new or unexpected findings would completely change the direction of my research. Truth be told, engaging in constant self-appraisal and critical evaluation has not done much to boost my confidence as a researcher. Sometimes I feel that being reflexive actually hinders me from doing research. Even Bucholtz (2000) admits that a high level of engagement with reflexivity runs the risk of the researcher "displacing the research as the centre of discussion" (p. 1463). But the line that separates the researcher from their work is often a blurry one. As mentioned by Brown (2010, p. 238), "a different researcher, or the same researcher in a different frame of mind, might write a different report from the same data" (cited in Dean et al., 2017). Hence, decisions about design and method selection should be made in light of the researcher's social, cultural, political, and temporal positionality, wherever possible.

Often, research processes unfold and outcomes emerge in unpredictable ways. There are circumstances that cannot be regulated, manipulated, or tinkered with, no matter how reflexive, adaptable, and creative we may be. Needless to say, research is a human activity that remains deeply entrenched in relations of power, and so we must strive to take responsibility for the elements of research that we can control. By doing so, we uphold ethical standards in our practice, accord all study participants equal respect, and minimise harm (Sultana, 2007).

Rowland Imperial is a linguist by academic training with a research interest in critical applied linguistics, second language acquisition, and language teaching/pedagogy. He is a Clarendon scholar and is currently reading for a DPhil in Education at Jesus College, University of Oxford.



References

- Bartlett, L., & Vavrus, F. K. (2017). Rethinking case study research: A comparative approach. Routledge.
- Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don't: researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. Qualitative Research, 15(2), 219–234.
- Brown, A. (2010). Qualitative method and compromise in applied social research. *Qualitative Research*, 10(2), 229–248.
- Choe, H.–S. (2016). Identity formation of Filipino ESL teachers teaching Korean students in the Philippines. English Today, 32(1), 5–11
- Bucholtz, M. (1999). The politics of transcription. Journal of Pragmatics, 32, 1439–1465.
- Dean, J., Furness, P., Verrier, D., Lennon, H., & Bennett, C. (2018). Desert island data: An investigation into researcher positionality. *Qualitative Research*, 18(3), 273–289.
- Flores, N., & Rosa, J. (2015). Undoing appropriateness: Raciolinguistic ideologies and language diversity in education. *Harvard Educational Review*, 85(2), 149–171.

References for "Reflexivity in Research Design" continued

• Llurda, E. (2016). 'Native speakers', English and ELT: Changing perspectives. In G. Hall (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of English language teaching* (pp. 51-63). Routledge.

- Jackson, A. Y., & Mazzei, L. A. (2012). Thinking with theory in qualitative research. Routledge.
- Jang, I. C. (2018). Legitimating the Philippines as a language learning space: Transnational Korean youth's experiences and evaluations. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 22(2), 216–232.
- Panke, D. (2018). Research design and method selection: Making good choices in the social sciences. SAGE.
- Rose, H., & Galloway, N. (2019). Global Englishes for language teaching. Cambridge University Press.
- Sultana, F. (2007). Reflexivity, positionality and participatory ethics: Negotiating fieldwork dilemmas in international research. ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies, 6(3), 374–385.

Identifying and Reducing Cognitive Biases in Research

By David D. Perrodin King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi

The primary role of a PhD student is to develop as an academic researcher. In doing so, the PhD student builds credibility and trustworthiness as a specialist in their field. It is likely that most doctoral students are genuinely interested in their chosen discipline, as was the case for the participants in Hribar and Dolinšek's (2015) study in Slovenia. Despite this interest, the possibility of gaining better employment in their current careers was the most significant factor in deciding to pursue a doctorate. However, in the United States, Bowen and Rudenstine (2014) found that over half of the PhD students at ten leading universities failed to complete their doctoral studies. Bowen and Rudenstine, among others, have discussed fundamental issues that may interfere with pursuing a doctorate, such as anxiety, conflict with PhD supervisors, funding issues, inadequate work/life balance, lack of institutional or personal support, loneliness, problems with motivation, and time management (Naylor et al., 2016; Pyhältö et al., 2012; Wan, 2016). Although most studies have focused on the abovementioned emotional and physical challenges in the academic pursuit of a doctorate, few studies have focused on the challenging influences of biases on up-and-coming researchers.

Biases are subtle yet ubiquitous and may emerge from internal and/or external influences. They are a faulty manner of interpreting the weight or value of information according to one's preconceived association as an insider within a community or social unit, such as with customs, identity, norms, religion, or values (Psychology Today, 2022). Wan (2016) found that one of the most challenging aspects for developing PhD researchers is identifying and overcoming biases in research. Moreover, Pannucci and Wilkins determined that biases can appear in all stages of research, from the planning, data collection, and analysis to the final writing phases.

One type of bias that a PhD student will encounter in their doctoral journey is cognitive bias, or our brain's ability to recognize and favor natural processing patterns within various stimuli (Wilke & Mata, 2012). (continued on page 11)

(cont.) An illustration of cognitive bias is confirmation bias, or the irrational processing of information where an individual is emotionally connected to an issue or has a personal stake in a belief, faith, or opinion (Nickerson, 1998). For example, a researcher may profile certain extralocal (see below) teachers as privileged and others as marginalized due to their appearance, nationality, or ethnicity.

My Own Experience with Research Biases

Although quite grueling, identifying and reducing cognitive biases is a rite of passage for developing PhD scholars. Take my current doctoral study, for instance. I am looking at privilege and marginalization in the working contexts, social perceptions, and self-image of 'extralocal' English teachers in Thailand (see Perrodin 2020, 2021a, 2021b). I define extralocal teachers as non-local teachers of English who are not citizens of the country in which they teach. They may be "native" or "non-native" speakers of English—or, to use another popular description, L1 or LX English users (see Thomas & Osment, 2019). To adequately examine privilege and marginalization within the three aspects above, I had to carefully identify biases in each phase before analyzing the data sets and then choose the most appropriate methodology to reduce biases within each. Consequently, carefully selecting the most appropriate methods will help reduce, although not eliminate, biases within the analysis of each data set.

Firstly, identifying and reducing biases in examining specific working contexts of different positions affiliated with teaching English in Thailand required a thorough literature review. I had several discussions with extralocal teachers from diverse backgrounds about what websites they use when looking for teaching jobs in Thailand. I ventured into a three-month undertaking examining hundreds of job advertisements from the most predominantly mentioned website catering to English teachers in Thailand. The landing page promoting job advertisements for this website displayed the job title, the school's name, whether the institute was government or private, the location of the job, and the minimum salary. A careful reading of the job advertisements provided additional information concerning the desired nationality, language proficiency, gender, educational qualifications, and/or experience. Utilizing the most preferred website mentioned by the majority of extralocal teachers for information related to teaching English in Thailand reduced bias in examining working contexts of extralocal English teachers in Thailand.

Next, identifying and reducing biases in social perceptions within the Thai society about extralocal teachers of English within Thailand was more challenging. Seeing as I am an outsider, both not Thai and not fully proficient in the Thai language, I elicited assistance in examining the opinions of Thai education stakeholders in Thai social settings. Upon completing a thorough literature review and several discussions with Thai education stakeholders (e.g., school directors, parents, students, teachers), I realized that certain Thai customs and traditions would not allow the stakeholders to offer constructive criticism of extralocal teachers straightforwardly. To overcome this obstacle, my Thai associates and I reviewed open conversations (in the Thai language) on social media platforms about extralocal teachers of English. As one of the most widely used social networks in Thailand when it comes to sharing and criticizing relevant topics, Twitter appeared to be the best platform to review social perceptions of extralocal teachers of English within Thailand.

To reduce bias in analyzing criticisms written in Thai about extralocal teachers of English in Thailand, I elicited the services of qualified Thai academics and language translators for the over 20,000 words I accumulated while building the corpus. In reviewing other studies of this nature, I found that researchers read through translated texts and 'discovered' themes related to their research focus.

(continued on page 12)

(cont.) To safeguard against my own bias in analyzing criticisms, I employed a corpus analysis application, AntConc, for concordancing and text analysis to identify themes in the Twitter messages (Anthony, 2022). The application provided the frequency of occurrences of certain content words within the Twitter messages. The basic assumption was that by analyzing the frequency of lexical words (i.e., nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs) within the text, a relationship between the keywords and themes within the text could be identified (Popping, 2000).

Finally, identifying and reducing biases in the self-image of extralocal teachers of English from various nationalities was as challenging as analyzing the social perceptions within Thai society. Seeing as I am both an insider and outsider within the different social groups of extralocal teachers in Thailand, I chose to use similar methodologies for analysis of the 'keyness' (i.e., the degree of being 'key' or significant within a text) of content words from in-depth interviews to identify themes (Bondi & Scott, 2010; Graham, 2021). As with examining the social perceptions, by utilizing the above application (Anthony, 2022), I reduced my potential bias in determining themes in the transcribed text from interviews about the self-image of extralocal teachers.

In Essence

Although studies have shown that the attrition rate for some doctorate programs is as high as 70%, these studies have mainly concentrated on the mental and physical challenges influencing the continued pursuit of a doctorate. Yet, according to several studies, acknowledging research biases is one of the most demanding elements of an emerging PhD researcher. Pursuing a costly doctorate monopolizes four or more years of a doctoral student's time. So failing to perceive and lessen biases in research may legitimately jeopardize a student's reputation and trustworthiness in their pursuit of a career in their field of study. Therefore, along with the demand to develop as an academic researcher and build credibility and trustworthiness as a specialist in a chosen field, identifying and reducing cognitive biases should be of equal importance in developing as a PhD graduate.



David D. Perrodin is a Foreign Expert, and Journal Manager for the *Journal of Population and Social Studies* (*JPSS*), with the Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR), Mahidol University. He is pursuing a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics for English Language Teaching at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi.

References

- Anthony, L. (2022). *AntConc* (Version 4.0.3) [Computer Software]. Waseda University. https://www.laurenceanthony.net/software
- Bondi, M., & Scott, M. (2010). Keyness in texts. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Bowen, W. & Rudenstine, N. (2014). *In pursuit of the PhD*. Princeton University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400862474
- Graham, D. (2021). *Key-BNC* (Version 2.4.0) [Computer Software]. King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi. https://key-bnc.tfiaa.com

References for "Identifying and Reducing Cognitive Biases" continued

Hribar T., & Dolinšek, S. (2015). Choice Patterns of PhD Students: Why should I pursue a PhD? In E. Henriksen, J. Dillon, & L. Ryder (Eds)., Understanding student participation and choice in science and technology education.
 Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-7793-4_11

- Naylor, R., Chakravarti, S., & Baik, C. (2016). Differing motivations and requirements in PhD student cohorts: A case study. *Issues in Educational Research*, 26(2), 351–367. https://www.iier.org.au/iier26/naylor.pdf
- Nickerson, R. S. (1998). Confirmation Bias: A ubiquitous phenomenon in many guises. *Review of General Psychology*, 2(2), 175–220. https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.2.2.175
- Pannucci, C. J., & Wilkins, E. G. (2010). Identifying and avoiding bias in research. *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*, 126(2), 619–625. https://doi.org/10.1097/prs.0b013e3181de24bc
- Perrodin, D. D. (2020). The constructs of privilege and marginalization subjectively experienced by extralocal teachers of English in Thailand. Mahidol Migration Center Newsletter, 7, 16. http://www.migrationcenter.mahidol.ac.th/download_newsletter/MMC_Newsletter_Vol.7.pdf
- Perrodin, D. D. (2021a). Aspirations of creating one homogenous group of extralocal teachers of English. *The Educators' Link*, 1(4), 226.
- Perrodin, D. D. (2021b). Extralocal! Extralocal! Read All About It! *EFL Magazine*. https://eflmagazine.com/extralocal-extralocal-read-all-about-it/
- Popping, R. (2000). Thematic text analysis. In Computer-assisted text analysis (pp. 39-66). SAGE Publications, Ltd, https://www.doi.org/10.4135/9781849208741
- Psychology Today. (2022). Bias. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/bias
- Pyhältö, K., Toom, A., Stubb, J., & Lonka, K. (2012). Challenges of becoming a scholar: A study of doctoral students' problems and well-being. *ISRN Education*, 2012, 1-12. https://doi.org/10.5402/2012/934941
- Thomas, N., & Osment, C. (2019). Building on Dewaele's (2018) L1 versus LX Dichotomy: The Language-Usage-Identity State Model. *Applied Linguistics*, 41(6), 1005–1010. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amz010
- Wan, C. D. (2016). Positional challenges and advantages of a PhD student researching the PhD. *The Qualitative Report*, 21(7), 1193–1202. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2016.2411
- Wilke, A., & Mata, R. (2012). Cognitive Bias. In V. S. Ramachandran (Ed.), Encyclopedia of Human Behavior (2nd ed., pp. 531–535). Academic Press. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-375000-6.00094-X

From Qualitative Research to Complexity Theory in Applied Linguistics

By Sarvenaz Balali Texas A&M Commerce

Now commonly used in Applied Linguistics, qualitative research has been defined as "inquiry aimed at describing and clarifying human experience as it appears in people's lives" (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 137). Qualitative researchers scrutinize the complex details of human experiences. They record and report the complexity, diversity, and dynamism that surround the experiences they study. In this paper, I will first consider the major characteristics of qualitative research which enable qualitative researchers to embrace complexity in their studies. Then, I will indicate how we may use complexity theory to provide a coherent understanding of complexity and further the power of qualitative research for addressing the complexity in our field.

Qualitative Research: Major Features

Qualitative research is immensely informed by constructivism. Constructivism became popular in social sciences in the latter half of the twentieth century. Constructivist researchers believe that truth or reality is not universal; rather, it is constructed socially and in a diverse variety of ways by individuals as they interact with their world (Croker & Heigham, 2011). Creswell and Poth (2018), drawing on the previous literature (on qualitative research), identify a few major philosophical assumptions that inform the design and development of qualitative studies. First, the ontological assumption holds that reality can be constructed subjectively through diverse subjective experiences of human beings. Second, the epistemological assumption acknowledges the validity and trustworthiness of subjective knowledge. Third, according to the axiological assumption, knowledge is value-laden rather than being neutral. Finally, the methodological assumption holds that qualitative researchers should study their topics within their natural contexts. Moreover, the methodology of qualitative research should be emerging so as to take different shapes as the researcher goes through the different phases of the research.

Following these underlying philosophical assumptions, qualitative research has a fundamental difference from quantitative research, that is, qualitative research does not normally yield generalizable knowledge. In fact, qualitative researchers are often concerned with learning about experiences of a phenomenon as perceived by certain (often few) people in specific situational contexts, and, therefore, the findings of their research may not be generalized regardless of context (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007).

Through recognizing diverse subjective experiences and acknowledging the intricate interconnection between these subjective realities and their contexts, qualitative research strives to embrace the inherent complexity of social phenomena. Social phenomena are complex since they are interconnected with their context and may be illimitably heterogeneous. These phenomena may appear in a diverse variety of ways as they develop in different contexts and as they are experienced by different people. In each experience, however, only a few aspects of them or a subset of their features may find the chance to develop depending on the context.

(continued on page 15)

(cont.) Qualitative research in applied linguistics aims to embrace the complexity of applied linguistics phenomena which include the processes of language education and language use. To this end, qualitative researchers are expected to scrutinize the experiences of these phenomena and produce thorough reports of the diverse, context-dependent experiences they study. Acknowledging complexity and reporting the diverse experiences of complex phenomena is, however, the first step in the process of coping with complexity. In fact, if we wish to manage complexity in our field, we need to develop a more coherent understanding of complexity.

Complexity theory is a theoretical approach that has been put forward to account for complexity in any system or phenomenon in the realm of both natural and social sciences (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2012). This theory may, therefore, have the potential to address the observed complexity and interconnectivity of applied linguistics phenomena more effectively than previous offerings.

In what follows, I will first introduce complexity theory and the main features of complex systems. Then, I will illustrate how complexity theory can more adequately account for complexity in our research.

Complexity Theory

Complexity theory originated in physical and biological sciences. However, applied linguists have considered the possibility of applying this theory in their research since 1990s. Complexity theory attempts to explicate the essential features of complexity which may appear in different phenomena at different levels of existence (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2012).

According to complexity theory, complex systems have certain essential features in common. Complex systems are *heterogeneous* and have many different but interconnected components. These systems are *nonlinearly dynamic*; that is, their behavior may change in an unpredictable manner. In addition, complex systems are *open* to, *interconnected* with and *adaptive* to their contexts (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2012).

Complexity theory maintains that complex systems can have numerous states. These systems may exhibit widely diverse patterns of behavior in different states, that is, at different times and in different contexts. The states of a complex system may be significantly different from one another, but they all represent the same system or phenomenon. Moreover, while complex systems are immensely heterogeneous and have many different components, all their components are not always present in these systems and may appear only in certain states. In addition, we may not form simplified generalizations about complex systems and identify simplistic, one-directional causal relationships among their components since all these components can be simultaneously interacting. Instead, we may observe patterns of coadaptation among certain components and note that some variables reinforce one another over time (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2012).

From Qualitative Approaches to Complexity Theory

Qualitative researchers acknowledge the presence of complexity—limitless diversity and complex interconnectivity—in their research. In what follows, I will indicate that we may use complexity theory to theoretically justify and contribute to the philosophical assumptions underpinning qualitative research.

The ontological assumption of qualitative research suggests that reality can be constructed in multiple different ways through our subjective experiences. The epistemological assumption acknowledges the validity and trustworthiness of subjective knowledge. (continued on page 16)

(cont.) Subjective knowledge is, in fact, the researcher's subjective interpretation or construction of reality. Therefore, subjective knowledge is, in essence, the same as subjective reality. Hence, both the ontological and epistemological assumptions recognize the significance of subjectively constructed realities or subjective experiences that may be widely diverse and context dependent. However, qualitative research does not necessarily go further to make a connection among the studied experiences particularly across qualitative studies which investigate the same social or educational phenomenon.

Complexity theory can, however, offer qualitative researchers a perspective that can help them translate their knowledge of context-specific experiences of social and educational phenomena into a general, context-independent understanding of those phenomena. Complexity theory may also enable qualitative researchers to form some generalizations about complex phenomena without dismissing their complexity.

The previous literature on experience clarifies that human experiences have both objective and subjective dimensions. (Dewey, 1938/2015). Furthermore, as Hiver and Al-Hoorie (2020) point out, the ontology of complexity theory which is referred to as complex realism acknowledges the objective dimension of reality. In fact, in any experience there is normally an objectively observable situation that exists independent of the subjective world of the experiencer. This objective situation is then subjectively interpreted in a wide variety of ways by people who experience it (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Moreover, while the objective situation may vary, to some extent, across different experiences of a phenomenon, there are central aspects of the situation that are fixed and unchanged in all individual experiences.

Qualitative research should, therefore, have the theoretical tools to account for the objective dimension of the experience and its interaction with the diverse subjective interpretations constructed by individual experiencers. I believe complexity theory may provide us with a theoretical perspective that can help us explain the interaction between objective and subjective dimensions of reality.

In order to describe the relation between subjective experiences and the objective dimension of experience we may view the objective dimension as a complex system. Similarly, subjective experiences may be regarded as contextual factors that surround the objective situation, or vice versa (see below). Therefore, the objective and subjective dimensions of reality are not disconnected or conflicting, rather, being our complex system and contextual factors respectively, they are interconnected and in continuous dynamic interaction. Due to this dynamic interaction, the objective and subjective dimensions may both inform and reflect one another. Consequently, we may argue that subjective reality and subjective knowledge are both valid because they are in continuous interaction with the objective dimension of reality and reflect that dimension. Complexity theory can, therefore, justify the epistemology and ontology of qualitative research and illustrate why subjective reality and subjective knowledge should be considered trustworthy. Furthermore, while subjective experiences of an objective reality are numerous and diverse, researchers can link them since they may all be viewed as reflections (or interpretations) of an objective situation whose central aspects are fixed and unchanged.

Complexity theory can justify the axiology and methodology of qualitative research as well. To account for the axiological and methodological assumptions, we may shift our perspective and view subjective experiences as complex systems that are surrounded not only by the objective reality but also by other factors that are present in their contexts. (continued on page 17)

(cont.) Values, beliefs, feelings, cognitive abilities, and previous experiences of the individual experiencer may be viewed as additional factors that are present in the contexts of subjective experiences. Subjective experiences as complex systems are interconnected with their context. Thus, such factors as beliefs and values may inform the subjective construction of reality. Consequently, we may argue that subjective knowledge is not neutral; rather, it is informed by our beliefs and values that are present in the context and is, therefore, value-laden.

In addition, the contextual factors that surround the subjective experiences may be multiple and variable. Subjective experiences as complex systems are interconnected with their context, and therefore, diversity and dynamism of the contextual factors may contribute to the emergence of unpredictable developments in these experiences. As a result, qualitative inquirers should employ methodologies that are flexible and responsive to the emergent developments in the process of their research.

As applied linguists who adopt a complexity theoretical perspective, we may view processes of language education and language use as complex systems. These processes are complex since they are highly interconnected with their context and may develop indefinite number of new features as they develop in new contexts thus being limitlessly heterogeneous and diverse. Along similar lines, we may regard individual experiences of a language education process as different states of that process. Individual experiences may be substantially diverse because of transpiring in different contexts, but they are still different states of the same process and represent the same phenomenon. I mentioned above that complex systems are heterogeneous but in each state of their existence a subset of their features may be present in these systems. Therefore, in each state we may be introduced to features or components of a complex phenomenon that have been absent from previous states. Similarly, we may regard individual experiences as opportunities that may introduce us to new features (or variables) of the complex phenomenon we study. These features may only appear in certain contexts and be absent from certain other contexts but still constitute the complex phenomenon that we study since they show up in some states (i.e., experiences) of that phenomenon.

Adopting the foregoing perspective, we can view codes that we identify in our qualitative analysis as features or variables of the studied complex phenomenon that has been experienced in a certain way by the participants in our research. Then, we can compare the codes identified in our research against the previous literature on the studied phenomenon to identify the variables that have appeared in our research and are absent from the literature. We may, then, add the newly identified variables to the list of the variables that characterize the phenomenon under study. These newly identified variables can broaden the scope of the heterogeneity of the studied phenomenon. They can also provide insight into the nonlinear dynamism that develops as the phenomenon is transferred from one context to another or, in other words, as it develops in new contexts.

Complexity theory maintains that as we study a complex system, we may observe patterns of coadaptation between certain variables (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2012). These patterns of coadaptation, particularly when observed in several studies, may provide us with the power and confidence to generalize about certain aspects of the system. Therefore, as applied linguists, when we observe concurrence between certain variables in experiences of language education in several qualitative studies, we may hypothesize that these variables coadapt and may reinforce one another regardless of context. Thus, using the notion of coadaptation, as we conduct qualitative studies on complex social phenomena, we may form general hypotheses about their behavior in general. Consequently, while we embrace complexity, we need not necessarily give up hypothesizing, prediction, and control. (continued on page 18)

Conclusion

The acknowledgement of complexity is the first major step in the process of managing complexity which qualitative research strives to take. The second major step is making adequate sense of complexity to further theorize about complex language education phenomena without dismissing their complexity. In this paper, I have tried to explain how complexity theory may help us make sense of complexity that is an inherent aspect of qualitative research.

Through my theoretical argumentation in this paper, I tried to illustrate the potential of complexity theory to advance the power of qualitative research. Several researchers and applied linguists have investigated similar ideas in detail in their work. Larsen-Freeman (1997) pioneered the application of complexity theory in our field. Since then, several applied linguists have explored and applied this theory in their research. Hiver and Al-Hoorie (2020), for instance, have scrutinized the contributions of complexity theory to both qualitative and quantitative research as well as how complexity theory may help researchers integrate these two approaches to research in applied linguistics. In this paper, I indicated that complexity theory may justify and broaden the ontology of qualitative research to embrace both objective and subjective aspects of the experiential reality. Complexity theory may also provide a theoretical ground for why subjective knowledge is both value-laden and valid and why the methodology of qualitative research should be emerging.

In my discussion, I suggested that we may consider individual experiences of a social (or more specifically educational) phenomenon as possible states of that phenomenon. These experiences may shed light on new variables that constitute the complex phenomenon under scrutiny and enable qualitative researchers to develop a more comprehensive image of that phenomenon as a whole. This thorough image may then enable qualitative inquirers in our field to more confidently theorize about language education phenomena that appear to be widely diverse, context-dependent, and unpredictable.

(References on page 19)

Sarvenaz Balali is a Ph.D. candidate in Applied Linguistics at Texas A&M University–Commerce. Sarvenaz's current research focuses on sociocultural aspects of language learning with a focus on "cultural discontinuity." Her research interests span a broader range of topics including applying complexity theory to research in second language education.



References for "From Qualitative Research to Complexity Theory"

• Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches.*Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Croker, R. A., & Heigham, J. (2011). *Qualitative Research in Applied Linguistics: A practical introduction*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dewey, J. (1938\2015). Experience and education. New York: Free Press.
- Hiver, P., & Al-Hoorie, A. H. (2020). Research methods for complexity theory in Applied Linguistics. Blue Ridge Summit.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (1997). Chaos/Complexity Science and Second Language Acquisition. *Applied Linguistics*, 18(2), 141–165. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/18.2.141
- Larsen-Freeman, D., & Cameron, L. (2012). *Complex systems and applied linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pinnegar, S., & Daynes, J. G. (2007). Locating narrative inquiry historically. *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology*, 3–34.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (2005). Language and Meaning: Data Collection in Qualitative Research. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52(2), 137-145.

Multiculturalism and its effect on international teaching associates and assistants in the United States

By Daeun Shin Arizona State University

Introduction

This article aims to depict a sample classroom environment by sharing the author's teaching experience in first-year composition (FYC) classes and to suggest a pedagogical approach that can be incorporated into international teaching associates and assistants (ITAs) training programs. ITAs are graduate students from different countries who teach undergraduate courses (Gorsuch, 2016). This article only focuses on the issue of ITAs in the United States (US), as per the author's teaching experience.

The international graduate student population has been increasing (Institute of International Education, 2022), and the population of ITAs is also projected to increase. Higher educational institutions, then, are responsible for offering proper ITA training programs for both ITAs and undergraduate students (Meadows et al., 2015). I argue that the first step for developing such training programs should be understanding the current classroom environment when taught by ITAs. The structure of this paper is as follows: First, the concept of intelligibility (Smith & Nelson, 1985) intertwined with perceived "non-nativeness" is introduced as the main problem based on a review of ITA studies. (continued on page 20)

(cont.) The author's teaching experience is then juxtaposed with the literature by focusing on the change in undergraduate student demographic and stance regarding multiculturalism. Finally, critical multicultural pedagogy (May & Sleeter, 2010; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995) is proposed as an approach that reflects the multicultural turn (May, 1994), empowers ITAs, and cultivates effective learning environments.

Intelligibility and Perceived "Non-Nativeness"

The main concern about ITAs portrayed in the literature is the issue of intelligibility of their instructional delivery. Intelligibility encompasses three levels of understanding: (1) word-level recognition, (2) sentence-level meaning understanding, and (3) sentence-level illocutionary understanding; each level being interrelated (Smith & Nelson, 1985). The intelligibility issue addressed in ITA studies ranges from the first level—related to English accents—to the third level—related to pragmatic aspects of the instructional delivery. Based on this framework of intelligibility, ITA studies have focused on the perceived "non-nativeness" attached to ITAs and its impact on the intelligibility of their instructional delivery. Intelligibility is co-constructed through a negotiation process between speakers and listeners (Smith & Nelson, 1985). Therefore, student perceptions toward ITAs (Kang, Rubin, & Lindemann, 2015; Rubin, 1992; Zhao, 2017) and ITAs' self-perceptions (Ruecker, Franzier, & Tseptsura, 2018; Zheng, 2017) as being "non-native" affect the intelligibility of their instructional delivery. For example, Rubin (1992) and Zhao (2017) demonstrate how perceived "non-nativeness" of ITAs negatively affects the intelligibility of their instructional delivery whereas Kang et al. (2015) shows that a change in student perceptions toward ITAs can bring a change in the intelligibility.

Positive Perceptions on "Non-Nativeness": My Experience from FYC classrooms

Compared to the ITA literature, perceived "non-nativeness" and its subsequent negative consequences regarding the intelligibility issue seems to be different from my own teaching experience. I have taught FYC courses in the US for the past two years. I have around 20 students per class and teach three courses per year. Both domestic and international students have reacted positively to my perceived "non-nativeness" as an ITA, and I have not encountered any negative reactions yet. They demonstrate their cultural affiliation to East Asia to which I belong by sharing their extra-mural lives. Their affiliation with Korean culture is expressed in multiple and unexpected ways. For example, one student asked if it is possible to visit my office hours to ask some questions about the Korean language. This occurred at the beginning of the FYC course in a student needs analysis survey. Some students mentioned that they took Korean language and culture courses or asked for recommendations. Experiences like these seem to imply the possibility of students' positive perceptions about my "non-nativeness."

A positive perception of "non-nativeness" could influence the intelligibility of instructional delivery (Kang et al., 2015; Wang & Jenkins, 2016). As mentioned above, intelligibility is constructed by speakers and listeners. The positive perception of "non-nativeness," then, can be an influential factor for students' willingness to understand instructions, which in turn, affects the construction of the intelligibility of instructional delivery. Student evaluations on my teaching for the past two years have remarked on two criteria that are related to instructional delivery: "the instructor demonstrated knowledge of the course subject and materials" and "the instructor effectively explained the importance of the subject matter," which have scored an average of 1.2 on a 5-point Likert scale. The scale ranges from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). This evaluation demonstrates that the majority of the students strongly agreed with the aforementioned statements regarding my teaching. (continued on page 21)

(cont.) The score from these evaluations implies that the students' positive perception of my "non-nativeness" positively affects the intelligibility of my instructional delivery.

The change in student demographic could be one possible reason for the gap between the findings in previous studies about ITAs and my own experience regarding my students' perceptions about ITAs' "non-nativeness." Having multicultural experiences can influence students' perceptions. As mentioned earlier, intelligibility is constructed by speakers and listeners, and students' multicultural experiences facilitate their willingness to be cooperative with ITAs in classroom settings (Kang et al., 2015). As the international population increases in the US, more people are exposed to different cultures from a young age and have positive attitudes towards people from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds than in previous generations (Budiman, October 1, 2020; U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). It is, then, possible to speculate that current undergraduate students, as opposed to the student demographic represented in past literature, tend to react positively to "non-nativeness" due to their multicultural experiences. They perhaps enrolled in my class because of my "non-nativeness".

Critical Multicultural Pedagogy

Multiculturalism has been a big part of current undergraduate students' lives and affects their perception of ITAs' "non-nativeness" and instructional delivery. However, recognizing and celebrating differences is not enough: Multiculturalism entails close examination of inequitable power relations (May & Sleeter, 2010; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995). In other words, having a positive perception of difference does not necessarily mean understanding difference. In fact, many of my students have also expressed their interest in Japanese culture, which could imply insensitivity towards diverse East Asian cultures. One time, I was surprised to see a white American student's name written in Japanese on an assignment assuming that I would be able to read it. Understanding multiple cultures from critical perspectives can cultivate solidarity among students (May & Sleeter, 2010) as well as empower ITAs to be confident in their teaching (Zheng, 2017). In this sense, this paper argues for incorporating a critical multicultural pedagogy (May & Sleeter, 2010; Sletter & McLaren, 1995) into ITA training programs.

In addition to offering critical awareness on differences, critical multicultural pedagogy provides students with a critical lens for understanding power dynamics and reconceptualizes schools as a sociopolitical space representing specific interests (Sleeter & McLaren, 1995). This aspect of critical multicultural pedagogy can empower ITAs. Inequitable power relations become visible by sharing historical and cultural self-narratives and comparing them with others. This, in turn, connects ITAs' multiple selves with larger socio-cultural-political discourses (May & Sleeter, 2010). Incorporating critical multicultural pedagogy into ITA training programs, then, offers these teachers an ideological lens to understand themselves from critical perspectives, empowering them to navigate the US higher education system. It also offers a pedagogical lens that they can bring into the classroom in which students can share their lived experiences and re-examine their cultural affiliations.

The close examination of inequitable power relations in cultures and societies offered by critical multicultural pedagogy seems to be beneficial for ITAs. If their "non-nativeness" attracts students with cultural affiliations associated with ITAs, it is possible to assume that the students are more comfortable discussing different cultures. Then, ITAs can apply critical multicultural pedagogy to (1) help students re-examine their assumptions regarding their cultural affiliations and (2) promote their critical understanding of the knowledge-producing process in the US higher education system. As the process of applying the pedagogy involves sharing lived experiences of ITAs as well as students, it could also engender solidarity among students and ITAs and empower them. (continued on page 22)

(cont.) Conclusion

This article suggests critical multicultural pedagogy for ITAs by addressing my teaching experience as an ITA in the US higher education system. Unlike the previous literature on ITAs, my teaching experience reflects undergraduate students' positive perceptions of my "non-nativeness." The shift in perceptions could be attributed to students' exposure to more multicultural experiences. However, these positive perceptions toward cultural differences do not necessarily mean understanding them. By applying a critical multicultural pedagogy, ITAs can offer opportunities for students to closely examine inequitable power relations in multiple contexts, including different cultures and US society. Since this paper is preliminary and based on personal anecdotes, systemic examination of the phenomenon, including understanding students' perspectives and adding other ITAs' teaching experiences, are suggested as next steps.

Daeun Shin is a graduate student at Arizona State University. Her research interests include intergroup emotion and emotion alignment in computer-mediated communication. She currently works on research projects exploring mechanisms of intergroup emotion and linguistic manifestations of emotion alignment that emerge in Korean online forums.



References

- Budiman, A. (2020, October 1). Americans are more positive about the long-term rise in U.S. racial and ethnic diversity than in 2016. *Pew Research Center*. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/10/01/americans-are-more-positive-about-the-long-term-rise-in-u-s-racial-and-ethnic-diversity-than-in-2016/
- Gorsuch, G. (2016). International teaching assistants at universities: A research agenda. *Language Teaching*, 49(2), 275–290.
- Institute of International Education. (2022). "International Student Enrollments by Institutional Type, 1999/00–2019/20." Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange. http://www.opendoorsdata.org.
- Kang, O., Rubin, D., & Lindemann, S. (2015). Mitigating U.S. undergraduates' attitudes toward international teaching assistants. *TESOL Quarterly*, 49(4), 681–706.
- May, S. (1994). Making multicultural education work. Multilingual Matters.
- May, S., & Sleeter, C. E. (2010). Introduction: Critical multiculturalism: Theory and praxis. In S. May, & C. E. Sleeter (Eds.), *Critical multiculturalism: Theory and praxis* (pp. 1-16). Taylor & Francis Group.
- Meadows, N. K., Olsen, K. C., Dimitrov, N., & Dawson, D. L. (2015). Evaluating the differential impact of teaching assistant training programs on international graduate student teaching. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 45(3), 34–55.
- Rubin, D. (1992). Nonlanguage factors affecting undergraduates' judgments of nonnative English-speaking teaching assistants. *Research in Higher Education*, 33(4), 511–531.
- Ruecker, T., Frazier, S., & Tseptsura, M. (2018). Language difference can be an asset: Exploring the experiences of nonnative English-speaking teachers of writing. *CCC*, 69(4), 612–641.
- Sleeter, C. E., & McLaren, P. (1995). Introduction: Exploring connections to build a critical multiculturalism. In C. E. Sleeter, & P. McLaren (Eds.), *Multicultural education, critical pedagogy, and the politics of difference* (pp. 5–32). SUNY Press.
- Smith, L. E., & Nelson, C. L. (1985). International intelligibility of English: Directions and resources. *World Englishes*, 4(3), 333–342.
- Wang, Y. & Jenkins, J. (2016). "Nativeness" and intelligibility: Impacts of intercultural experience through English as a Lingua Franca on Chinese speakers' language attitudes. *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 39(1), 38–58.
- Zhao, Y. (2017). Student interactions with a native speaker tutor and a nonnative speaker tutor at an American writing center. *The Writing Center Journal*, 36(2), 57–87.
- Zheng, X. (2017). Translingual identity as pedagogy: International teaching assistants of English in college composition classrooms. *The Modern Language Journal*, 101(S1), 29-44.

Professional Development Corner

Graduate students as conference organisers: Tips and reflections

By Tim Hampson University College London

Five years ago, I was on the founding team of a conference called <u>excitELT</u>. Since then, I have been on the organising team of three in-person and two online conferences. In this article, I want to tell you a little about those experiences and why graduate students should consider organising a conference. Organising a conference is a really enriching experience, not just for the field as a whole, but for the organiser as well. While it's impossible to give a complete guide to running a conference in a brief article such as this one, I will highlight some important points that graduate students who decide to organise conferences should consider.

My involvement in excitELT, the first conference I organised, was driven by seeing problems with existing conferences. The first of these problems was that the featured speakers of many conferences were disproportionately made up of older, white, male native speakers of English. This, I learned from conversations with other conference organisers, was a self-perpetuating problem. Organisers often look for featured speakers with a track record of being a featured speaker. That means, if a group has historically dominated those slots, it will usually continue to do so.

The second issue was that conferences often seemed quite unconcerned with interaction. Some of my best conference experiences have been disappearing to a nearby cafe and talking to teachers. However, many conferences I have attended did little to support this. One of the strongest memories I have that illustrates this point is seeing an experienced and well-respected speaker spending an hour lecturing from PowerPoint about how people can't learn if you are lecturing from PowerPoint!

Third, we wanted the conference to be affordable. In the pre-Covid era, many international conferences were held in expensive venues and ended up costing far too much for anyone whose school or university wasn't paying for them to go. In the Covid era, many conferences have inexplicably kept these high prices despite the major expense of physical venues being gone.

The nice thing about organising your own conference is that you can think outside of the box to change these things you don't like. We decided early on that we wanted our list of featured speakers to be diverse. We also worked on ways to tweak the conference experience to make it more social. The biggest change was to session types. We made all of our plenary talks 10 minutes long and made these the only presenter-focused sessions. The other sessions were 1) workshops: sessions where participants learn to do something together; 2) hangouts: where the presenter introduces an issue and brings a list of questions; and 3) demo classes: where the presenter shows off a particular teaching technique.

In addition, we added longer breaks between sessions and less obvious initiatives based on things we observed at other conferences. For example, at many in-person conferences, you might see people skimming through conference booklets alone, thinking about where they should go next.

(continued on page 24)

(cont.) To make our conference more social, we used large timetable posters rather than booklets. Initially, the posters seemed like a strange idea, but we found they worked really well at promoting conversation. At the end of each session, people gathered around these posters, and this sparked up 'What are you off to see next?' conversations.

In addition, by working with universities, who are often willing to offer rooms for free, we managed to lower these costs dramatically and offer access to the conferences at an affordable price (and later, on a 'pay what you can' basis). Any profit that the conference made was donated to charity. As a result, the conference has managed to donate thousands of dollars to Room to Read, a charity supporting literacy in the developing world.

Conferences in different places will have different issues they need to address. My purpose is not to tell you what should matter to you when organising conferences. Instead, I want to show what is possible and encourage you to think about what you would change about conferences.

Having a clear vision for what a potential conference looks like is important. In the past, many conferences have been organised simply because people in that area needed a place to share research and meet one another. This led to conferences being organised around quite broad themes. It seems that online conferences are here to stay, and one upside is that online conferences can become more niche focused. Furthermore, online conferences are less geographically bound than in-person conferences. This means if you want to gather a group of people around a specific idea, you'll have a much easier time. For example, I recently attended a conference about Race and Queerness in ELT organised by the <u>IATEFL Teacher Development SIG</u>. The fact that this conference was online meant that I could hear talks from experts in this topic from around the world. Online conferences offer a chance for organisers to be more specific about what the conference is about or how it is organised.

The other important thing about organising a conference to keep in mind is that people are usually very willing to help. This is especially true if your conference has a clear vision for what it wants to do. You are going to want people to help on the day, so talking to people with an interest in your topic and some experience organising events can be beneficial. It's also a good idea to speak to people you know who can suggest and reach out to potential speakers.

When I first was involved in excitELT, I was a teacher rather than a graduate student. At that point, getting to connect with potential speakers was a bonus, because it gave me a chance to connect with teachers and researchers I admired. However, as a graduate student, making these kinds of connections is more than just enjoyable, it's a career must. People I have met through organising conferences have become close friends and academic contacts.

To conclude, organising a conference is a lot of work, but it is also deeply rewarding. By organising a conference, you get to see a tiny bit of academic discourse take place in the way you want it to. It gives you the opportunity to meet with people you might not otherwise get the chance to. Finally, you get to put together an event that others will learn from and enjoy.



Tim Hampson is a first-year PhD student at University College London having completed his MSc at Oxford University. Aside from his research activities, he is creative director at The ELT Workshop and teaches at Practical IELTS. He is a founding organiser of the excitELT series of conferences.

Cultivating lifelong mentormentee relationships through successful crosscultural mentorship

By Yoko Mori University of Otago, New Zealand Professional
Development
Corner

As someone studying professional identity formation and growth of faculty developers (i.e., teacher educators) in higher education, I often ponder on what the ideal qualities of academics would be, especially in the context of mentoring. Pursuing such ideal qualities for academics is a de facto educational agenda for universities to achieve inclusion and equality in higher education (Zou, 2021). It is essential for academics to have profound knowledge in their respective fields. Additionally, in this era of globalization, being able to implement effective cross-cultural mentoring seems to be a quality many stakeholders in higher education agree is increasingly important. So, what exactly is "effective cross-cultural mentoring"? I believe it is the act of developing mentorship (mentoring+relationship) with openness to different cultures including racial and ethnic identifications, gender, religion, sociopolitical background, and nationality. Without openness to accept each other's culture, establishing a trusting relationship between a mentor and a mentee is difficult. Being open to each other's culture may sound commonsensical. However, past studies (e.g., Freeman & Kochan, 2019; Zou, 2021) reveal that this is not always the case. In this article, I would like to focus on three points which I have found helpful to nurture "openness to different cultures" from my own experiences as an international student: 1) sharing a clear common vision and understanding of the project process; 2) upholding dignity for each other; and 3) sharpening intuition for mutual understanding.

Sharing a Clear Common Vision

Sharing a clear common vision and understanding of the project process helps to overcome cultural differences and strengthens teamwork. In the process of discussing a common vision and the various expectations from both sides, cultural differences may surface. However, the eventual agreement on, for example, the project process, will create a metaphorical boat on which both the mentor and mentee ride together toward a common goal. In many institutions, a mentor-mentee agreement form is often signed after matching expectations. This clarifies the goal and project process of what the team hopes to achieve. The consolidation of expectations supports the mentor and mentee's commitment to start a journey on the same boat, setting them to look in the same direction despite cultural differences they may have. As long as these two points have been openly discussed and agreed on, I believe the focus would be kept on common elements rather than differences.

Upholding Dignity for Each Other

Upholding dignity for each other is vital in any human relationship and closely connects to an individual's approach to professionalism. This is true for the mentor, as a professional academic, and for the mentee, as an apprentice working toward such professionalism. According to the Cambridge Dictionary (2021), "dignity" is defined as "the importance and value that a person has, that makes other people respect them or makes them respect themselves." (continued on page 26)

(cont.) The awareness to respect and appreciate each other is even more important between individuals of different cultural backgrounds because it is easy to take things for granted based on one's own culture and forget that one's common sense may not necessarily be common to the other.

One activity I have found helpful in a cross-cultural mentorship is having straightforward talks. In a high context culture like Japan, where people basically speak the same language and act according to shared beliefs and customs (Meyer, 2016), they can communicate relatively well without being explicit. However, in a low context culture like the US, where many people have different native-languages and act according to diverse beliefs and customs (ibid.), this tends to be rather difficult. Expecting others to read "between the lines" in low context cultures is often not an ideal means of communication. If mutual respect exists as a foundation in a mentor-mentee relationship, I believe straightforwardness will not be interpreted as impoliteness. Instead, in many cases, it may even be a good strategy to prevent miscommunication.

Sharpening Intuition for Mutual Understanding

Sharpening intuition for mutual understanding is essential for a healthy mentor-mentee relationship and strongly connects with the second point, upholding dignity for each other. If mutual respect exists, I feel that it is natural for both sides to try to sharpen intuition for the sake of optimal mutual understanding. "Intuition" in an academic context may sound lacking in scientific evidence, and in general, seems less valued than "intellect." Furthermore, these knowledge components ("intuition" and "intellect") are often positioned as opposites in dictionaries. However, I believe intuition is a very important component of knowledge and should be valued as much as intellectual knowledge, if not more.

Intuition strongly connects with one's capacity to imagine, and imagination connects to empathy and compassion—another knowledge component that is crucial for peaceful human relationships. Without imagination, one would not be able to understand the other's feelings or be creative enough to communicate well. I think we have all experienced situations where we used gestures and anything we could possibly think of, at times so desperately, to get a message through to a person with a different cultural background. I remember those moments very well, even as a child. In fortunate instances, people would rephrase my sentence and kindly turn the conversation around so that I could simply answer, "Ah, yes! That is what I meant!" What a relief those moments were, and how grateful I was for their sharp intuition to receive my message correctly! Intuition is, indeed, a primal yet higher order construct—an indispensable component of knowledge which helps us overcome cultural differences. I believe making conscious effort to sharpen such knowledge is vital for a sustainable mentor-mentee relationship.

"By nothing do men show their character more than by the things they laugh at" - J.W. Goethe

Reflection

Reflecting on my past and present mentorship experiences, I am thankful that they have developed to become lifelong mentorships. I understand that these relationships are not always easy to nurture, so even more for this reason, I cherish them. I would like to end my column with Goethe's (1749–1832) insightful words, which brings the three points together: "By nothing do men show their character more than by the things they laugh at" (von Goethe & Saunders, 1908, p. 122). (continued on page 27)

(cont.) Laughter is a nonlinguistic mode of communication that, at most times, occurs instinctively (Ward, 2017) and "relates to and reflects our capacity to feel for others, and articulates the play of the imagination" (ibid., p. 729). I hope cross-cultural mentorships will create many happy moments of shared laughter despite potential challenges stemming from cultural differences. This could enable both mentors and mentees to deepen mutual understanding and cultivate lifelong relationships.

References

- Cambridge Dictionary (2021). https://dictionary.cambridge.org/ja/dictionary/english/dignity
- Freeman, S., Jr., & Kochan, F. (2019). Exploring mentoring across gender, race, and generation in higher education: An ethnographic study. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, 8(1), 2–18. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/IJMCE-05-2018-0027
- Meyer, E. (2016). The culture map. PublicAffairs.
- von Goethe, J. W., & Saunders, T. B. (1908). *The maxims and reflections of Goethe*. Macmillan and Co.
- Ward, M. (2017). Laughter, ridicule, and sympathetic humor in the early nineteenth century. SEL Studies in English Literature 1500–1900, 57(4), 725–749. https://doi.org/10.1353/sel.2017.0032
- Zou, L. (2021). Cross-cultural mentoring: Cultural awareness & identity empowerment. *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies, 17*(1). https://doi.org/10.5070/D417150292

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the editors (Nathan Thomas, Mariana Becker, Sooyoung Kang) for their helpful review and support. Yoko Mori is a doctoral candidate of higher education at the University of Otago, New Zealand. Her research interests include professional identity development, motivation, English as a Medium of Instruction, intercultural communication, and internationalization of higher education.

Role-playing Games in English Language Teaching

By Katherine Oliva Ortolani Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo

The sun is hanging low in the sky as you all approach the tavern's door. You hear the music and smell the fresh-cooked meats. You put your weight against the door, and as you open it, you are hit by dozens of voices and new smells. 'Ye will ne'er catch me alive!' The Dungeon Master, who was voicing the narrator and the hanging dwarf, then looks at the players and asks: 'What would you like to do?'

This is one of hundreds of possible scenes played and interpreted during a role-playing game (RPG) session. Creative thinking, leadership skills, and human connection are some of the skills that can be developed during a single gaming session. This article reports on how RPGs were utilized to teach English as a foreign language to Brazilian students of all ages in Brazil.

About Me

I'm a Brazilian English teacher, and I have been teaching English in Brazil for fifteen years now. I'm also a PhD candidate in Applied Linguistics, so one could say that the drive to research flows through my body, especially when the opportunity to try something new presents itself. I also have a major in Fashion Design, which gave me even more resources for my creative-thinking toolbox. For this Creative Corner article, I wish to share a creative teaching solution. It involves the principles and themes of RPGs used for online English classes aimed at local students of all ages in Brazil.

RPGs in my Life

For much of my life, I have been surrounded by fantasy and friends who would invite me to play RPGs with them. For some reason, my interest was never really piqued. After getting married, however, there was no escaping it; my husband was an RPG lover.

A little before the pandemic, I had immersed myself in some tabletop RPGs with him and some friends of his. I was



introduced to many fantastic creatures which I knew from my love of fantasy books and films. I was then gifted a set of seven dice. They were beautiful! They vary in color, size, material, and texture. After creating my character and filling out my character sheet with my character's information, which included, for instance, name, gender, their class (e.g., fighter, wizard, bard), equipment (e.g., sword, dagger, lyre), and spells. The Dungeon Master (DM) the person who narrates the story and voices the non-player characters (NPCs)—started setting the scene. As an educator and a teacher of English, I could not help but to analyze and visualize each step of the game as a teaching mechanism. I thought about how effective these games could be if used with children.

The games and the strategies needed to play them enable involvement and opportunities to develop problem solving, decision making, and cohesive team-working skills-all skills deemed important by Vygotsky (1978), who children's argued that learning processes happen by internalization of habits, vocabulary, and ideas of people whom they socialize with. Most importantly, perhaps, it did not competition between encourage friends. It encouraged teamwork. After all, teamwork makes the dream work! (continued on page 29)

Online Classes and Gamification

The COVID-19 pandemic exploded in the beginning of 2020. I found myself at home with a PhD project to work on and Business English classes for adults to teach online. The real challenge, though, was the children. Have you ever taught children in person? It is quite challenging in its own right and demanding beyond belief. What was I to do with them now that the classes were online? I accepted the challenge anyway and tried many different methods. I used textbooks, online games, and storytelling. I was running out of resources, and it was very hard to keep the attention of the 5-yearolds who were on the other side of the screen. Parents or guardians had to be present during the classes; they needed to call on their children's attention so that they did not leave their chairs or go play with their toys. Everything was messy, until it dawned upon me to implement some of the RPG techniques I had analyzed over a year prior to the pandemic. RPGs allow people to interact and explore their own imagination. When applied to teaching, I hoped it could keep students involved and motivated. ... It did!

I searched online to see if there were RPG books for kids, and I happened to find many at my disposal. The language was a little complex for Portuguese speakers who would only have two 1-hour classes during the week, so I knew I couldn't exactly play with them the stories the way they were originally planned. Thus, I created a story according to the children's daily routine, focusing on grammar and vocabulary learning; it was an English class after all.

I guided them through a world of fantasy with dwarves, goblins, orcs, vampires, dragons, werewolves, and even Santa Claus appeared to ask them for their help. The students were the heroes on their fantastical journeys. I put together a presentation with some images I could get online and started teaching them vocabulary as I told them the story. As described in Ortolani and Ortolani (2021), an article I wrote with my husband about this experience, students would initially find themselves in a tavern, a restaurant, or even a bakery. They would then be approached by a waiter (played by me) who would ask them what they would like to eat. Since some of them couldn't read proficiently yet, I would present a menu filled with images. Here, they would have to order using the sentence starter "I would like" plus a food option, such as ice-cream, French fries, a sandwich, and so on. Someone else, an NPC, would then show up and engage in a conversation with them, which is when the main quest would be presented.



Image 1 -Elves, humans, fairies, ghosts, wizards, and fighters by some of the students

As an NPC, I told them about a missing amulet and asked them for their help to find it before a terrible villain could. After accepting the quest, they could then go to a store to buy whatever equipment they deemed helpful for completing it. At that point, I introduced more vocabulary. They were able to buy a limited number of items such as swords, maps, potions, daggers, ropes, candles, backpacks, books, rations, shields, and armor. They loved it. On their journey, they met more NPCs and interacted with them. They were free to speak, be curious, find solutions to problems, identify animals and objects, count, spell out words, and do their favorite part: fight monsters using the equipment they had gotten throughout their journey.

Eventually, I asked them to create their own characters. They drew and described them (see Image 1).

After seeing how well the RPGs worked, I decided to use them in my private classes with adults. It could not have gone better. By creating their characters, they built a pseudo-bridge over their walls of insecurities. It was not the individual expressing themselves; rather, it was their characters. By being someone else, they felt more comfortable putting themselves out there. They spoke without fear of making mistakes, and this gave them more confidence. With older (above 10 years old) and more advanced students, I was able to work with writing. I asked them to write their backstory and a recap of each game/class from their character's perspective.

I even had an official character for myself drawn by a professional artist (see Image 2). The character's name is Luna. I decided that she would have no fashion sense, mixing lots of patterns and wearing a potato sac for a dress. Her hair changes color according to her mood, so if I say she has pink hair now, it means she is shy. She carries a spell book around, which shows that she is a scholar, and she values research. She will always learn new spells! I had as much fun as my students creating it.

Conclusion

Using games in teaching is nothing new. It has been done for quite some time. The secret, however, lies with RPGs. They are fantastic at capturing the attention and imagination of children and adults alike. I can now keep students on the edge of their seats and never wanting to leave them. Their world is no longer trapped by the limitations of COVID-19 or whatever else life throws at them (for the brief moments in which our classes take place).

This has been my experience. I also believe that these techniques have the potential to transcend the pandemic. In my own context, I will keep applying them even after the restrictions are completely lifted and hope others will consider doing the same.

References

- Ortolani, K. N. P. O., & Ortolani, A. N. (2021). Games-based learning: An experience report in teaching English during the pandemic. *Matraga-Revista do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras da UERJ, 28(53), 248-256.*
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in society: Development of higher psychological processes. Harvard University Press.



Image 2 - Luna, an elf wizard by Katherine Oliva Ortolani and Felipe Manossieri

Katherine Oliva Ortolani is a PhD candidate in Corpus Linguistics at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo. Her current research focuses on the language of fashion through a multidimensional perspective (MDA). Her research interests fall at the intersection of applied linguistics, English language teaching and learning, fashion, and games.



Testimonials from GSC Members

Are you interested in joining the AAAL Graduate Student Council? Read what some departing GSC members have to say about their experience and how they view the impact of the GSC on them personally and on the larger AAAL community.

Svetlana Koltovskaia (2021-2022 GSC Co-Chair)

Oklahoma State University

Joining the AAAL GSC has been the best decision I made! In 2019, I became a member of the social media sub-committee and made my way all the way up to serve as a co-chair. The experience serving on the GSC has been great! I not only met and made friends with wonderful graduate students from all over the world but also got to know well-known researchers in our field. I believe that serving on the GSC is an invaluable leadership opportunity with a lot of benefits and opportunities for professional and personal development and growth.

Oksana Moroz (Social Media Member-at-Large)

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

AAAL GSC's social media team working with Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, blog, and website has had a great productive year. We managed to increase our digital presence, interviewed numerous amazing scholars, interacted with our audience, and listened to its needs. Overall, this year has proved to us that people need online community just as much as they need an offline one. Hence, we are always ready to help graduate students navigate their professional and personal endeavors, keep them up to date on the latest events in the applied linguistics world through our social media channels.

Xiao Tan (Diversity Member-at-Large)

Arizona State University

Working with the excellent members of the Graduate Student Council has taught me so much! I joined the GSC in 2021 as the secretary and chair of the Diversity Subcommittee. What's really valuable about this experience is to see from the inside how such a big organization works. I've developed communication and leadership skills. And being able to contribute to the field I love is rewarding! I will take this experience with me and strive to achieve more in the future.

Award Winners

Please join us in congratulating all of this year's graduate student award winners!

Dissertation Award Winner 2022

Dr. Zhongfeng Tian | University of Texas San Antonio



Graduate Student Award Winners 2022

Olumide Ajayi | University of Georgia | GSA-DEIA

Elizabeth Huntley | Michigan State University | Wilga Rivers Award

Harini Rajagopal | U. of British Columbia | Multilingual Matters Award

Tom Avery | University of Bath, United Kingdom | *ETS Award*

Megan Heise | Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Benjamin Calman | McGill University

Jing Yu | University of California, Santa Barbara

Masaru Yamamoto | University of British Columbia, Canada

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

Huy Phung | University of Hawai'i

Design Competition Winners 2022*

Xiaofang Lu | University of Warwick, UK
Tianfang Wang | Pennsylvania State University

*see the winning designs on the next page!

Design Award Winners 2022

Xiaofang Lu

I am a Ph.D. student in Applied Linguistics at the University of Warwick. I earned my MA degree in Teaching English as a Second Language from the Pennsylvania State University. Before coming to the University of Warwick, I worked as a Research Assistant at State Key Laboratory of Cognitive Neuroscience and Learning, Beijing Normal University, for one year. My current Ph.D. research is on the pre-service language teacher identity construction. My research interests include, but are not limited to, language teacher education, language teacher identity, teacher agency, discourse analysis and classroom discourse analysis.



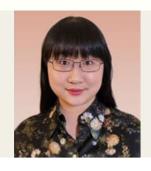


About my design

- The circle in Chinese calligraphy illustrates my understanding of applied linguistics, namely the Linguistic Planet. It can be viewed globally as earth.
- Leaf pattern stands for the ecological system. Regarding applied linguistics, we have ecological perspectives on second language acquisition.
- The letter "L" stands for "language." Language brings us together in the world, unveils our personal identity and social identity in society, and unfolds discourses in different communities. The unclosed circle represents linguistic spirits of inclusivity and diversity.
- Triple-A inside the circle is hand-in-hand, meaning AAAL conferences bridge people to share their feelings and acquire knowledge.

Tianfang (Sally) Wang

I am a fifth-year doctoral candidate in Applied Linguistics at the Pennsylvania State University. My research interests include the integration of sociocultural theory and cognitive linguistics for second language pedagogy, cross-linguistic conceptual metaphors in Mandarin and English, and classroom interaction within the field of conversation analysis.





About my design

My design is called Making Waves. In the design, the three "A"s in "AAAL" are depicted as waves and the letter "L" is turned into a fist. A heart is drawn in the background, and the full name of "AAAL" is presented at the bottom. The waves illustrate our participation, advocacy, and contributions in the social movements, and the fist represents solidarity, the strength in our community, and our power to bring positive changes with our teaching, research, and service. The heart symbolizes the compassion and love that we share. With this design, I hope to highlight the positive social impact our AAAL community is bringing to the world.