



UMBC TESOL Program Newsletter

EDITED BY KENEISHA MURRELL

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Education's purpose is to replace an empty mind with an open one.

-Malcolm Forbes

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An Ever-Evolving Educator: Dr. Sarah Shin

This semester TESOL professor Sarah Shin received the exciting news that she is the recipient of a much sought-after fellowship with the American Council on Education (ACE). During the upcoming 2017-18 school year, this leadership development fellowship will place her at an area university. Dr. Shin will have the opportunity to shadow the university president and gain firsthand experience in leading university administrators as well as in strategic planning. Having served as a member of the President’s cabinet here at UMBC, she has developed a growing interest in university administrative leadership.

Arriving in New York City from Korea at the age of thirteen, Dr. Shin is no stranger to the ESOL student experience. After completing her undergraduate studies at Cornell University, she matriculated to the Linguistics program at the University of Michigan, completing a Ph.D. in Sociolinguistics. With a special interest in language acquisition, language teaching, and code-switching, Dr. Shin’s dissertation research focused on bilingualism in Korean American first-grade students. Upon graduation in 1999, she joined the faculty of the TESOL Program, drawn to the diversity of UMBC.

In addition to working on a second edition of her 2013 book, *Bilingualism in Schools and Society*, Dr. Shin has recently received funding for a new project supporting Baltimore City ESOL students. A pilot study is being designed to promote the school suc-

cess of 250 ESOL students attending Lakeland Elementary/Middle School. Struggling to keep up with an increasing number of unaccompanied minors, school staff

have created an intervention block where community volunteers can provide individualized support. However, finding volunteers who are available during school hours has proven to be difficult. Along with the dean of the Aging Studies Program, Judah Ronch, Dr. Shin is recruiting retired residents of the local Charlestown retirement community to assist in supporting these ESOL students, most of whom have experienced significant interruptions in schooling.

Reflecting on her work as an ESOL teacher trainer, Dr. Shin emphasized that the most important trait for an ESOL teacher, and the one thing she cannot teach, is having a caring heart. Quoting a colleague, she estimates ESOL teaching to be “20 percent head, and 80 percent heart.” As a parent, professor, and former ESOL student, she is surely quite knowledgeable. We wish her well in all of her upcoming endeavors.

*Written by Keneisha Murrell,
ESOL Program Graduate Assistant*



Teaching at the English Language Institute

By Alyona Yazykova

In November 2016, I was lucky enough to be hired for the position of English Instructor at the English Language Institute (ELI). From the first day at the ELI, I realized that it is a very pleasant place to work, where everybody is very friendly to and supportive of you; ready to help with any question or problem you might have. However, working with wonderful people is not the only reason why, as a grad student, I consider my teaching experience at the ELI to be great, informative, and exciting.

First, on the first day of classes I realized that I was going to gain a completely different teaching experience here from the experience I had gotten before while I was teaching in Russia. Besides being very engaging, teaching international students whose native language I don't know is definitely challenging. My very first ELI students were students from Saudi Arabia who had very basic knowledge of English. We had to start our course from learning and revising English letters, sounds, and most importantly, sight words. As a teacher, I had to learn how to communicate with my students in English having no other common language to use. What is more important, I had to find ways to explain to my students the material they had to learn using the language appropriate for their level. Various visual aids were of great help to me, as well as different associations and body gestures.

Moreover, teaching international students means getting to know the cultures and traditions of other countries. I think one of the ways to be successful as an ESL teacher is to know your students' background and culture, to learn what is appropriate in their culture and what should be avoided and never asked about. The Saudi students let me know more about Arabic culture in different aspects, including their attitude to studies which seems to vary very much from how it is regarded here in terms of addressing teachers, approaching homework assignments, and writing class tests and quizzes. With this in mind, as a teacher, I had to challenge my students' views in order for them to understand that now they were learning the language in a foreign country where a lot of attention is paid to classwork and homework, and where students are taught to be responsible for their learning. While educating my students about American culture and helping them acquire new study habits, I still had to remain patient and respectful toward them and where they came from.

Finally, and most importantly, teaching at the ELI allows me to apply the knowledge I am acquiring in the MA TESOL Program. In our TESOL classes, we discuss various activities which are applicable to students with different level of language proficiency. Working with my ELI students gives me an opportunity to practice the same activities and see if and how they can work in the real language classroom. In our ESOL classes, we also learn about various strengths and weaknesses of language learners. Teaching my students lets me observe first-hand what they struggle with in their learning, which of their skills are developed better and which ones require more attention and practice, and how much their L1 can interfere with their second language learning. As a teacher all of this requires from me to find more efficient and effective approaches to teaching in order to help my students succeed in their learning and make it an exciting and interesting experience for them. Whenever I see that something I have learned can really work with and for my students, I know that I am on the right path. Nevertheless, there are situations when certain practice activities may work with some learners but may not be very efficient or useful for others. In my opinion, this is what makes my teaching experience at the ELI even more fascinating because every other day or week I have to learn something new for myself and improve as a teacher and educator for the sake of my students' success.

To sum up, not only is teaching at the ELI exciting and interesting because I work with professionals in TESOL field, have great colleagues, and meet a lot of students from different countries around the world, but it is also enlightening because I get to know new cultures, learn from my colleagues' experience, and apply the knowledge I am acquiring while studying in the MA TESOL Program.

Alyona Yazykova is studying to become an Adult ESOL educator.

Students and Practitioners: The Benefits of Two Hats

We currently have five students who partner with the ELI to apply the skills they are learning. They were recently asked, “How has working at the ELI impacted you as a grad student?”

Kate Sprando

Working at the ELI while taking classes as a grad student has been a fantastic experience. It has given me the opportunity to put into practice what I learn in my grad classes almost instantly. I am able to get to know my students and design lessons for class that fit their needs. I have been able to see both how the program works behind the scenes, in addition to how the program is implemented in the classroom, which gives me unique insight to the teaching experience. Most recently I have been introducing art into my classroom. I had always overlooked picture expression, thinking it didn't really have a place with adult learners, but I have learned that sometimes drawing a representation of a word can make even adults remember vocabulary more clearly.

Adrianna Neuenschwander

Working at the ELI as a graduate assistant has been an enriching experience. I love having the opportunity to learn a new theory or approach in class and then use it with students at the ELI and see first hand how it works. The most special part of my job, however, is the relationships I get to build with the students at the ELI. I am the writing tutor, so I get to meet with students weekly for one-on-one appointments. Meeting

with students individually has allowed me to learn more about their home countries, their culture, and their personalities. Seeing their struggles has given me a deeper insight and empathy into the process of learning English. Seeing their drive to learn and succeed has inspired me in my own journey as a student.

Erica Ashton

Working at the ELI has definitely played a huge part in my graduate program experience. While I was teaching full-time in Fall 2015, I took Dr. Nelson's Methods class. I would learn something from him on a Tuesday - some technique or activity - and then use it in my own class on Wednesday morning. It was great to have access to students every day with whom I could immediately try out new teaching strategies. Since I started the program full-time, I've been working at the ELI as an administrative GA, doing more behind-the-scenes work for our academic program. But working in this position has also been a really positive experi-

ence, and I like having a new perspective on (and appreciation for) how a language program runs. It's often very complex!

Jacob Wines

Working at the ELI has been an incredibly valuable opportunity. Because of my work here, I've been able to apply my studies and reflect on course materials on a daily basis, not to mention all that I've learned from collaborating with other teachers here as well. In spite of all this, I still felt like I was in a sort of chaotic free-



From L-R: Kate Sprando, Adrianna Neuenschwander, Erica Ashton, Jacob Wines, and Alyona Yazykova

Peaceworker by Ryan Good

At the end of my first semester in the TESOL Graduate Program, after our finals were completed and we could all relax a little bit, Dr. Nelson took our Methods class out to an Ethiopian restaurant in Baltimore called Dukem. I had never been to an Ethiopian restaurant before, and being from Ohio, the city was still new to me. It was all very fun and exciting. Dr. Nelson showed us how to eat the Ethiopian food with the special bread, called Dabo, and talked to us extensively about Ethiopia where he served as a Peace Corps Volunteer. In fact, the experience felt very much like the Peace Corps, and reminded me of those times in Indonesia when I would meet up in the city for dinner with some of the other Volunteers.



This is my favorite memory of the but I think it also shows the large member of both the UMBC worker Fellowship. The fellow-Corps Volunteers. Both programs people from different backgrounds the defining characteristics of past two years has been their in- from many different countries, ship has been the same way, made up of twelve Returned Volunteers from different backgrounds who served in several different countries. Having positive and productive discourse in such groups around topics that people are passionate about, such as education and social justice, can be extremely challenging. However, when it works it is one of the most wonderful feelings in the world — one that I've only ever felt hitting a home run in Little League. Without the feeling of community, and the trust and good faith that come with it, discourse erodes. I am very grateful for the many people in the TESOL Program and the Shriver Peaceworker Fellowship who have gone out of their way to make me feel like I was part of a community, and feel blessed that I was able to participate in these programs.

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program because it was such a good time, er picture of what it has been like to be a TESOL Program and the Shriver Peace-ship is only available to Returned Peace- have been about bringing different peo- together in community. Indeed, one of every graduate course I've taken over the credible diversity, with people coming age groups, etc. The Peaceworker Fellow-

ship has been the same way, made up of twelve Returned Volunteers from different backgrounds who served in several different countries. Having positive and productive discourse in such groups around topics that people are passionate about, such as education and social justice, can be extremely challenging. However, when it works it is one of the most wonderful feelings in the world — one that I've only ever felt hitting a home run in Little League. Without the feeling of community, and the trust and good faith that come with it, discourse erodes. I am very grateful for the many people in the TESOL Program and the Shriver Peaceworker Fellowship who have gone out of their way to make me feel like I was part of a community, and feel blessed that I was able to participate in these programs.

Ryan Good is a graduating MA TESOL student.

Recognitions & Recent Endeavors



A previous Global Teaching Fellow and Fulbright English Teaching Assistant, **Jessica Sadler**, recently collaborated on an article that was published in TESOL Connections. The article is a product of her interest in making vocabulary assessment a motivating learning experience for students. Currently Jessica serves as a Graduate Program Coordinator at the University of Maryland.

The article can be found at:

(<http://newsmanager.commpartners.com/tesolc/issues/2017-03-01/2.html>)

Professor Doaa Rashed has been very busy this semester. The MA TESOL Program had the privilege of hosting an information session for 17 TEFL teacher educators from Bolivia and Egypt. The visit was part of their program with the U.S. Department of State International Visitor Leadership project on TESOL Education.



Spring semester graduate, **Elizabeth Helsel**, was selected as a 2017 Teacher of Promise. Teacher of Promise is a Maryland State Department of Education program that recognizes and supports exceptional beginning teachers. This program pairs promising new teachers with award-winning teachers who can provide support for the first year of teaching.



This semester **Professor Laura Hook**, made a special presentation on WIDA standards to the EDUC 655 Reading & Writing 2 class. She is a 2003 graduate of our program who is currently serving as an English Learner (EL) Title III Specialist at the Maryland State Department of Education. In this position, Laura provides leadership, technical assistance, and guidance to Local Educational Agencies in the development and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and professional learning as well as with the administration of assessments for ELs.

STUDENTS Continued from p. 3

fall throughout my first year here. I experienced radical, emotional shifts between feeling confident in my teaching and feeling hopelessly lost and unsure if I was teaching “correctly”. If I could single out a “light-bulb moment”, I’d say that it came recently. I had just introduced new vocabulary to my students, so I put them in groups to write sentences; an admittedly basic and uninspired exercise. As I monitored the room and listened to my students’ conversations, my mind wondered back to Dr. Lee’s SLA class, and suddenly I realized something. Every single student in the classroom was negotiating meaning! I heard them not only clarifying one another’s understanding of the target vocabulary, but also correcting and explaining each other’s grammar while constructing their sentences. Through studying SLA theory, my classroom perspective has shifted and I see many of my decisions, past and present, through a new lens. I feel that I can comfortably justify my rationale behind certain activities and objectives in a way that I couldn’t before, and it has given me a newfound confidence in myself as an educator.

ESOL CLUB



This spring, the ESOL club went to the Baltimore Museum of Art for a short tour and a tasty brunch.

We hope you can become involved in the ESOL Club next semester! We will be looking for input as we plan future events. Interested in planning or helping?

Contact: esol@umbc.edu

CON“GRAD”ULATIONS!



NEW HORIZONS

Congratulations to our recent and former graduates settling into new positions!

Bob Smith (2009) - ESOL Teacher at Liethwalk Elementary-Middle (BCityPS).

Brittany Bond (2016) - METS 6-8 grade ESOL teacher at Neelsville Middle School (MCPS).

Elizabeth Helsel (2017) - ESOL Teacher at FrederickCountyPS

Kristine Alvarez Flynn (2017) - PK-8th grade ESOL Teacher at Bay Brook Elementary School (BCityPS).

Linnea Johnson (2017) - 7-8 grade ESOL Teacher at Highlandtown Elementary #237 (BCityPS)

Lisa Avolio (2014) - ESOL Teacher at Northwestern High School (PGCPS).

Nancy Horton (2017) - ESOL Teacher at Thurgood Marshall Elementary School (MCPS).

Nicole Cohen - (2016) PreK to 5 grade ESOL Teacher at Hillcrest Elementary– (BCountyPS).

Paola Castillo - Kindergarten ESOL Teacher at Cherokee Lane Elementary School (PGCPS).

Sara Osman (2011) - ESOL Teacher at CCBC (Essex campus).

Stephanie Ward-Aldossary (2015) - Rowad Al-Khaleej International Schools in Dammam, Saudi Arabia.

Spring 2017 Graduates !

Certificate Awardees:

Mary-Luisa Abiva

Zachary Barnetzke

Michelle Coleman

Amina Didich

Jose Gomez Garcia

Beatriz Hernandez Moreno

Master's Graduates:

Kristine Alvarez Flynn

Kathleen Anderson

Katja Behrend

Sherry Defrancisci

Ryan Good

Elizabeth Helsel

Nancy Horton

Linnea Johnson

Marsha Kessler

Katherine Kirsch

Long Nguyen

Julaine Nichols

Nursat Zaidi

Chengcheng Zhou

*Please keep in touch with us as
we greatly enjoying hearing from
our graduates!*



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