

Editorial

**Contributing to Open Access Journals with Peer Review:
A Meaningful Opportunity for Engaged Continuing Professional Development**

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Abstract

This editorial reinforces the *BC TEAL Journal's* commitment to open access, opportunities for continuing professional development, and knowledge creation related to English as an additional language teaching and learning in British Columbia. In particular, it outlines how peer reviewers benefit from taking part in the intellectual life of their scholarly and professional community through access to new ideas, practical skill development, and reducing the separation between theorists, researchers, and practitioners. The editorial continues with a description of the six articles and one book review in the 2018 issue, and it ends with a friendly invitation to everyone interested in English as an additional language teaching and learning in British Columbia to become more involved in the journal.

From the Editor

The *BC TEAL Journal* is an open access peer-reviewed academic journal that focuses on English as an additional language (EAL) teaching and learning, with implications for EAL teaching and learning in British Columbia. The journal does not charge readers to access articles, nor does it charge authors to submit and publish their work. Instead, a dedicated team of volunteers ensures it remains free for everyone. These volunteers are inspired by a variety of reasons, but one of the main reasons is perhaps an engagement in continuing professional development that is meaningful and relevant to a volunteer's own scholarly practice.

The largest cohort of journal volunteers are the peer reviewers. To create the current issue, 12 peer reviewers donated their time and energy to bring the contents to publication. The reviewers, who remain anonymous to the authors (and vice versa), look at the level of interest to the Association of British Columbia Teachers of English as an Additional Language (BC TEAL) members, the connections to teaching and learning in British Columbia, the originality of the work, the understanding authors have of the topic, the research plan, methods, and theoretical framework, the conclusions and recommendations, the formatting, and the quality of writing. The peer reviewers offer comments and feedback to the authors, and if the authors meet the basic journal requirements, they then have the opportunity to incorporate that feedback to strengthen their work for publication.

While authors benefit in a number of ways as they receive feedback and suggestions to prepare the next draft of their work, peer reviewers also benefit from the opportunity for continuing professional development. Peer reviewers are taking part in the wider intellectual life of their professional and scholarly community, and they have the chance to access the latest ideas and research before it is broadly available. They get to consider how these ideas and research

apply to the local context while contemplating core issues related to EAL teaching and learning. These considerations may, in turn, encourage reviewers to come up with new ideas, identify areas for further study, and lead them to engage with theory and research they may not have encountered otherwise. There is also the opportunity for practical skill development. Peer reviewers can enhance their critical understandings of scholarship and gain a greater familiarity with a range of research methods. They can hone the ability to identify logical arguments and understand the reasonable connections authors should make between their methods, findings, and conclusions. Being a peer reviewer can also have a positive washback effect on the reviewer's research skills, academic writing ability, and delivery of constructive feedback. Thus, the process strengthens local scholarship and contributes to improving EAL teaching and learning in the province and wider region. The process further encourages stronger connections between theory, research, and practice while blurring the demarcation lines between theorists, researchers, and practitioners. In effect, knowledge creation in the field of EAL teaching and learning becomes a shared endeavour in which *BC TEAL Journal* reviewers and authors bi-directionally benefit from each other's scholarship and professional knowledge.

The benefits of the peer review process, for both reviewers and authors, are evident in the current issue of the *BC TEAL Journal*. The 2018 issue starts with an investigation of student perceptions of portfolio-based language assessment (PBLA) in government funded EAL programs (Drew & Mudzingwa, 2018). The issue then turns to elementary school English language learners (ELLs) and the importance of having a strong instructional focus on vocabulary (Roessingh, 2018). Next, Findley (2018) looks at the role of belongingness in achieving academic success in higher education, and Chang (2018) explores academic misconduct and integrity as it relates to multilingual university students. The fifth article in the 2018 issue presents how a high school in British Columbia transformed its English as a second language (ESL) program into a culturally responsive English for academic purposes (EAP) program (Li, 2018), and the last full article investigates how accurately EAP students use words from the Academic Word List in their writing (McDonough, Neumann, and Hubert-Smith, 2018). Finally, the issue concludes with a book review by Naismith (2018) of *The Lazy Teacher Trainer's Handbook* (Coney, 2017).

As preparations begin for the 2019 issue, the journal remains committed to open access, providing opportunities for continuing professional development, and fostering knowledge creation related to EAL teaching and learning in local contexts. Many thanks go to the team of volunteers who contributed to making the 2018 issue a success, and a friendly invitation is extended to everyone who is interested in EAL teaching and learning in British Columbia to become more involved in the journal and consider it a meaningful opportunity for engaged continuing professional development.

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