



FROM THE EDITOR

It is with great pleasure and pride that I introduce the inaugural issue of North Carolina State University's *Dialogues: An Interdisciplinary Journal of English Language Teaching and Research*. The goal of *Dialogues* is to provide an open platform for a constructive exchange of innovative ideas, evidence-based theories, and best practices related to the field of teaching and learning English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL). As an interdisciplinary journal, it represents a range of voices from scholars and teachers in applied linguistics, composition studies, intercultural studies, K-12 education, and other relevant fields. *Dialogues* is also intended as a resource for educators in all contexts of English language instruction: public, private, and international K-12 schools; Intensive English Programs (IEPs); community colleges; literacy centers; and a variety of other institutions. Moreover, the editors are committed to upholding the standards of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) with regard to code of conduct and best practice guidelines.

Dialogues is founded on the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion. You will see that the articles in this issue touch on culturally responsive teaching methods and the value of inclusiveness with respect to all English language learners (ELLs)—especially the more vulnerable populations.

In the first article in this issue, “The Pedagogical Implications of Orality on Refugee ESL Students,” Philip Keller provides an illuminating view into “orality”—the characteristics and habits of mind associated with oral literacy, which characterizes the culture of many U.S. refugees. Keller addresses the predicament in which ESL teachers may find themselves when teaching learners who neither read nor write. Keller posits that teachers can bridge the “wide chasm between their own literate culture and the oral culture of their learners,” by understanding and seeing “their refugee students’ oral culture as an asset, rather than a deficit.” He offers relevant suggestions for how teachers of refugees can incorporate in their lesson plans certain aspects of oral culture, thereby helping their students adapt to a literate culture without sacrificing the richness of their orality.

In the same vein of culturally responsive teaching, Paula Wilder’s article, “Fostering an Environment for ESL Student Success in College and University Writing,” explores the challenges instructors face when preparing students from diverse cultural backgrounds and linguistic proficiency levels for written assignments in U.S. programs of higher education. Based on current research findings and her own extensive experience as a writing instructor, teacher trainer, and curriculum developer, Wilder offers an array of practical strategies that she has found highly effective for helping her students become successful academic writers in their future courses.

The third article shifts from writing to reading skills. In her article, “The Development of L2 Reading Skills: A Case Study from an Eight-Week Intensive English Program Course,” Rachel Kraut reports the findings of a quantitative study she conducted with students—predominantly Arabic speakers—in an intermediate-level Intensive English Program (IEP) course. Her study aimed to find out if (1) students improved their reading skills after completing a short-term immersion program; (2) if their attitudes toward reading changed; and (3) if there was a correlation between marked improvement, change of attitude and amount of time spent on out-of-class reading. She offers an insightful discussion of findings that suggest the positive influence of at-home reading on students’ reading skills and interest. Kraut adds that replicating these kinds of “in-house studies” can

provide valuable information to IEP administrators regarding the effectiveness of the curriculum and the program as a whole.

Another eye-opening and informative study is Joan Lachance's "School Counselors and English Learners: Conceptualizations of Beneficial Knowledge and Skills While Facilitating Individual Student Planning." In a qualitative multi-case study, Lachance investigates what four high school counselors tend to identify as the "beneficial knowledge and skills" of English language learners (ELLs) and how these counselors use that information for individual student planning and course selection. Lachance offers compelling snippets of transcribed meetings between the school counselors and English language learners and their families (at times via an interpreter), as well as the school counselors' reflections about their work with ELLs. These conversations and reflections give the reader an insider's view of the challenges that school counselors face when attempting to successfully place a student in the appropriate class and grade level, while at the same time advising teachers how to best instruct the new student.

In this issue's final article, "Power Swings: From Authoritarian to Collaborative Teaching Assessments," Valerie Sartor advocates a new and more compassionate "humanizing" paradigm for assessing teachers' performance and effectiveness. As Sartor explains, evaluating teachers according to a checklist of impersonal standards that emphasizes compliances and deficiencies puts the teacher on the defensive, leaving little possibility for growth and change. As an IEP coordinator whose duty was to evaluate faculty teachers, Sartor decided that a collaborative model of assessment in which teachers have a voice in its design and implementation would not only reduce pressure and anxiety but also fortify teachers' desire to uphold the institution's broader vision statement, particularly with regard to best practices and teaching excellence. Sartor reports that this grassroots approach to teacher assessment has been much more constructive than the traditional top-down approach.

Each issue of *Dialogues* will also conclude with an engaging "Spotlight" article that offers a more narrative (even illustrated or photographed!) glimpse into recent "TESOL in Action" moments. This issue features Joanna Koch and Micha Jeffries' article, "Cultivating Culturally Relevant Classrooms," in which they explain how a short-term cultural immersion experience in Mexico helped prepare pre-service teachers to better gauge and empathize with the needs of English language learners. Koch and Jeffries outline their pedagogical goals and the activities they organized prior to departure, such as inviting the Consulate General of Mexico in Raleigh, N.C., to present an overview of the social, economic, and political ties between Mexico and the U.S. (We hardly imagine that any talk of "wall-building" came up in the subsequent conversations!) The article covers their full agenda in Mexico, including highlights such as the students' first-hand experience teaching English in local elementary schools.

We hope you will enjoy reading these articles—but more importantly, we hope this journal will provide a catalyst for interaction and conversation. Your say is very valuable to the editors, to the authors, and to the broader readership. After all, the overarching vision of this journal is *dialogue*. To that end, each article published in the journal will include a "comment" feature; any user registered (for free) in the Open Journal System that hosts the journal can add comments.

Dialogues aims to offer a free interactive forum for teachers, researchers, and scholars from intersecting backgrounds in TESOL to dialogue with one another. If you would like to share your insightful experiences, successful classroom strategies, and academically driven inquiries into any area that might inform students, teachers, and those interested in serving English language learners, please submit your manuscript to *Dialogues*. This journal needs you.

Finally, I would like to thank the following stakeholders who made the vision of an open-access, peer-reviewed TESOL journal at North Carolina State University a reality.

First and foremost, I thank the associate editors, Bethany Bradshaw and Juliana Pybus, for their enthusiastic support and willingness to jump on board when I first introduced this half-baked idea to them in the early spring of 2016. They dedicated countless hours to brainstorming, researching, networking, formatting, and copy-editing. Much like the symbiosis and synergy of Lennon and McCartney, Bethany and Juliana were a perfect complement to each other: Bethany with an eye for design and aesthetic appeal and Juliana for clarity and style. This issue (and hopefully more to come) is a testament to their blended talents and insistence on creating a publication that reflects intellectual rigor and academic integrity.

We are greatly indebted to our reviewers who took time from their own very busy teaching schedules to scrutinize manuscripts and offer invaluable feedback in a timely fashion. Thanks to their astute observations and constructive suggestions, the authors were able to revise their manuscripts for greater accuracy, completeness, and clarity.

I wish to thank the authors for the crucial role they played in getting this journal off the ground. Because of their interest and faith in this new publication, as well as their patience and willingness to collaborate throughout the process, we are able to offer a range of relevant and unique insights into research findings and practical application in classrooms and other settings.

Finally, I thank you, the reader, for your interest and time as you peruse our first issue. The word “dialogue” originates from the Greek words “dia” (“through”) and “logos” (“meaning” or “word”). It is our sincere hope that you will find yourself drawn into these “conversations” and that your engagement will be meaningful.

Jillian S. Haeseler,
Editor-in-Chief