

**Introduction:**  
**At the Juncture of TESL, Multicultural Education, and Newcomer Integration**

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Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) may not be a familiar term for many people in Newfoundland and Labrador, and TESL professionals in the province are a very small group. One can easily count the numbers of ESL teachers in the K-12 school system, the government sponsored Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program, and the ESL Department at Memorial University. There are also a few ESL teachers in the community and a handful of graduate students who came from, and taught ESL in, different parts of the world and are still interested in the field. TESL professionals work with very diverse student populations and they need to feel connected and have their voices heard in a rather homogeneous province with a predominantly white English speaking population (Statistics Canada, 2016).

The reception of increased numbers of refugees in past years has brought newcomer support front and centre. The educational resources in the St. John's area, where most newcomers were settled, were stretched thin. Administrators, ESL teachers, subject teachers, and counselors all felt challenged. This situation did not go unnoticed. A number of studies were conducted looking into the challenges faced by newcomer students and their parents, and educators in the school system (Baker, Price, & Walsh, 2015; Doyle, Li, & Grineva, 2016; Li, Doyle, Lymburner, & Ghadi, 2016; Li, & Grineva, 2016). In 2016, the Premier's Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes was formed to examine the K-12 education system and make recommendations to improve student outcomes. One chapter of the Task Force Report (Collins, Fushell, Philpott, & Wakeham, 2017) was dedicated to multicultural education, which begins with this paragraph:

Multicultural education is important in this province for two reasons: many newcomers to Newfoundland and Labrador, especially refugees and those who do not speak English or French, require educational supports if they are to succeed in NL schools; and, students in NL need to learn about, and learn respect for, the many different cultures in the world. The task force considered both aspects of multicultural education. (p. 89)

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The report mentioned the importance of the ESL program and the Literacy Enrichment and Academic Readiness for Newcomers (LEARN) program and recommended ways to improve and extend such programs. Positive changes in the education system have been expected.

The idea of publishing a collection of articles focusing on ESL teaching/learning and newcomer integration issues in Newfoundland and Labrador occurred to me a few years ago. It finally crystallized in fall 2017, when I was finishing up my research projects and preparing for upcoming teaching in January 2018. I had included experiential learning as part of my course requirements before, but winter 2018 couldn't have been a better time to bring it to a higher level. Graduate students in our programs all have teaching experiences and those in my TESL classes are mostly international students who are, quite often, research oriented. They need guidance in research methods and academic writing; and most importantly they need access to local ESL learners in order to apply what they have learned in class. Through the Student Experience Office of Memorial University and my local research connections, my students were matched with newcomer ESL learners, most of whom were serviced by the Association for New Canadians. Several months of invigorating classroom discussions and diligent hands-on work in assessing and tutoring learners, my students produced unique narratives detailing what they learned through the tutoring experience.

This special issue on TESL and newcomer integration aimed to connect teachers and researchers who work with newcomer students in NL. It is a collection of personal narratives of graduate students tutoring ESL learners; a deep reflection of language, accent, and identity of a Chinese speaker; researchers' discussions addressing newcomer support issues and recommendations for an arts-based approach; ESL and LEARN teachers' experiences working with newcomer students; and a philosophical elaboration on newcomer integration.

The issue is composed of two sections. Section I includes six research length articles and Section II contains seven discussion papers.

In Section I, four graduate students reflected on their Experiential Learning through tutoring ESL learners. They each had a different focus: Juan Marcelo Zapata Rugel on pronunciation, Yushuo Zhang on reading, Joyshree Deb on writing, and Ling Ding on speaking. From a very different perspective, Cheng Li delineated her experiences of speaking a variety of Chinese dialects and drew attention to the dominance of Mandarin in contemporary China. Haley Toll, through a comprehensive review of literature, discussed the role of arts-based research in generating a safe space for newcomer refugees.

In Section II, Xuemei Li and Hua Que highlighted eight points for discussion from years of research in newcomer academic support and social integration in Newfoundland and Labrador. In a similar vein, Tony Fang, Kerri Neil, David R Brake, and Halina Sapeha, based on their

research findings, outlined some of the barriers faced by refugees learning English and resolutions to some practical issues found in the classroom. The issues raised from these articles are accentuated in the next one by Martha Trahey, a longstanding ESL teacher reflecting on the changes and challenges in her 20 years of teaching in NL. Suzanne Fitzpatrick, a LEARN teacher with diverse travel and work experiences, offered her observations and suggestions on grade placement of refugee students in the school system. With the same intention to help, Mohammad Ali Bakhshi, Hua Que, and Xuemei Li presented strategies for teachers on how to support newcomer students to adjust and flourish based on the findings of a research project on newcomer students' integration in NL. Among the numerous ways of helping newcomer students, Leah Lewis, Heather McLeod, Xuemei Li, and Haley Toll made a strong recommendation for a school-based art hive with newcomer youth, one that has been proved through their research projects. Finally, James Scott Johnston added weight to this collection by discussing some philosophical underpinnings of creating a pluralistic, supportive environment for newcomer students.

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