Discover Washington DC metro area: read about your fellow TESOLers’ favorite places in and around DC!

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Newsletter Editor: Valeriya Minakova
Stay Connected with AU TESOL!

Upcoming Events

TESOL Program Opening Reception
Start the new fall semester with great snacks and conversation!
**Tuesday, September 1**
Mary Graydon 247
4:30pm-5:30pm

TESOL Social
Join us in the TESOL Office (MGC 300) to snack and chat with current AU TESOL students, professors, and alumni!
**Tuesday, October 27**
4:00pm-5:15pm

End of Semester Holiday Potluck
Celebrate the end of the semester and our December grads with AU TESOL students, faculty, and staff.
**Thursday, December 10**
4:30pm-5:30pm
Mary Graydon 247
Dear AU TESOL Community,

Welcome back after an eventful summer! It is wonderful to see our program growing and to welcome a new diverse group of residential and online students. This year, students from Argentina, Colombia, Myanmar, Senegal, South Korea, Turkey, and the US joined AU TESOL.

As always, our academic year is full of professional development events. We kicked off the fall semester with the Community-Based Heritage Language Conference on September 19 in partnership with the Bilingual Education Program of the School of Education and the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL). The conference welcomed heritage language educators from around the country for a day of panels, workshops, discussions, and networking. Next, is the workshop “Pedagogical Uses of Digital Stories for Student Empowerment and Engagement” that I will lead on October 10. I look forward to seeing many of you there. And of course, in the spring (February 27, 2016), we will have our annual pronunciation workshop “Call 'Em As You 'Ear 'Em” lead by Dr. Robin Barr.

We are also excited about the TESOL International Convention taking place in Baltimore in April 2016! We look forward to attending sessions and reconnecting with old friends. As always, TESOL Program will organize an AU TESOL lunch at the convention.

In Summer 2016, we will welcome Dr. Nancy Bell (Washington State University) and Dr. Anne Pomerantz (University of Pennsylvania), as they will lead the three-day intensive summer workshop “Laugh, Joke, Learn: Teaching with and about Humor in the Second Language Classroom” on June 24-26.

We look forward to seeing you at our program events in fall and spring and of course at AAAL and TESOL International conferences in Orlando and Baltimore in the spring!

I wish you all a productive and exciting academic year and look forward to seeing you soon.

With warm wishes,

[Signature]
One of my favorite places in DC is M Street, Georgetown because it offers you a wide range of selections including shopping stores, restaurants, dessert shops, movie theater, etc. In M St. Georgetown, you can find DC's most popular cupcakes shop: Georgetown Cupcakes. You may have to stand in a queue, but believe me it is worth the wait! If you were thinking to spend a fun day with family or friends, M St. is a perfect place!

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<td>Opening Reception</td>
<td>Tuesday, September 1 4:30pm-5:30pm</td>
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<td>Saturday, October 10 9:00 am-2:00pm</td>
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<td>Program Social</td>
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<td>Thursday, December 10 4:30pm-5:30pm</td>
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Upcoming Events

2015 Community-Based Heritage Language Schools: Promoting Collaboration among Educators, Families, and Researchers

September 18-19, 2015
Abramson Family Founders Room, SIS Building

Many language communities in the United States have established schools and programs to teach a wide variety of heritage languages. These programs face similar challenges, which include maintaining sustainable funding levels, involving families fully and effectively in the language development enterprise, finding and supporting effective teachers, developing curriculum and materials that engage students and promote learning, and receiving recognition from the formal public and private school education community.

Building on the success of last year’s heritage languages conference at American University, this year’s conference will bring together teachers, administrators, and parents involved in community-based language schools, along with language researchers, to explore ways to address these important issues together.

The conference will feature presentations and workshops by leaders in the field of heritage language education who will also lead discussions with educators and parents as they share best practices to help us collaboratively seek effective solutions to common challenges.

For more information, visit:
http://www.american.edu/cas/education/bilingual/Community-Based-Heritage-Language-Schools-Conference.cfm

Organized by the AU Bilingual Education Program and AU TESOL Program
Co-sponsored by the Center for Applied Linguistics

TESOL 2016 International Convention & English Language Expo

April 5-8, 2016
Baltimore, Maryland

For more information, visit:

“The Best Things in Life are Free”

Musical and theater performances along with a gift shop and dining are all things to look forward to at the Kennedy Center, but my favorite is the view from the top. The Lincoln memorial, Georgetown, and the Potomac River are a few places you can see when outside on the top level. Take a FREE shuttle to the center, enjoy a FREE performance at 6 pm any day of the week then head upstairs and enjoy the FREE view.
Upcoming Events

Fall Workshop Information

Pedagogical Uses of Digital Stories for Student Empowerment and Engagement.

Dr. Polina Vinogradova
Saturday, October 10, 9:00 am–2:00 pm
Butler Boardroom, 6th Floor Butler Pavilion

With the increasing diversity of English language learners and the need to incorporate digital literacy skills into the curriculum, educators are looking for pedagogical approaches, multimodal materials, and activities to empower students and meet their various needs. This workshop will introduce participants to a pedagogy of multiliteracies and will illustrate how students’ interests and various learning objectives can be met using digital stories as a pedagogical tool. Workshop participants will explore the process of digital story production, try out some planning activities, and will discuss how this can be used in their own teaching. Examples will be drawn from digital storytelling projects with university-level language learners, and participants will be encouraged to think how these practices can be applied in other language learning settings including the ones with limited access to technology.

Dr. Polina Vinogradova is an applied linguist interested in the use of digital technology in language education and in identity negotiation in multimodal personal narratives. Her recent research focuses on the development of multiliteracies and pedagogical uses of digital stories in ESL and heritage language instruction. She has extensive experience in teaching English as a foreign and second language, teacher training, and curriculum and project development in higher education. Dr. Vinogradova holds a PhD in Language, Literacy and Culture from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) and has MA degrees in TESOL from the University of Northern Iowa and in Intercultural Communication from UMBC.

For more information, visit:
http://www.american.edu/cas/tesol/news/workshop-fall.cfm
Pronunciation Workshop

Dr. Robin Barr
Saturday, February 27, 9:00am-2:00pm
6th Floor Butler Boardroom, Butler Pavilion

What's the first sound in unicorn? In apple? [Hint: they aren't vowels!] How many syllables are there in feel or file? Do you think that flour and flower sound alike? How about cot and caught? Writer and rider? Dr. Robin Barr, AU's Linguist-in-Residence, will show you how to detect invisible consonants and missing vowels, and help you become more aware of the way you actually speak, as opposed to what you think you're saying. Brush up on your phonetic transcription and features, and learn how to use phonetics as a tool for sharpening your ears and teaching your students more accurately. Then hang on tight as Dr. Barr takes you on a journey beyond vowels and consonants into syllables, rhythm, intonation, stress, linking, and even The Brain! Learn the suprasegmental tricks with rubber bands, kazooos, and songs that you can use to help your students become more comprehensible, even if they still have trouble distinguishing ship and sheep, or rake and lake. The workshop features entertaining, low-cost activities that you can use right away in your next class.

Robin Barr holds a PhD in Linguistics from Harvard with concentrations in both Indo-European and psycholinguistics. Her research on morphology involves the relationship between language learning and language change, and she is always happy to hear of new irregular verbs or refinements for wug-tests. Her daughter has been one of her favorite informants, and students are likely to encounter data from her on their problem sets. Prof. Barr is also an avid amateur oboist.

For more information, visit:
http://www.american.edu/cas/tesol/news/workshop-pronunciation.cfm
Upcoming Events

Intensive Summer Workshop 2016

Laugh, joke, learn: Teaching with and about humor in the second language classroom

June 24-26, 2016
Location TBD

Dr. Nancy Bell (Washington State University)
Dr. Anne Pomerantz (The University of Pennsylvania)

Language educators often see playful, humorous language as either too difficult to teach or ancillary to their “serious” curricular goals. Yet, second language learners consistently report a strong desire to initiate and/or participate more actively in humorous exchanges. In this workshop, language teachers will learn how to integrate playful language into L2 lessons in a pedagogically sound and theoretically informed manner. Participants will explore how traditional lessons might be altered to include a greater focus on non-serious language use and develop a repertoire of pedagogical strategies for helping learners to develop key micro-skills related to the identification, comprehension, production, and appreciation of conversational humor.

Nancy D. Bell is an Associate Professor and coordinator of the ESL program in the English Department at Washington State University. Her research interests center mainly on the discourse analytic investigation of conversational humor, language play, and linguistic creativity, especially with respect to second language users. She recently authored a text on failed humor (We are not Amused: Failed Humor in Interaction).

Anne Pomerantz is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Pennsylvania, Graduate School of Education, where she works closely with language educators and intercultural specialists. Her research focuses on the role of humor in classroom discourse and language pedagogy.

Anne Pomerantz and Nancy D. Bell are the co-authors of Humor in the Classroom: A Guide for Language Teachers and Educational Researchers (Routledge).

For more information, visit:
http://www.american.edu/cas/tesol/intensive-summer.cfm

I love to be outside and am always looking to escape the crowded streets and rushed atmosphere of D.C. One of my favorite spots to get outside and do some hiking is Great Falls Park. Situated northwest of the city, a trip to Great Falls Park is an easy drive from AU and a great way to spend a fall weekend! I recommend the “Billy-Goat Trail” on the MD side which includes beautiful views of the Potomac River, rock scrambling, and more!
Kim Herndon lives in New Orleans and is currently enrolled in the MA in TEFL online program. In her interview she gave insights into the benefits and challenges of pursuing an online degree, told us how work in personal protection helped her gain a deep appreciation for other cultures, and how Hurricane Katrina helped her learn Spanish.

**When did you first become interested in TEFL?**

I have always had an interest in languages and have traveled, read widely in other languages and experienced other cultures. For several years, I worked at an international immersion school where I taught students of multiple languages in the same classroom. As a result, I became more interested in English as a second language. I also worked as a personal protection specialist (bodyguard) before I became a teacher, so I have had a long-standing appreciation for other languages and cultures. I have had clients and made some especially close friends from North and West Africa, Europe, India, China, the Middle East, and Russia. I also worked in Washington, DC quite a bit. It made me very cognizant that much of the world’s conflict comes from a lack of cultural understanding and respect, combined with nationalistic egocentricism. Working in the personal protection field, you sometimes have the privilege of protecting people who are changing the world for the better; those people are lightning rods for violence against themselves and their ideals. You learn to build trusting relationships based on a person’s character, and nothing else. In the desert everyone shares water. When you are afraid and in danger, you don’t care what color your friend is or what language he speaks. You also learn to work as a synchronized team where everyone has an essential role and everyone pulls their weight. When they can’t for one reason or another, everyone pitches in to pick up the slack. You begin to see each other, not as a person with flaws and weaknesses, but as an individual with different strengths.

**Did you have any teaching experience before you enrolled in the TEFL program?**

I worked for five years teaching Spanish Language Arts, English Language Arts, Spanish as a Second Language, geography, math, and several other subjects to native speakers of French, Arabic, English, Spanish, Russian, and other languages. I have also privately taught English as a second language, Spanish as a second language, and other classes, including recently, citizenship.

**Are you currently teaching English? If yes, where and what is your learner population?**

I currently have my own small business, One Tongue Language Learning, doing curriculum design, professional development, and language instruction. I am also a volunteer teacher at La Semilla (The Seed), a faith-based language instruction program with about 200 adult students, most of whom are undocumented immigrants, and native speakers of Spanish, Portuguese, K’iche’, Garifuna, and other languages. They have very difficult lives, so a teacher also plays a role as mentor as well.

**Do you speak any foreign languages? If yes, does your language learning experience help you in teaching English?**

After the levies broke and flooded New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina, the entire city was destroyed, with the exception of the French Quarter. Those who came back faced conditions that I hope you never experience. There were two kinds of people here - survivors, and those who preyed on survivors. The survivors banded together. The city already had a large Latino population, and they were a wonderful asset to the community after the flooding. Many of them did not evacuate due to financial reasons and language barriers. As a result, they were immediately ready
to step in and help rebuild the city, and many more crossed the Mexican border looking for work. People came together after this disaster and helped each other, including in my neighborhood. I loaned generator power to some workers rebuilding my neighbor’s house and we started talking. I ended up learning Spanish fluently. It wasn’t a plan, it just happened naturally from friendships and relationships formed during that time of adversity.

My language experience does help me teach in that I learned the language in a natural way; I immersed myself in the Latino culture here and am self-taught. I also later studied by myself at home using a textbook to fine-tune the grammar. I try to imitate the authentic natural part of language learning in my classroom, but also blend in some language focus where appropriate, in context. I am a big proponent of communicative and task-based language instruction. You can learn it and then do it (CLT), or do it and then learn it (TBL). I think both work well. Aside from that, I understand and read in some other languages; I somehow picked that up years ago just from intellectual curiosity poring over books written in other tongues. And the church where I attend service is in a blend of Portuguese and Spanish. It’s easy to be a multicultural person in the Big Easy if you want to be; it’s an Old-World-meets-the-islands melting pot.

Why did you choose an online program instead of taking on-site classes?

Geography was the primary reason for not taking classes in a brick and mortar institution; I couldn’t find a program of the quality I was looking for close by. I was initially set against online learning, because I didn’t think it would be high enough quality. However, the more I began to investigate American University, the more I liked the way the program was designed. It had the multicultural bent I was searching for and the quality of instruction that was a requisite.

What is the biggest challenge of pursuing an online degree?

Time is my biggest enemy. To really give your best to the program takes serious commitment. There is no one standing over you forcing you to dedicate yourself 110% to the program, but I try to do that anyway. I do a lot of volunteer work both at the school where I teach and also in language instruction at my own church. It is hard to fit all of it into my day. My professors can attest to the fact that it is not uncommon to find my discussion posts regularly stamped 3, 4 or 5 o’clock in the morning. And with an online program, there is no flying under the radar. You are completely accountable. Imagine if you had to answer every question that every professor asked your entire class, yourself, in writing and were graded on your response. That’s what it’s being an online student.

What are some benefits?

There are so many benefits that it is hard to list them. The quality is excellent. The organization of the classes is superb. My favorite part of the program is that every class unites theory with best practice. I like that there are few traditional exams, and instead the program focuses on authentic projects that are readily applied to a real classroom. Every single project I have designed for the program has gone directly and immediately into my own teaching practice and classroom. There are not many college classes of any type that can make this claim. There is no false division between theory and practice at American University. I was an experienced teacher when I started the program; now I am a studied one.

In your opinion, what makes a successful online learner?

A successful online learner is one who is never satisfied, they are always striving to learn more, be more,
no matter if the project or paper has already been turned in for a grade or not. A successful online learner is one who doesn’t just give lip service to working as a team, but actually does it. It is not unusual for my classmates and me to be up and working together by Skype or phone in the middle of the night, on weekends or some other crazy time. We really do look out for each other and learn from each other. We interact with each other seven days a week, by choice. We build an academic community, albeit a small, focused one. So far we have had African American, North African Muslim, Puerto Rican, and Anglo Saxon American students working together. Between us we speak, read, and write a multitude of languages, represent a multitude of religious beliefs (or no religious beliefs at all), and have traveled to many different places and share a multifaceted cultural outlook. Our own target ESL students have spoken Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Arabic, Russian, French, Spanish, K’iche’, Garifuna, Portuguese, and Russian as their native languages. It’s very interesting. We teach our students but we learn from them too. It’s a dynamic, symbiotic, cultural and linguistic exchange.

Do you think e-learning will at some point replace traditional classroom learning?

I hope not. Each has its place. On one hand, online learning makes you more accountable. There is no coasting by sitting in the back of the room. There are no excused absences. You are 100% accountable, 100% of the time. I have learned more from this online program than I have ever learned in a traditional classroom, even though I had a high “in person” GPA. On the other hand, there is something to be said for the networking and social connections of face-to-face instruction and interaction. I was lucky enough to meet some of my professors and classmates at the international TESOL conference this winter in Toronto and it was a pleasurable and valuable experience. So I think both online and “in person” instruction have their place.

Are you planning on staying and teaching in the U.S after you obtain your degree?

That is a difficult question. I have been abroad, so it is not the bright shiny new bauble it is to some. Added to that, New Orleans is a cultural melting pot. Although the city “fathers” would probably not appreciate this, in some ways I think it is very close to living in a Third World country. You don’t have to go very far to be in another “world”, complete with another language. There are pockets of New Orleans where you can spend your whole life and never speak English.

There is also a great need here for professional development of teachers; we have had somewhat of a teaching revolution here in the Big Easy since Hurricane Katrina, and that continues. Since everything was destroyed during Katrina anyway, and the Louisiana education system was a disgrace, a very driven group of what I like to affectionately call “rabble rousers” collectively decided that it was time to start over from scratch and do it right. There have been huge educational reforms here, including a widespread charter school movement.

Although there was already a large immigrant population that did not speak English before Katrina, with the immigrant influx after the storm, that situation multiplied. The second language needs in the city are complex and widespread. I am enjoying contributing
to language learning in the city and to working as a
team with other language instructors. However, my
dream is to work at the university level teaching teachers
how to be more effective language educators, and to broad-
en their understanding and appreciation of other cultures. So
I will follow that dream wherever it takes me. Actually, my
“dream job” is to work in a program just like the one I am
in. But I doubt that I will ever give up teaching ESL, even if it’s
as a part-time volunteer at night.

What advice can you give to those who will en-
roll in the online TEFL program in the future?

Work. Learn. Apply yourself and what you have
learned. Re-learn. Become a permanent student prac-
titioner. Mesh theory with practice until they are in-
separable in your classroom. Love your students.

In this newsletter, we ask our stu-
dents and faculty to tell us about
their favorite places in Washington,
DC. Do you have a favorite place in
this city?

Personally, I like the Jamaican empa-
nada stands, the basement Indian
food hideaways, and the quiet pent-
house show-your-card-to-get-in
clubs. As for the private clubs and
roving discos, you will have to find
those for yourself! But I’d still rather curl up with a
good book. Try Kramerbooks in Dupont Circle and
One More Page in Arlington.

Online MA in TEFL

The online MA in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) program is designed
specifically for students interested in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in
secondary schools, universities, and private language schools outside of the United
States.

Students take one course during each 8-week session and may complete the MA in
TEFL in eleven sessions (less than 6 semesters) of continuing coursework from loca-
tions in or outside of the United States.

Please visit www.american.edu/cas/tesol/ma-tefl.cfm for more
information and to learn how to apply!
Alumni Spotlight

Dr. Victoria Hasko shares her favorite grad school memories and tells about how her experience in the AU TESOL Program shaped her career in academia.

Why did you decide to study TESOL/applied linguistics at the graduate level?

I grew up in Russia and English lessons were a part of life since early childhood. However, I first realized that I could not live a monolingual life after my first study abroad experience in high school. I spent one summer month in London studying English and found the experience utterly fascinating - not only because of the beautiful sightseeing that the voyage offered, but the multiculturalism of London and realization of the richness of cultural differences that come with the learning of foreign languages made me long for a career rooted in international communication and sojourn. I could relate to Marcel Proust's famous saying that “the only true voyage of discovery [...], would be not to visit strange lands but to possess other eyes, to behold the universe through the eyes of another”[1]. I decided to apply to American University's graduate program in TESOL after receiving my degree in English with emphasis in Creative Writing from Bemidji State University in Minnesota, seeking to explore the scholarship and innovation in second language learning and pedagogy. I ended up being a lucky recipient of the AU Scholarship for Outstanding International Students that I am extremely grateful for, as it truly paved the path for my career in academia.

What was your time at AU like as a graduate student? What's your favorite memory from your time here?

I remember being very busy! I wanted to make the most of the program and its focus on instructed language learning. Most of my memories include spending long days on campus in classrooms, computer labs, and at the library but also pursuing every opportunity to gain practical experiences in the field. During the two years at AU, I had an opportunity to volunteer as an ESL instructor for the City Gate program at Tenley Circle, to work as a Russian tutor in the tutoring center, to teach academic ESL at the Northern Virginia Community College, to serve as an adjunct instructor of Russian in the AU Russian program, and to join the summer faculty of the internationally renowned Middlebury College Russian Summer Immersion School. I appreciated that the AU TESOL courses had such a strong orientation to the best classroom practices and curriculum development because I could immediately put the skills I was acquiring to practice in the classes I was teaching. Yet, my favorite courses were with Dr. Naomi Baron – I felt that she challenged us as practitioners and graduate-level scholars, and I was inspired by her ongoing research projects that she shared with us. Today, as a faculty member, I strive to convey to my students the same level of enthusiasm about the subject matter, encouragement, and respect that Dr. Baron offered to us by holding the bar high. I remember sharing the idea of pursuing doctoral studies with Dr. Baron, and I do believe that her support and reassurance were instrumental in my pursuit of admission to a doctoral program.

What did you do after graduating from AU TESOL program?

I am very thankful to AU TESOL, because the credentials I earned there allowed me to gain admission to five very selective doctoral programs! I chose to study in the Applied Linguistics doctoral program at the Pennsylvania State University. I feel incredibly lucky to have studied there under the direction of Dr. James Lantolf and to have worked as a graduate research assistant to Dr. Aneta Pavlenko at the Center for Applied Language Proficiency Education and Research on the Project on Narrative and Conceptual Proficiency in Advanced Russian. I cannot imagine having more inspiring professors, generous mentors, smarter fellow students, and a more dynamic environment for doctoral studies than what I experienced at Penn State. I have also continued my affiliation with
Alumni Spotlight, Continued

the Middlebury College as a faculty member and a research fellow, ultimately, collecting my narrative dissertation data on L2 Russian in the incredible environment of academic immersion there. I really do feel that the academic institutions I have been affiliated with during my graduate studies—American University, Middlebury College, Pennsylvania State University can only be described as the dream path for anyone in academia in the field of language education, and I feel incredibly indebted to all of them for fostering my professional expertise as well as research curiosity and skills.

**What work have you been doing in the field of English language education/applied linguistics?**

Just as I envisioned, my scholarly, professional, family, and everyday environments are inherently multilingual and multicultural. I am proud to be working alongside a highly diverse and accomplished group of colleagues and students in the Department of Language and Literacy Education at the University of Georgia, where I currently hold an appointment of Associate Professor of TESOL and World Language Education. My life experiences make me appreciate holistic and ecological perspectives associated with the study of language acquisition and pedagogy, bilingualism, culture studies, and language policy. I enjoy exploring such topics as acquisition of culturally-mediated concepts by second, foreign, and heritage language learners (e.g., motion structures, expressive morphology, identity repertoire, affective talk, with a particular focus on what and how such studies contribute to the long-standing debate on linguistic relativity and its relevance to instructional contexts). I study the dynamics of language development as it interrelates with students’ learning histories and sociocultural milieus, which I have predominantly explored via corpus-based approaches. I am currently designing a series of eye tracking studies to be able to take a more cognitively oriented approach to investigating the above topics. I am also fascinated by digitally mediated language learning and have engaged with several telecollaborative initiatives at UGA, including a UGA-Russian telecollaborative bilingual partnership supported by the Endowment of Digital Humanities’ Office of Digital Innovation grant and a UGA-Brazil project supported by the U.S. Department of Defense, investigating digital telecollaboration for language education and the affordances that it creates for fostering learner self-expression, inquiry-based learning, democracy in language classrooms, and global citizenship.

I am grateful for working in a thriving graduate program, where I can design a variety of graduate courses in my area of scholarship; e.g., I have offered courses on Heritage Language Education, Bilingualism and Cognition, Computer-Assisted Language Learning, and First and Second Language Acquisition, face to face and online.

On a more personal note, I am a happy and adoring mother of 3 absolutely amazing children. My son Anton is almost 5 and my identical twin daughters Ariana and Sofia are about to turn 2. Having preached the importance of heritage bilingualism and preserving familial languages in my teaching, I am doing my best to walk the talk by fostering my children’s Russian skills (which is a significant challenge given that the Russian community in Athens, GA is very small, and my husband’s first language is Albanian). At the very least, they are giving me rich material for SLA analysis, and the emerging talk patterns in the twins are as fascinating as they are endearing.

**This newsletter is about our favorite places in DC. Do you have a favorite place in this city?**

Living in Washington D.C. and having access to all the magnificent museums is such a treat! I also love Dupont Circle: I find the multiculturality and the dynamism of its hustle and bustle - as well as the many excellent choices for sampling international cuisine - reenergizing. Walking through Georgetown during the Cherry Blossoms is easily one of my favorite memories of living in D.C., and I look for opportunities to re-visit these memories by traveling to D.C. for conferences and family trips.

—

Director of the TESOL Program Dr. Polina Vinogradova tells how she developed an interest in digital storytelling, how her dream to rescue a cat came true, and gives advice to current AU TESOL students on how to survive a busy semester.

How long have you been a member of the AU community and what roles have you filled at AU during your time here?

I started in the TESOL Program in July 2011 as program director, and this is my 5th year with American University. Incredible how fast time goes by, and it’s been fascinating past four years. I have been very fortunate to work with and mentor outstanding students and to have great colleagues. These have been very busy and enriching years. The first two years I focused completely on getting to know the program, department, and American University and devoted my time to program development, curriculum revisions, and student advising. Now I also teach every semester, which allows me to get to know our students even better and to focus on teaching what I am particularly interested in – contemporary critical approaches to teaching methods and the use of technology in language education.

Where did you obtain your MA degree and PhD?

I received my MA in TESOL from the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) in 2002 and PhD from the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) in 2011. The years at UNI were particularly life changing as it was then when I realized how much I enjoy academic challenges and working and living in a multicultural environment.

What is your most cherished memory of graduate school?

It’s difficult to choose just one – there were so many. I was very fortunate to meet great people, to work with people who had integrity and kindness, who were supportive and encouraging, who challenged me intellectually, and genuinely enjoyed what they were doing. But if I have to choose, there are two moments: receiving an outstanding graduate student award at UNI and a Russell N. Campbell Award from the International Research Foundation of English Language Education (TIRF) for my dissertation proposal. When I received an email from TIRF notifying me of the award, I was so overwhelmed with joy and in disbelief that it actually had happened, that didn’t realize that my dissertation proposal was ranked number one among all proposals that were submitted that year.

What is your specific field or area of study? When did you become interested in this particular topic?

I am particularly interested in the pedagogy of multiliteracies and how it can be implemented in language education using digital stories. I am also interested in postmethod pedagogy and student empowerment. Overall, I was interested in ways to empower students and was exploring various uses of new media in ESL curriculum when I got introduced to digital stories in one of my classes at UMBC. I was fascinated by the simplicity of the genre and by the power of messages that the authors were able to convey in 3-4 minutes of their video stories. And as I was teaching in an ESL program at that time, I decided to see what student response would be if they had to produce digital stories as projects in my class. They responded very positively to the projects, were involved and interested, worked collaboratively and independently,
supported each other, and produced fascinating stories. You can read about the projects, see some of my students working on their digital stories, and watch my students’ stories from Summer 2007, Summer 2008, and Fall 2010 here: http://stories.umbc.edu/digitalstories/2007/07/ and http://stories.umbc.edu/digitalstories/2010/12/elc_054_crosscultural_communic.html. In Fall 2009, my students and I also experimented with ethnographic projects using main principles of digital storytelling. You can watch their work here: http://stories.umbc.edu/digitalstories/2010/01/digital_story_projects_from_el_1.html. If you are interested in finding out how some language educators have been using digital stories, I invite you to read my article: http://fltmag.com/digital-stories/. And of course, if you are taking TESL-654: Technology in Language Teaching and Learning in the spring, you will be working on your own digital story.

If you had to create your own digital story, what would it be about?

I created my own digital story – that’s how I first got introduced to the genre. Actually I created two – one in English and one in Russian. The story was for my parents, I was thinking about my childhood and talking about some memorable moments with them. The one in English came first as it was done for the class and by then English already was my main medium of expression. But since my parents don’t speak English, I recreated the story for them in Russian using the same images. And it came out a bit different as instead of translating the story, I rewrote it. This process also gave me and idea to encourage my ESL students to play with languages in their digital stories and not to limit themselves to the use of English. If you watch my students’ stories from Summer 2008, you will see creative examples of language use.

The fall semester is in full swing, and AU TESOL students experience a lot of stress working on their reports, presentations and doing their practicum. What advice can you give to students who are trying to deal with stress?

Good question! First, I would recommend developing time management techniques that work for you and have a schedule. When you have a busy life, deadlines, and several things happening at the same time, I think it’s very important to plan, keep a calendar, and a to-do list. It was also very helpful to me to have a study group – a group of friends with whom we would get together at a library or another place and study/write next to each other. In fact, Sarah Young and I do that on Fridays – we go to a library or coffee shop, and she works on her dissertation and I work on my projects. This way, we accomplish quite a bit in 2-3 hours, do not get distracted (for example by cute cats that we both have at home), and, at the same time, change a work setting. Also, make sure you get good sleep, eat healthy and nutritious food, exercise or stay active at least several hours/week, and do fun things with friends. Also, if you love animals but cannot have one right now, consider volunteering at a rescue group or a shelter – you will make a real difference in animals’ lives and they will take stress away from you. Even a hour/week makes a difference for you and for them.

In this newsletter, we ask our students and faculty to tell us about their favorite places in Washington, DC. Do you have a favorite place in this city?

I love Old Town Alexandria – strolling down King Street, along the river, checking out historic houses, going there Saturday morning for one of the oldest farmer’s markets in the area… I love seeing families with children and dogs… brings me a feeling of peace.

We know that you are a cat lover (just as al-
most everybody who works in the AU TESOL office). Can you tell us your cat story?

I love animals in general, and it’s been my dream since childhood to rescue a cat or a dog (or both) and give them a loving home. Almost exactly a year ago, I adopted two cats – a goofy and funny sister-brother duo – Carly and Marley. They stole my heart when I came to meet them in their foster home and brought so much joy. I also read and learned a lot about cats when getting ready to adopt. Cats are fascinating animals, incredibly sensitive and perhaps very misunderstood by people. When I brought Carly and Marley home, Marley was very scared and hid in a box under the chair for several days. Now he is a confident, talkative, and outgoing cat. He still doesn’t like to be held and so far has only sat on my lap once (which makes his sister very happy as she can have lap all to herself), but he is always with me when I am at home. He greets me at the door, hangs out in the kitchen with me, and particularly loves to come and supervise laundry.

“LIKE” US ON FACEBOOK!

Stay up to date on the latest AU TESOL happenings, catch links to current issues in the field, and browse the picture gallery of past events. Put your two cents in as well!

Search: American University TESOL Program
Congratulations to WATESOL Executive Board on a successful WATESOL conference!

We are very excited to see current AU TESOL students and alumni on the 2015-16 WATESOL Executive Board:

President
Sharla Branscombe

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I have a plan to visit all the Smithsonian museums while I'm in DC. My favourite so far is the Museum of American History; it houses a great collection of Americana, and I was really excited to see Kermit the Frog, the ruby slippers from The Wizard of Oz, and a top hat that belonged to Abraham Lincoln! The museum also has a huge vehicle collection, which is really interesting to a car nerd like me.
Congratulations to our Spring and Summer 2015 Graduates!

MA TESOL
Maram Al-Sharif
Tanya Camp
Alison Holt
Shuyu Liu
Mary Spanarkel
Wenmiao Xiao

Graduate Certificate in TESOL
Kentaro Clark
Joshua Gates
Louise Godley
Afryea Nophlin
Rivka Yerushalmi

The place I love is Smithsonian’s National Zoo. Interestingly enough, I never liked zoos before I came to DC. I thought that animals couldn’t be happy living in cages. However, when I first visited National Zoo, I saw that there were no cages and all the animals looked pretty happy. My favorites are Giant Pandas and flamingos. I can spend the whole day in the zoo watching them! I also noticed that after each visit to the zoo I feel happy and peaceful.
Margaret Gibbons Mathieu (Fall 2014)
Margaret Gibbons has been teaching in an intensive English program at Stratford University in Falls Church, VA since September 2014. Stratford University has a rapidly expanding ESL program, which is considered an integral part of the University’s mission to reach underserved groups in developing nations by providing opportunities to prepare for careers in fields like health sciences, nursing, culinary arts and information technology.

Mary Spanarkel (Spring 2015)
Mary serves as the Director of Curriculum and Instruction at Washington English Center, a community-based, non-profit program that offers low-cost English classes to adult immigrants in the greater DC area. This term, she’ll be focusing on developing new volunteer teacher trainings and redesigning a strong civics and citizenship curriculum for use in the future.

Rivka Yerushalmi (Spring 2015)
Rivka has been hired to teach an evening class on "ESL and Workforce Preparation" through the Literacy Council of Montgomery County. That job begins in October, and she is scheduled to teach three nights/week. In addition, she is continuing her volunteer teaching on Sundays at St. Michael’s School in Silver Spring (Level 5), and also fills in as a substitute for an afternoon conversation club at the Gilchrist Center in Wheaton, MD. Finally, she plans to maintain her relationship with the AU TESOL Program by auditing one class per semester for the next several years, with an eventual goal of teaching at Montgomery College.

Tanya Camp (Spring 2015)
Since Tanya graduated from the MA TESOL program in May 2015, she has joined Montgomery College as a full-time Instructional Associate in the Writing, Reading, and Language (WRL) Center at the Takoma Park/Silver Spring campus. There, she provides individualized academic support across the disciplines to both English language learners and to native-English speaking students. She is looking forward to serving MD TESOL as the Advocacy Interest Section Chair-Elect as well as to possibly going back to school to earn another degree!
Welcome to AU TESOL!

MA TESOL Students

**Laurel Beedle**
Laurel recently moved to D.C. from Minnesota. She completed her BA in English at Andrews University in Michigan. During the 2014-2015 school year, Laurel lived in Poland and worked as an English teacher. She loves writing, traveling, reading, and photography. She also enjoys blogging about her travels and teaching experience in Poland. Most importantly, she loves to meet new people and learn about their culture. Today, Laurel is excited to start a new chapter of her life at American University in the MA TESOL program and continue her journey as an ESL teacher.

**Mary Mateus**
Mary decided to go into education while she was a high school student in Bogota, Colombia, and one of her teachers inspired her to become an educator. She graduated from La Gran Colombia University with a degree in Humanities and English, and has worked with children for several years. Mary loves the cultural diversity of the DC area, and is looking forward to having a wonderful academic and professional experience in the TESOL program.

**Mindy Corriher**
Mindy just recently moved to D.C. from her home state of North Carolina. After six years of working in corporate America, she is ready to trade in the 9-5 for a career she is passionate about. Mindy worked in manufacturing with overseas vendors in China, Ecuador, South Korea, and also relocated to Honduras for a year to work on-site. During this time, she primarily enjoyed interacting with the locals and teaching English on a volunteer basis. Mindy speaks Spanish and a few words of Russian and Arabic. She is fascinated by linguistics and dabbles in other languages any chance she gets.

**Emine Uzun DeLaitsch**
Emine is from Istanbul, Turkey. She received her BA in Translation and Interpreting from Hacettepe University in 2008. After graduation, she worked as a freelance translator while working as an English language instructor at Istanbul Technical University. Emine got married in 2014 and moved to the US with her cat that she rescued from Istanbul streets. Having lived in Minneapolis, Minnesota since February 2014, she will be transferring to American University from University of St Thomas in Minneapolis and she is looking forward to experiencing what AU and DC offer.
Welcome to AU TESOL!

MA TESOL Students

Silvia Hildesheim
Silvia is excited to return to her home city to start a career in TESOL. She holds degrees in Biology and Spanish from The Pennsylvania State University. Originally wanting to work in the field of public health, she switched tracks after discovering a fascination and love of languages.

Heeso Lee
Heesoo is from Korea. She holds a BA degree in English Education. She has 3 kids and is a little worried about her long leave from academic work. But she is going to do her best and looking forward to meeting her new classmates.

Aung Ko Zaw
Aung Ko is from Sittwe, which is a small city situated on the west coast of Myanmar. He received his BA in English from the university of Sittwe in 2008. He was inspired by the fables told by his grandfather and took a serious interest in education early on. In 2010, he founded his private English language school “Everest” in Sittwe and since then has been working as the head teacher of the school. Now that he is starting his first semester in MA TESOL program, he is really excited to meet people from different parts of the world and to learn more about his field.

Bourama Badji
Bourama Badji is a high school teacher from Senegal (West Africa) where he taught English for over ten years (November 2004-June 2015). He studied English at Cheikh Anta Diop Universite of Dakar (Senegal) and graduated with a Master in English and Literary Studies before being admitted at the national teachers training school where he received an EFL/ESL teaching certificate. He is currently a graduate Fulbright student at the American University in DC and is pursuing an MA in TESOL. He is very enthusiastic about the AU TESOL program and the study environment and hopes to be able to work in in-service teachers’ development back home.
Welcome to AU TESOL!

MA TEFL Students

Steven Bieber

After a highly successful career in the telecommunications industry with Sprint, America Online and IMImobile that carried him to over 35 countries around the world, Steven has returned to the US to pursue a career change and earn an MA in TEFL. As the founder and owner of Bogotá’s first exclusively English language bookstore, Steven developed and hosted conversation clubs in his store, built book clubs for all age groups and did volunteer work in the local junior college in order to promote English as a foreign language in Colombia. His heart is in Colombia and with a formal study in education, he hopes to return there soon to teach.

Keith Schmidt

A native New Yorker, Keith moved to Florida, USA, in 1999. After 6 years at several colleges studying theatre arts and music education [NSSR, MSM, Dalcroze, JCS], he left to work for a prestigious sound reinforcement firm and for a leading edge stage & scenery production company, where he worked at the very venues that previously he had only attended as a ticket holder. More recently, Keith obtained AA and BA in Legal Studies (KU), MSEd in Androgogy & Online learning (KUGS), and is now doing MA in TEFL at AU. His teaching experience includes decades of private music instruction, years administering governmental training, and a few years as a volunteer online ESL instructor.

Certificate in ESOL

Connie Patsalos

Connie is a former television producer turned teacher. For more than 25 years she worked in various capacities at NBC, CBS and most recently MSNBC where she was a producer on "Hardball with Chris Matthews." In 2014 she began teaching as an adjunct at UDC Community College, where she continues to teach, and in 2015 decided to leave television and pursue teaching full time. She came to AU to become certified to teach ESL and expand her knowledge of English language learning. She has a BA in English from Colgate and an MS in journalism from Columbia.

MAT: ESOL

Hilary Lawch

Hilary is from the Washington DC area. Her passion for teaching ESL was sparked while she was teaching in a village in Honduras. She is new to the MAT ESOL and looks forward to working in the public school system, perhaps pursuing a degree later in linguistics or starting her own ESL nonprofit. She loves anything to do with language, and she wants to use her knowledge of language acquisition to help others.