

2022

## EnglishUSA - Full Issue, v 6

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## EnglishUSA - Full Issue, v 6

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# ENGLISHUSA JOURNAL

ISSUE 6 | 2022 SPRING

**ENGLISH**  
**US**  EnglishUSA.org  
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# About the Journal

The EnglishUSA Journal focuses on theory and practice in the field of teaching English as a second/foreign language and serves as a medium for sharing best practices, addressing current issues and presenting research. Submissions will be received by the EnglishUSA Professional Development Activities Committee (PDAC), evaluated by peer-reviewers and published in an online journal to be shared with the EnglishUSA members and the wider ESL/EFL community. The EnglishUSA Journal is created for readers interested in English language teaching, administration and leadership at the post-secondary level. The journal is published twice/annually and features practical and theoretical content primarily focused on programs that serve language learners in proprietary programs or university-governed institutions. Featured articles support EnglishUSA's interest to represent, support and be the recognized voice of English language programs, emphasizing engagement, integrity, excellence and collaboration.

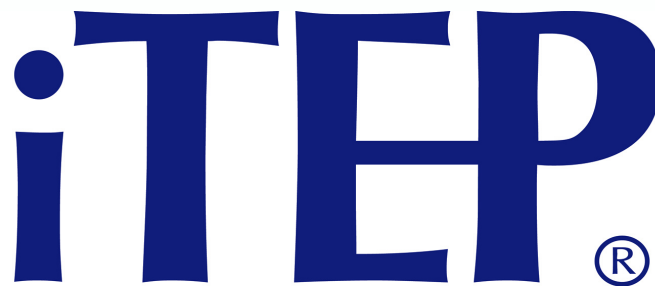
## Call for Submissions

EnglishUSA is accepting submissions for the 2022 Fall/Winter Issue of the EnglishUSA Journal in the following categories:

- In the Classroom articles provide a space for instructors, trainers, administrators and managers to share practical ideas, resources and tools to use in the classroom. The objective of this section is to share best practices, encourage peer collaboration and inspire creativity.
- Reports and Reviews offer summaries of relevant events, conferences or resources in the English language teaching field. The objective is to update the EnglishUSA community with reports on useful topics recently presented at events and conferences in the USA and overseas. This section also offers professional reviews on English language-related publications to help inform readers, which would be useful for their own programs.
- Journal Articles feature research, analysis and studies on teaching, learning and administration in the field of ESL/EFL. Content is relevant for instructors and administrators of the English language and focuses on language acquisition and learning, aspects of the English language, applied linguistics in addition to issues related to program administration.

For more info about the journal and submission guidelines:

<https://www.englishusa.org/page/Journal>

The logo for iTEP (International Test of English Proficiency) features the lowercase letter 'i' followed by the uppercase letters 'TEP' in a bold, blue, serif font. A registered trademark symbol (®) is positioned to the right of the 'P'. The entire logo is enclosed within a thick, black, rounded rectangular border.

*International  
Test of English Proficiency*

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## Editorial

by Lisa Kraft & Alison Camacho

We would like to start this editorial with a huge thank you to Engin Ayvaz who has tirelessly served as the Chair of the Professional Development and Activities Committee (PDAC) for the past 2 years. In addition to working with members of PDAC to organize webinars and the Professional Development Conference (PDC), Engin essentially worked alone to coordinate the many details that go into putting the EnglishUSA Journal out twice a year. Each edition was better than the last and the Journal soared to new levels of perfection, so much so we had to assign two Board members to replace him. Engin's board term may be done at the end of June but his legacy lives on through this Journal. We will do our best to make him proud.

It is our pleasure to present the Spring 2022 edition of the EnglishUSA Journal. We are confident that the Journal will educate and engage you. We would also like to thank our authors, reviewers, PDAC and of course, Cheryl Delk-LeGood for their effort and support.

The world is still struggling to come out of this devastating pandemic. At the time of writing, the United States hit another sad milestone of 1 million deaths due to COVID-19. Infection numbers are increasing again, especially in the Northeast and Midwest and the country is weary. We are seeing similar increases in other countries such as China whose zero tolerance policy still has major cities shut down. The war in the Ukraine rages on as the world watches and waits for what's next.

The stock markets are on a rollercoaster ride with no "up" relief, while worldwide inflation causes the same horrible feeling as it soars to record levels. Despite continued uncertainty, member programs have reported modest gains in enrollment numbers. Eternal optimists, we believe hope is on the horizon. EnglishUSA remains at the forefront of the IEP industry as a voice on behalf of the members and seeks additional ways to make sure our stakeholders hear us. This month, EnglishUSA applied for cooperator funding to bolster IEP-specific data collection, recruitment efforts and professional development for the membership.

This issue of the Journal continues to present timely and important topics of interest to English language programs. The Advocacy Corner by Daryl Bish delves into the state of international and IEP enrollment through IIE Open Doors data, which is dim, but his comments also take us to where hope lives. Surprisingly, that encouraging news can be found in the government's actions after last year's announcement of the Joint Statement of Principles of Support of International Education. Lisa Besso and Alex Thorp's article brings us into the fascinating world of student assessment, language proficiency and the difficulty admissions teams face in determining student success based on standardized exam results. Focused on the intersectionality of DEI and international students, Carol Olausen and Tarah Trueblood's article provides useful tools to help international students determine their own social identity and strategies and vocabulary to navigate difficult conversations while encouraging advocacy and allyship. We encourage you to read the article through a contextual lens of how you could apply these strategies at your institution and in your program. The Journal's second entry to the "Interview with" section introduces us to the new Executive Director of TESOL, Amber Crowell Kelleher. We hope you enjoy getting to know her.

We encourage you to submit an article for a future publication or become a reviewer. It is a wonderful way to get involved in EnglishUSA and score professional development for yourself. We thank our sponsor, iTEP for their support of the EnglishUSA Journal. We hope to see you at the next EnglishUSA Stakeholders' Conference on October 13 and 14 in Alexandria, Virginia. Be sure to mark your calendars!

Happy reading!

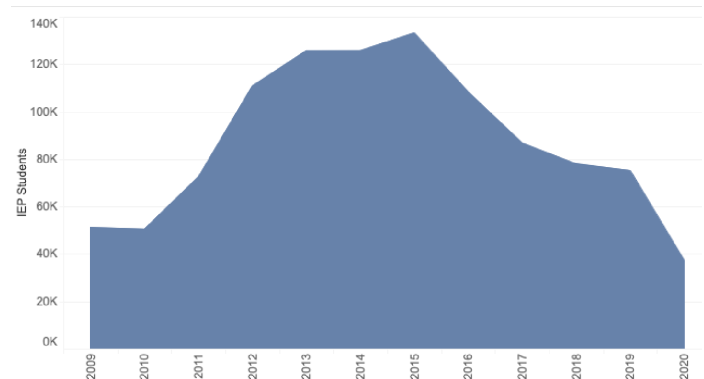
*Lisa Kraft is the Director of International Special Programs and Director of ELI Academics at Pace University. She serves as President of the EnglishUSA Executive Board and is a member of the Professional Development Activities Committee. Her work focuses on developing sustainable relationships with international partners and providing the best educational experience possible for international students and visitors.*

*Alison Camacho is the Marketing and Outreach Manager for English Language Programs - a program of the U.S. Department of State. She serves on the EnglishUSA Executive Board and is a member of the Professional Development Activities Committee. Her work focuses on strengthening connections within the English language programs community by providing a variety of engagement and professional development opportunities.*



Without a doubt, the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically impacted international education in the U.S. resulting in dramatic decreases in international student enrollment. In November 2021, the Institute of International Education (IIE) released the 2021 Open Doors Report for the 2020/2021 academic year. It showed a 15% decrease in international student enrollment at U.S. schools from the previous year, which is the largest year-to-year decrease in enrollment ever reported by IIE. Such a large decrease in student numbers effects all sectors of international education, but English Language Programs (ELPs) were particularly devastated. IIE reports that international student enrollment in Intensive English Programs (IEPs) decreased over 50% from 2019 to 2020.

*IEP Enrollments by Year*



*Institute of International Education (2021). IEP Student Enrollments by Total Students and Total Student Weeks, 2009-2020) Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange. Retrieved from <https://www.opendoorsdata.org>.*

*Hopefully, the forthcoming IIE report on IEP enrollments in 2021 will show that programs are rebounding from the lows of 2020, but low enrollments continue to impact the field as we enter the third year of the global pandemic.*



EnglishUSA members have reported increased student numbers in Fall 2021 and Spring 2022, but they have been uneven across the field and not close to pre-pandemic enrollments. This, one hopes, is not the much talked about “new normal” and that ELPs will continue seeing increased enrollments in the 2022/2023 academic year. There is reason to believe this will happen.

Since the Biden administration issued its Joint Statement of Principles in Support of International Education last year, visa appointment wait times have improved, embassies are prioritizing student visas, nonimmigrants are required to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 to enter the country, and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced plans to set new agency-wide backlog reduction goals. Furthermore, in a sign that the administration is open to learning lessons from the pandemic, the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) permanently adopted the use of electronic signatures and transmission for the Form I-20, a move universally praised by Designated School Officials (DSOs) and programs. Most recently, in April 2022, SEVP extended its March 2020 COVID-19 guidance to cover the 2022-23 academic year. This allows schools to continue counting online classes toward a full course of study in excess of the regulatory limits. While many ELPs are resuming in-person classes and services, continuing the March 2020 guidance gives programs flexibility should COVID cases again increase in their areas.

These significant and welcome developments demonstrate that the administration is working to support international education as it recovers from the effects of the pandemic, but more could be done. In April 2022 the Presidents’ Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration called on the Department of State to improve visa application processing for students and to “continue to remind consular

officers that attendance at a lesser-known college, is not, in itself, a reason for refusing a student visa applicant”. This mirrors the request made by EnglishUSA, NAFSA, TESOL, UCIEP, ACCET, and CEA in their August 2021 joint letter recommending that consular officers adjudicate student applicants “regardless of chosen institution or program type, given that all accredited and SEVP-certified legitimate schools must be accorded the same weight under the law.” Consular officers should, for example, not determine that an applicant should take equivalent English courses in their country of residence before studying in the U.S.

The administration has not yet developed a national strategy for recruiting international students. Ideally, the recruitment strategy “sets specific enrollment targets, engages a broader number of U.S. institutions in enrolling international students, and seeks to attract a more diverse pool of students from a wider range of countries and regions around the world” as recommended by NAFSA and supported by EnglishUSA, UCIEP, and TESOL. EnglishUSA is continuing to advocate for a national recruitment strategy that includes English language study in the U.S. We urge you to discuss this with your congresspeople. You can also submit a letter to the administration via NAFSA and urge them to take action and include English language study in any national recruitment strategy.

To further support ELPs and the field, Cheryl Delk-Le Good, Executive Director of EnglishUSA, applied to become a member of the reinstated Homeland Security Academic Advisory Council (HSAAC). English language training is a unique, large, and diverse sector of the international education field serving international and domestic students. Cheryl’s knowledge, experience, and expertise in the English language training field and the regulations and issues impacting it would benefit the HSAAC. Her inclusion would give

the HSAAC direct representation of the English language training field.

EnglishUSA is hopeful that Cheryl will be included on the HSAAC and that the Biden administration will develop a national strategy for recruiting international students. In the meantime, we are taking a significant step to promote and support English language programs in the U.S. In May 2022, EnglishUSA applied for a Market Development Cooperator Program (MDCP) grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce. If awarded, the grant would support several initiatives that will contribute to rebuilding U.S. capacity to host English language students and increase U.S. competitiveness in the global IEP industry. While the initiatives in the grant proposal do not directly support advocacy efforts, a primary initiative is to collect enhanced data on ELP enrollments and operations in the U.S.

Currently, U.S. IEP enrollment data at the national level comes from the Institute of International Education (IIE) Open Doors Report (referred to above) and a Data Mapping Tool by SEVP. SEVP also releases an annual SEVIS by the Numbers report but enrollment data on language training students is not included. The report focuses more on degree programs and K-12 students. Neither the IIE Open Doors Report nor the SEVP data collect detailed information on IEP enrollments, such as course type, age groups, study groups, or visa type (current reporting only looks at F-1 data). If the grant is approved, EnglishUSA proposes developing data sets that meet industry specific needs and support EnglishUSA advocacy efforts. In short, EnglishUSA's goal is to collect IEP-specific data that, for the first time, represents the diversity and nuance of the field.

We at EnglishUSA appreciate your support and encourage you to continue to advocate for your students and programs. Please share your thoughts and questions about any of the above topics on EnglishUSA's Engage Forum.



*Daryl Bish is the Assistant Director and PDSO at the University of Florida English Language Institute. He has extensive experience as a teacher, program recruiter, and administrator, having worked for university and community college programs. His master's degree is in Curriculum and Instruction, with TESL Certification. He has served as the NAFSA IEP Network Leader, a CEA site reviewer, and is currently Chair of the Advocacy and External Relations Committee on the EnglishUSA Executive Board.*



## Why International Freshmen May Not Be So Fresh

by Lisa Besso & Alex Thorp

### **Continuing to broaden our own assessment literacy level**

As educators, it is always refreshing to be put into a position where we need to learn and build our own competencies. This is certainly true in the area of student assessment. This area of international education has been in a state of disruption and flux for the past few years, after a long state of dormancy. As English language professionals, we are relied upon to quickly evaluate the merits of English proficiency exams by our host institutions; understanding the raft of exams is no small feat and is complex and time consuming.

The following article has been adapted from our submission for Institute of International Education after the Open Doors® report was released in 2019, but remains as relevant today as it was when it was written.

### **Why International freshmen may not be feeling so fresh.**

#### *Predicting International student success and English language assessment*

Imagine you are an international student in a foreign country in the first week of an undergraduate course of study. What is playing on your mind? Probably far more than academic success. It is more likely to be about whom you will meet and what friendships you will build, about integrating how you will integrate into a strange culture, about how you will fit in and be judged and about how you are going to cope without the immediate support of friends and family.

However, you are assured that you are in the right place doing the right thing. After all, you have been accepted into the program of study having proven your worth academically, financially, and linguistically, and you have faith in the institution's ability to gauge your capability to succeed.

But is it that simple?

If we consider the gatekeeping measures employed by most institutions, there are limited windows that help foresee how well a learner will integrate and succeed on a socio-cultural and psychological level. While most HEIs necessarily focus on academic veracity, learners' chances of optimizing their learning and overall success in an undergraduate program are underpinned by their experiences beyond the lecture theatre or seminar room. It is clear that academic ability is not the sole measure nor predictor of success or student well-being.

Arguably, the best insights an institution can gain into learners' potential to integrate well into and participate fully in their course of study is the linguistic proficiency profile made available, and, admissions interviews aside, this is usually in the form of a high-stakes summative assessment. Such assessments apparently denote whether or not the learner has the required linguistic ability to access and perform in the course of study, and they generally stake claims as to the learners' ability to communicate. However, what do such English proficiency certificates actually show?

Predictive validity determines the extent to which a score on an assessment can predict the future performance, and indeed behavior, of the test-taker. In terms of succeeding in an academic course of study, what 'predictive validity' do admissions staff require of language exams, and do they have the tools to check whether the certificates recognized are delivering on this? 2022 SPRING | PAGE 5

There would be clear advantages if high-stakes assessments could give a reliable and accurate reflection of communicative competence, actively assessing linguistic and discourse competencies, alongside socio-cultural and strategic competencies and pragmatic application of language. Furthermore, if such assessments could reflect a raft of study strategies and transferable skills evidenced to play a key role in university-level study, this would also be of considerable value in giving a clearer indication of an individual's ability to communicate with peers and integrate into the educational environment operating across languages.

However, owing to the considerable pressure on admissions departments, often navigating the precarious balance between commercial and academic drivers to offer places to international students, established and traditional measures of linguistic ability are often approved, even required. Concerningly, such certificates are often acknowledged without serious scrutiny as to what they actually measure, and can be recognized on merits of ubiquity or local market drivers rather than giving an indication of suitability for study related to acceptance criteria.

It is reassuring to see a positive move within the industry, whereby admissions teams are developing higher levels of assessment literacy, upskilling to be able to critically evaluate English language proficiency tests and assess whether they are fit-for-purpose for the requirements of the institution. This includes questioning levels of predictive validity and sub-skill development that surround a test, and to question to what degree a test helps demonstrate a learner's likelihood of success.

There are exams that have been developed to actively assess communicative competence and the learner's ability to engage in meaningful communication, and to engage in near authentic use of language within the academic domain.

The Integrated Skills in English suite (ISE), from Trinity College London, is one such high-stakes 4-skills exam, and is currently recognized by almost all universities in the UK, and is also accepted for visa application purposes.

As an international examinations board and educational charity based in the UK, Trinity has the vision of promoting and fostering the best possible communicative skills through assessments that encourage candidates to bring their own choices and interests into the assessment and by developing tasks that closely reflect real-world communication. The impact of preparing for and taking such exams is one of developing a broad range of skills needed for natural use of English, and not just learning exam skills that are only of use in the examination room. Trinity would suggest that a learner with an ISE certificate of a specified level has proven his/her ability to actively engage with English through natural communication [in what situations?], and demonstrated readiness to operate at that level in an English-speaking academic environment.

Of course, there is no such thing as a perfect English proficiency exam; in fact, no English exam can claim to be valid and reliable for all contexts. However, admissions teams are progressively obliged to arm themselves with the skills to determine what an exam actually tests and to evaluate the effectiveness of how this is operationalized.

The job of admissions departments has never been more challenging, and the stakes are high. There is an ever-increasing danger that institutions that accept international students into their programs and who then fail their classes will be held accountable for allowing the initial admission, both from a legal and financial perspective.

The choice of which English proficiency exams are recognized for admissions, therefore, carries a considerable weight, not only to identify learners that can access academic input at a given level but possibly to serve as the best available indicator of a learner's potential for overarching success in an academic program.

*Alex Thorp manages Centrally Managed Markets at Trinity College London and has over 15 years' experience heading a teacher training department in the UK. With special interests in English Language Assessment, CLIL, Neuro-linguistics and Evidence-based teaching, he publishes and presents globally with the aim of supporting best practices in language teaching and testing.*

*Lisa Besso is a former EnglishUSA Executive Board member and Co-Founder of Global Ed Professionals, a non-profit consultancy group. She and currently works with Trinity College London to help introduce American institutions to Trinity's assessments.*

*Trinity College London is a leading international exam board and independent education charity that has been providing assessments around the world since 1877. We specialise in the assessment of communicative and performance skills covering music, drama, combined arts and English language.*



## **Introduction**

The recent and highly publicized murders of people of color and those in the LGBTQ community have increased the frequency of conversation around diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) issues on campuses and in communities across the country. For an international student coming to a country where there are so many conversations about social identity, this can feel daunting to comprehend. Many international students are from countries that have less diversity than the United States, so their awareness of the processes a society needs to support all voices could be limited. Additionally, international media coverage of these events is presented through the lens of the culture in which they are shared. The result is that students hearing news of issues related to violence and discrimination in the US are often left with a perspective that could hold significant bias which they may bring with them when they arrive to study in the US. Nevertheless, when they arrive, international students become active members in our communities. They contribute to the rich diversity of those with whom they live, work and study. They need to have the space and knowledge to participate in these conversations and challenge preconceived ideas, since this participation will directly impact their experience for the time they are in the United States.

Working with international students to explore what diversity, equity, and inclusion mean in the context of American society is a way to answer questions students may have about their experiences. It is also a way to empower them with tools to manage their experiences to the best of their abilities.

### **Cultural Content Confusion**

Since many students are from nations or regions with less diversity than what they may experience in the US, the cultural assumptions around having this conversation can feel overwhelming for someone who has no idea why this conversation is necessary. One initial step in orchestrating this conversation should be for the group to establish some ground rules for engaging with one another on this topic. Words have power, and non-native speakers may struggle to articulate ideas with the vocabulary they currently possess. This vocabulary could be inaccurate or informed by stereotypes or misinformation rather than truth, so a few ground rules could support the intent of this conversation. One ground rule might be to use “I” statements, such as “In my experience with professors, I have been treated in this way by a few.” rather than “Professors don’t like students from my country and treat us poorly.” Using “I” statements allows participants to avoid blanket assumptions about a group of people. Another might be to be patient with one another and allow for mistakes as the group navigates conversations around DEI issues.

Ultimately, we want to make sure that students are able to connect what they are hearing and experiencing in terms of diversity with strategies for navigating DEI issues. In this paper, we offer several strategies for helping university-bound, international students make those connections.

### **Social Identity**

One good starting point for bringing students into this conversation is to have them consider how social identity is socially constructed. The various ways humans identify themselves within a society has no objective reality. Rather, each social identity is the result of beliefs and practices in society and may or may not have a factual foundation apart from those beliefs and practices. According to research by Northwestern’s Searle Center for Advancing Learning and Teaching,

An individual’s social identity indicates who they are in terms of the groups to which they belong. Social identity groups are usually defined by some physical, social, and mental characteristics of individuals. Examples of social identities are race/ethnicity, gender, social class/socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, (dis)abilities, and religion/religious beliefs. Some instructors may believe that social identities are not relevant to their courses. However, as classrooms and other university learning communities (e.g. research labs) become increasingly diverse, issues related to individuals’ social identities may surface (e.g., racial and gender composition of study groups). Instructors, regardless of department/college in which they teach, should be aware of and acknowledge how their social identities, as well as those of their students, impact the teaching and learning experience. (Searle Center for Advancing Teaching and Learning)

As a starting point, ask students to consider the ways in which they identify themselves. Do gender, race, religion, socio-economic status, education, nationality contribute to how they view themselves? Inviting students to consider that they may represent multiple

identities broadens their perspective of how others may relate to them, since they may build a connection based on any one or more of those identities. Facilitators can model how to articulate various aspects of identity and the fact that a single individual has multiple identities. For example, I can share some of my identities (woman, educated, mother, wife, white, American) as a way to help students consider their own.

### **Power, Privilege and Oppression and Microaggressions**

Once students have considered their social identities, they can move on to consider the roles of power, privilege, and oppression in US society and in their societies in their home countries.

The next step is to explore how social identities relate to power, privilege, and oppression in everyday life (Miller & Garren, 2017). This would be an opportunity for a facilitator to talk about which ones of their own identities reflect power, privilege, or oppression in American society as a model. For example, I could share with my students that my identities as a white American who is educated, offer me privilege in American society. And, at the opposite end, my identity as a woman could involve oppression in how women are regarded in some parts of American society and professionally. Some students may struggle with seeing where they have privilege, so a very basic privilege would be their education: they are students at a university. Once students can start identifying how some of their identities may be privileged and some oppressed, then their understanding of the importance of their inclusion in the DEI conversations on campus or in the community take on a new level of importance.

Once students have considered their own identities, it is time to have them branch out and consider how power, privilege, and

oppression may affect others in their communities. Asking students to think of an instance in which they have witnessed, experienced, or heard about the impact of power, privilege, or oppression on someone else gives them the opportunity to now attach some understanding to that event. For example, did a student feel targeted during COVID because they are of Asian descent? Or, did a woman who wears a hijab feel that she was treated differently because she covered her hair? In addition to naming the incident, supporting students in understanding any terminology related to that incident will further support students in having the language to participate in this broader conversation of how we navigate differences as a community.

Many of these incidents amount to what are known as “microaggressions,” and appear in our university communities and classrooms. Microaggressions are based on identities. They take the form of such things as “inappropriate jokes, malicious comments, singling out students, setting exam and project due dates on religious holidays, and stereotyping. (Trevino et al, 2013). What’s important to note is that microaggressions are often committed unintentionally by people who are saying these things unconsciously, and who are unaware of the impact of their words in creating an environment that doesn’t feel safe or comfortable for all of the students in it.

Helping students understand what microaggressions are and how microaggressions can negatively impact a person’s daily experience will provide them with a context for understanding their own experiences as a target of microaggressions. Therefore, it is important to provide resources to students for identifying and navigating microaggressions in their everyday life in the US. Above all, we want to help them to build agency, so that they are able to successfully advocate for themselves and others about issues around microaggressions.

## Building Agency

Conversations around identity and issues of oppression related to identity are challenging topics. However, not having the conversation with our students to support them in building agency is asking them to navigate a minefield with no protection. Students already worry enough about personal safety. Their parents also worry about personal safety. Demystifying conversations around discrimination and empowering students makes it far more likely that they will be able to confidently advocate for themselves, and others, while enriching our communities with their participation.

Intergroup dialogue practices are helpful in this demystification. Intergroup Dialogue (IGD) is based on a theoretical model that was developed and researched for over 30 years by the University of Michigan and a cohort of peer institutions. IGD brings together participants from different social identity groups in a sustained and facilitated learning environment. Through sustained dialogue with diverse peers that integrates content learning and experiential knowledge, IGD encourages participants to be intellectually challenged and emotionally engaged. These facilitated relationships influence participants' understanding of their own and others' experiences in society and cultivate individual allyship and collective agency to effect social change.

Miami University's Voices of Discovery is an intergroup dialogue program piloted by Global Initiatives in Spring of 2019. The program continues to be assessed by Miami's Discovery Center. When combining the last 3 semesters of student survey data, Voices students reported gains consistent with those of University of Michigan's peer cohort in many significant measures. Voices students reported larger positive changes in communicating with people from other groups, confidence levels of taking self- and other-directed actions,

confidence levels of intergroup collaboration, anticipated post-college involvement in redressing inequalities, involvement in social justice activities at Miami, and skills in dealing with conflict.

One IGD strategy for demystification is the PALS Approach (Pause, Acknowledge/Ask, Listen, Speak your truth/Share stories). PALS is a mnemonic device for how dialogue participants and facilitators can respond in the moment to microaggressions and other problematic comments. In the heat of the moment, it can be challenging to respond to oppressive comments. With the PALS toolkit, we can remember to simply "Pause" -- to slow things down, to unpack the comment without invalidating or putting down the person who made it.

The Pause is often the most important tool in the dialogue toolbox. Microaggressions and problematic comments come and go quickly, and, if we are not prepared, the moment passes, and we have done nothing. International students may not even recognize a microaggression, but they do feel that something inappropriate has transpired. Remembering to slow down, to pause, can make all the difference. Therefore, in the heat of the moment, simply saying, "Wow, wait a minute – I don't understand what you mean by that. Would you mind explaining?" When international students may be struggling to understand a quickly paced conversation, this lets them slow things down to make sure they understand and ask for additional clarity, when they think something may be inappropriate.

PALS also reminds us to Listen deeply—to what is going on beneath the surface, to where the speaker is coming from. Then, we can Acknowledge the humanity of the speaker and Ask probing questions. Finally, PALS reminds us to Speak our own truth and to invite others to Share relevant stories. The PALS approach



humanizes encounters with others who are different, helps people who are targets of oppression to build skills in self-agency, and invites those with unexamined perspectives to develop critical skills to interrogate those perspectives.

The PALS approach is helpful for us as leaders and facilitators and for students, but it takes practice to make it seamless. For our international students, having them practice this approach with some examples in class is a good way to help them build comfort with the language and process of using this approach. For example, students could look at these scenarios and discuss how they might use PALS to develop a conversation:

- “I can’t believe ALL these international students are from China.” (to an Asian student not from China)
- “You’re from the Middle East, so what do you think about the oil policy in Saudi Arabia?”
- In a group project, the American students discuss and divide the work up among themselves and don’t include the international student for fear that the international student will be a liability to the group.

## Conclusion

For our international students to find a sense of “home” during their time in the United States and feel safe to achieve the success that is their main reason for coming here, it’s imperative that we provide them with the language and tools they need to advocate for themselves and their communities. Conversations around diversity, equity and inclusion represent a commitment to our international student population to make space for them in this discussion and amplify their voices and perspectives in the dialogues undertaken in our communities.

Supporting our university-bound students in both navigating challenging conversations around these themes, as well as building their ability to advocate for themselves and one another, will engage them more fully in the classroom and in the community.

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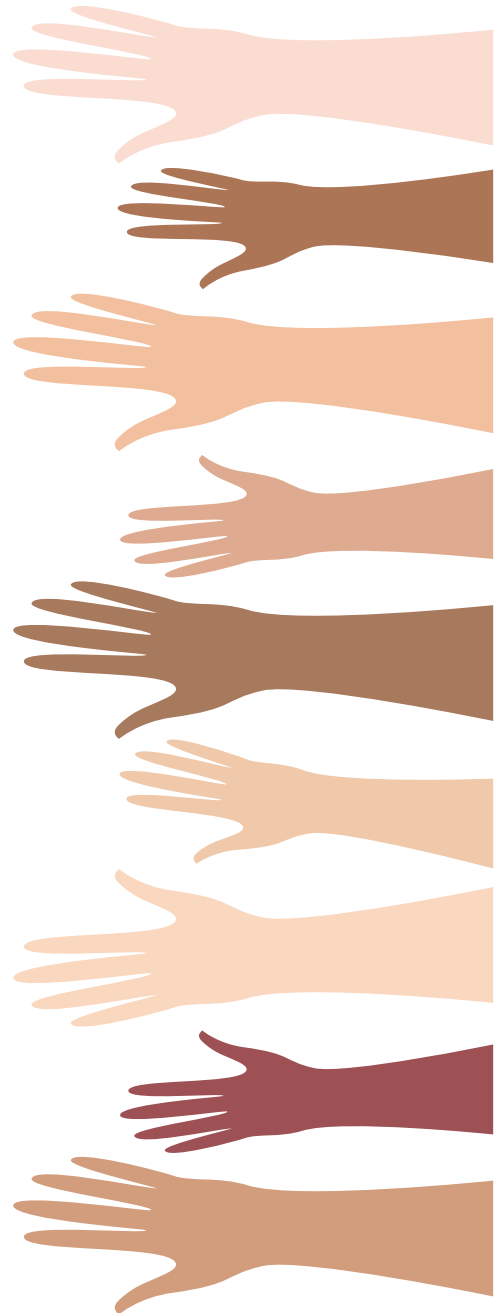
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## Interview

**Amber Crowell Kelleher**  
Executive Director, TESOL  
International Association

### **What do you like to do in your free time?**

Most Saturday and Sunday mornings I “run gently” with a small cohort of friends. We don’t care about our time or distance. Our runs are an excuse to socialize and unpack our weeks. I also love traveling and meeting people around the world. I have been content to hunker down with my family during the pandemic, but my wanderlust is reemerging.

### **How did you meet your spouse/significant other?**

I met my husband on a study abroad program in Sheffield, England. We were both business majors at RIT (Rochester Institute of Technology), but we didn’t meet until we were “across the pond.” Like many people, our study abroad experience was transformative. It was the spark that ignited a lifelong interest in international education.

### **If you could go back and give your 18-year-old self one piece of advice, what would it be?**

Take Spanish in college. I took two years of Spanish in high school and switched to German during college and grad school. I enjoyed learning German, but in hindsight, I wish I had continued learning Spanish. Instead of being strong in one additional language, I am mediocre in two!

### **What did you want to be when you were a child?**

An author or a doctor. I don’t think there are “many (any?) people who start out thinking, “I want to pursue a career in association management,” but I’m grateful that I discovered this path. It has been a terrific way for me to put my Thunderbird MBA skills to work.

### **When did you first hear about TESOL? What attracted you?**

I have known about TESOL (and known members of TESOL) since early in my career. My first couple of jobs were in international education (American Institute for Foreign Study and Linden Tours). Other career opportunities took me down a different path for a while, but I am thrilled to be back serving professionals whom I truly admire and respect.

### **What’s one thing working with TESOL that you didn’t expect?**

I have been so impressed with the collaboration and partnerships that happen in this profession. I am a collaborator to the core, and it is invigorating to see the mutual support and true willingness to work together to the benefit of our students and teachers.

### **What’s one lesson that you have learned in your career that you think everyone should know?**

People support what they help to create. It’s a simple concept, but it’s a game-changer. It is a lesson I use every day.

### **What was your COVID hobby that you still do now?**

Walking. I walked a couple of miles nearly every morning during the pandemic, and I still do. There is a lot of noise and energy in my house (!!), and the introvert in me thrives on that alone time to recharge and start my day.





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