

**2010-2011 CAUCE Awards for Program Excellence: non-credit over 48 hours
Professional Specialization Certificate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (PSC in TEFL)**

Continuing Studies in Education, Division of Continuing Studies, University of Victoria

Program Abstract

The Professional Specialization Certificate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (PSC in TEFL) was established in 2004. It was created to meet international requests for a professional program for in-service English teachers in a K–12 setting whose first language was not English. Participating teachers and district leadership teams wished to acquire specialized knowledge in the field of English language education and apply it in a foreign language context. The program, with both face-to-face and online components, was delivered for the first time in July 2006 to 32 teachers from Veracruz State, Mexico. During the same summer, 20 teachers from Jinshan District in Shanghai participated in a modified, face-to-face only, three-week program at UVic.

The PSC in TEFL targets educators who have an undergraduate degree, teacher certification and, normally, two years' experience in the field. The PSC in TEFL can be repurposed to meet client needs for a customized program.

The program is facilitated by culturally intelligent and experienced ESL/EFL instructors / teacher trainers who are currently working at the University of Victoria's English Language Centre, in the Linguistics department, or are BC-certified and employed by one of the local school districts in the south Vancouver Island region.

Historical Background and Development

For over 40 years, the University of Victoria's English Language Centre (ELC) has responded to a steady growth in interest and demands for quality ESL teaching and training. ELC's reputation in the field resulted in international requests for curriculum which would meet the needs of non-native speaking language educators teaching in a foreign language context. The ground work for this certificate was laid through collaboration amongst the English Language Centre, Department of Curriculum and Instruction in the Faculty of Education, the Department of Linguistics in the Faculty of Humanities, and Continuing Studies in Education (CSIE) at UVic. CSIE has been the "home" of the Professional Specialization Certificate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language since 2006 because of its focus on in-service teacher education.

English as a foreign language (EFL) refers to the learning of English that is taking place where English is not widely used as a primary form of communication. Examples of such communities would include Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Mexican students learning English in their own country. Given the status of English as an international language, the demand for quality teacher professional development continues throughout the world. In many cases, government policies dictate that English will be compulsory and that teachers will be expected to teach to a greater range of students in a K – 12 system while using a much higher percentage of English in the classroom.

Program Description

The PSC in TEFL is a non-credit, professional development certificate designed to develop a sound theoretical foundation in language teaching, along with practical skills and knowledge that can be applied to a K – 12 classroom setting. In some countries it has become mandatory to teach English at the elementary and secondary levels, with a growing emphasis on English instruction commencing at the primary level. The PSC is meant to assist in training local, non-native speakers of English to be more effective language teachers. The total number of hours invested in the PSC in TEFL is 150. Classroom instruction takes place for three weeks on campus at UVic, from 8:30 am until 12:30 pm five days a week. Additional hours of instruction and interactive learning on campus come in the form of afternoon seminars and workshops during the three week face-to-face period. Less formal socio-cultural outings to various venues in the Victoria area increase cultural understanding and offer opportunities for participants to use English for authentic communicative purposes.

The distance education or online component takes place for a period of nine weeks from mid-September (depending upon the actual delivery date of the face-to-face component) through the end of November, after teachers have returned to their home-teaching environment. This contextualized, reflective component makes up

the remaining approximately 75 hours dedicated to teacher education and professional development. Delivery timelines for both the face-to-face and online components will vary depending upon whether the participating teachers engage in the UVic, on campus option or the on site delivery, a recent option that was introduced in October 2009.

Adhering to an adult-oriented approach to learning, the PSC in TEFL respects and accommodates the learning needs of working, professional clients. The PSC in TEFL:

- recognizes and builds on participants' existing qualifications, previous learning and their foundations in pedagogic theory and practice;
- provides learners with an opportunity to upgrade their existing skills in order to respond effectively to changing times and current trends;
- emphasizes the immediate application of new learning in learners' current teaching contexts;
- is culturally sensitive to learners' distinct regional and national teaching environments, through its emphasis on applying learning directly to individual classroom situations;
- accommodates learners' work schedules and modest window of opportunity for study abroad, by limiting the time required for on-campus instruction or, if preferred, the PSC in TEFL can be delivered on site;
- is based upon adult learning principles and respect for self-directedness, accountability and responsibility of the participating teaching professionals (learning as one would in the workplace).

Program Objectives

The objectives of the Professional Specialization Certificate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language are:

- to enhance non-native speaking English teachers' capacity to teach English and, consequently, enrich their students' appreciation of and fluency in English
- to enable non-native English speaking teachers of English as a foreign language to advance their theoretical knowledge and practical skills in teaching, and enhance their fluency in English for the purpose of teaching English
- to provide a programmatic framework which meets the practical, pragmatic, and varied learning needs of overseas based, non-native English speaking, working teachers.

The PSC in TEFL provides an opportunity for foreign language teachers of English to upgrade their teaching skills. This must be done in order to respond effectively to the increasing demands placed upon them by the growth of English as a global language and changing government policies on how and when English is taught in their schools.

The PSC in TEFL program curriculum is comprised of modules which focus on:

- second language acquisition and orientation: learner variables
- methods: survey and foundations of language use
- integrating the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing (and also viewing and presenting)
- form focused instruction and the teaching of grammar
- assessment and evaluation
- curriculum development.

Afternoon workshops include topics and activities such as:

- drama and music in the EFL classroom
- cooperative games that engage students
- brain-based learning strategies
- recycling vocabulary
- magic of engaging learners.

Encouragement of critical reflection is emphasized during the on campus component and reflective practice is woven throughout the various assignments and activities completed during the distance component. This is in

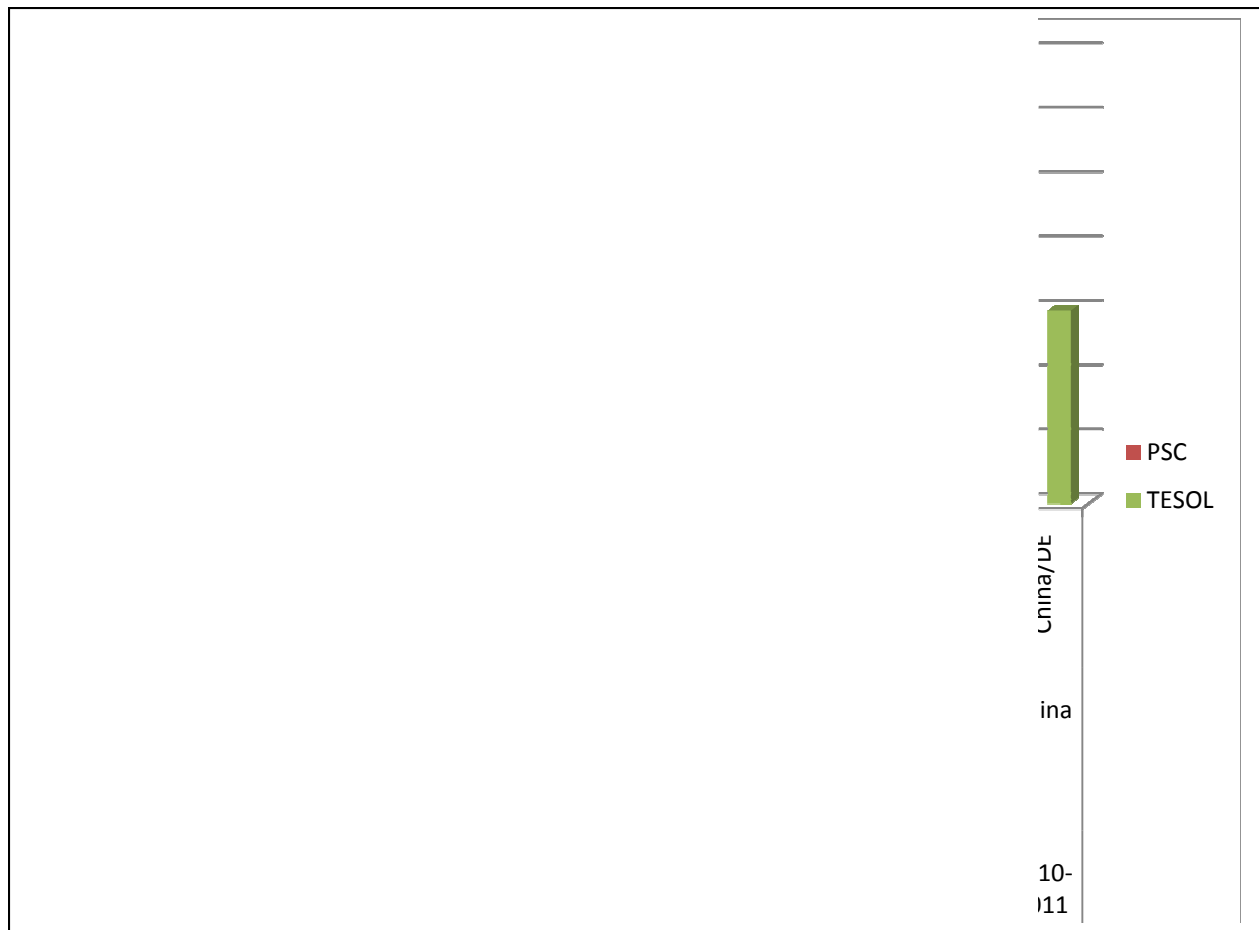
keeping with John Dewey’s concept of reflection and its impact on developing higher order thinking skills (for teachers to encourage with their students).

The Target Audience

International, non-native English speaking teachers enrolled in the PSC in TEFL program are required to hold a degree and teaching certificate from an accredited post-secondary institution and to have been engaged in teaching for a period of two years. However, the program is also open to education leaders responsible for language programs and pre-service teachers enrolled in an accredited teacher education program. Educators who apply to this program should be able to demonstrate a command of both spoken and written English by providing a Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score of 530 (197 on the Computer Based Test—CBT) or a score from International English Language Testing Services (IELTS) of 6.5. Pre-service teachers must also provide supporting documentation confirming that they are enrolled in an accredited teacher education program.

Since 2006, 174 teachers have come to the University of Victoria from Mexico, China, Puerto Rico, Korea and Japan. Of those, 104 participated in the full PSC in TEFL program with a completion rate of 92 percent. An additional 40 teachers from Yuexiu District in Guangzhou completed the certificate through on site deliveries in Guangdong Province, China, in 2009 and 2010. A total of 70 teachers from Korea and China participated in modified PSC in TEFL programs in 2006, 2007 and 2010. Those TESOL offerings were based upon PSC in TEFL content.

Enrolments from 2006 to present: Professional Specialization Certificate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language programs (PSC in TEFL) and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages programs (TESOL)



Total tuition generated from the above offerings: \$663,900.

Delivery Challenges, External Links and Outcomes

As the program has evolved, delivery challenges have been diminished but have not yet been completely eradicated. Fortunately, at the University of Victoria, we have the advantage of working with a team of experts in the field of distance learning, Distance Education Services. Their expertise and guidance have been generously given to ensure that our international TEFL teachers receive the support they need during the online, distance component of the program. While on campus, participating teachers are given a minimum of two orientation sessions to work with Distance DES personnel. This ensures that teachers can return to their home teaching context confident in their ability to fully engage online through the Moodle platform with their instructor and international peers. Once back in their home teaching context, the DES Help Desk offers timely support either through telephone or internet communication. Where the PSC in TEFL has been delivered on site (for example, Guangzhou, China in 2009 and 2010) and the international teachers do not attend classes on the UVic campus, thorough on site orientations are conducted at the designated training venue to ensure consistent communication with their online instructor. To date, the majority of communication challenges have been a result of human error revolving around inaccurate entry of Netlink IDs or forgotten passwords.

Other challenges have included:

- partner country and institutional regulations and policies related to bank wires and taxes
- delivering a quality education program to diverse audiences with their own goals and objectives
- natural and human disasters, economic reversals, leadership changes, policy limitations, lengthy national holidays such as the Chinese Lunar New Year or Spring Festival
- collaborating at a distance; language and cultural differences
- maintaining personal contacts in frequently changing environments
- investment in time and money to build and sustain relationships
- fluctuating exchange rates
- conducting negotiations and signing agreements or contracts through translation and interpretation
- communication styles
- contrasting values and beliefs regarding quality second or foreign language programs.

The PSC in TEFL could not be successfully promoted and delivered either at UVic or internationally without the expertise of on-the-ground agents and district champions who have a vision for effective professional development programs for international teachers. We remain grateful for their contributions to the program's past success and continued growth. International relationships depend upon clear and open communication and must be nurtured and respected in order to meet the needs of the participating parties. Much of CSIE's success has been a result not only of signed contracts but also of building and sustaining trust over great distances through positive intercultural encounters.

In the introduction to his 2010 book, *Leading with Cultural Intelligence*, David Livermore states that 70 percent of international ventures are doomed to failure due to cultural differences and misunderstandings. Our repeat business with Mexico, Japan, Puerto Rico and China speaks positively about the care we have given to respect diversity.

Marketing and promotional activities have included:

- face-to-face meetings using PSC in TEFL related visuals and graphics
- electronic and hard copy brochures
- electronic pre-arrival handbooks for each participant (information regarding living and studying in Canada)
- welcoming letters to individual teachers, cohorts, supervisors and sponsors
- information sharing with visiting international delegations at the University of Victoria
- distribution of program information through our colleagues in the ELC (for example, brochures for international language fairs, former students, etc.)
- website, word-of-mouth; local school district colleagues with international contacts
- Office of International Affairs at UVic
- use of teacher (student) feedback: testimonials from program evaluation forms and unsolicited sources, and

- use of *Skype* to reduce communication costs while nurturing relationships through real-time communication.

Participating teacher satisfaction has been gauged through the use of face-to-face and online evaluation rubrics and anecdotal feedback from UVic instructors and afternoon workshop leaders (throughout the duration of the program). The results of these surveys have consistently indicated a very high level of satisfaction for all elements of the program by both our instructors and the trainees. A keen sense of support for the program has been further demonstrated through participants' willingness to endorse the program through solicited and unsolicited testimonials and recommend it to peers and administrators in their home country. They have been especially keen on encouraging their supervisors to support teaching colleagues so they too can experience an authentic, English language and culture immersion experience on Vancouver Island. For some, their participation in the program proved to be a rejuvenating and career altering experience. What follows is an unsolicited testimonial from Encomium Agency regarding feedback the director received from a Puerto Rico National Guard teacher:

I just got off the phone with Awilda. Asked her for feedback – she said “WOW” three times and that she loved it and so did her colleagues. She has already told the new Commander (Major Norris) how important it is to send the rest of the teachers [from the Puerto Rico National Guard, Fort Allen] for the PSC in TEFL.

Value/ Service to UVic and the Participants and Profile of Continuing Education

The PSC in TEFL has redefined the scope of Continuing Studies in Education's focus on in-service teacher education by going beyond traditional local, regional and provincial boundaries. In doing so, this program contributes to answering a UVic question about its role in “supporting capacity building of other nations.” The PSC in TEFL leads to capability development which could help ensure that enough teachers have the skills to lead train-the-trainer types of professional development where teacher renewal options are limited. Co-configuration (as defined in John Field's *Social Capital and Lifelong Learning*, 2005) could then lead to adapting learning to the international teachers' own unique situations.

For University of Victoria and local school district instructors who have taught international teachers in the PSC in TEFL or in one of the customized TESOL programs, the comments have bordered on euphoria. Without fail, they have stated that it is the best teaching (and professional development) experience they have had. This holds true for staff who administer the programs and other service areas such as the Computer Assisted Language Lab which offers orientations and space for individualized learning support.

The PSC in TEFL has attained the enrolment goals that were envisioned at its inception. Furthermore, from the perspective of some members of the Faculty of Education, the program raises the profile of continuing education on campus and the University of Victoria on an international level. For international teachers, the PSC in TEFL is an opportunity for non-native speakers to acquire a credential from a well respected English language university and to become alumni of that university. From a social capital perspective, bonding, bridging and linking relationships are formed among teachers of the same and different cultural backgrounds resulting in life-long friendships and larger closely-knit learning communities.

From an economic perspective there results an additional modest amount of revenue shared across the Division of Continuing Studies (ELC/Homestay), the University (housing and food services), and the city of Victoria (tourism dollars). The city's international reputation as a world class destination is further reinforced.

Complexity

Before being signed, international agreements to deliver the PSC in TEFL need to be clearly written, carefully translated and confirmed as accurate, interpreted and agreed upon to serve the needs of CSIE and its international partners. Agreements or contracts are not looked upon in other parts of the world in the same way as they are in the West. To reach an agreement, relationships must be built on trust over time and cultural differences need to be understood and respected. Ambiguity and risk play a large part in negotiations and a willingness to be flexible is of utmost importance for success.

Offering programs internationally means trying to meet unique teaching and learning needs of diverse teaching professionals with varying levels of English competence. Delivering the program either on campus at UVic or on site creates challenges related to securing appropriate classrooms that offer access to learning resources such as internet connectivity and technical support for participants. Working on site has the additional challenge of being assured of healthy food, safe and comfortable accommodation for instructors, a venue where the teaching and learning conditions are optimum and textbooks and other materials can be guaranteed a destination from abroad.

Delivering an international program like the PSC in TEFL requires patience, flexibility and no small amount of tolerance for ambiguity, and a willingness to accept that no program crossing borders and the international date-line can be without some delivery challenges.

Ingenuity and Innovation

The PSC in TEFL is delivered in a blended format. The face-to-face component offers an opportunity for participants to bond as they engage as a newly formed community of learners. The asynchronous, online component allows teachers to reflect on their own practice and on their own terms. Participants can engage when convenient and progress at their own pace over the course of the program. This learner control can reduce anxiety and result in increased confidence as teachers participate in their personal or professional workspace.

The Moodle platform that teachers access through the Internet offers basic tools to fully engage in the PSC in TEFL. Most importantly, however, it is the interactive facilitation skills of qualified online instructors (i.e., the face-to-face classroom instructor in most cases) who continue to care and share through an optimum asynchronous presence that make the most positive impact. Passionate and knowledgeable instructors with up-to-date expertise, backed by the Distance Education Services online help desk, give the encouragement and technical support required for participating teachers to successfully complete the program.

Additionally:

- special seminars facilitated by leaders in their field engage international teachers in interactive facilitation/ learning opportunities with practical take-aways for immediate application in their own teaching context or for sharing with district colleagues
- first-hand observations of best practices are built into the on campus component; teachers visit authentic learning centres (local schools, colleges, English Language Centre, etc.) where ESL is taught
- increased cultural intelligence is encouraged by integrating teachers from different cultural backgrounds while on campus
- teacher professional competence is enhanced through action research and built in reflective cycles
- program Director visits schools on site to keep abreast of teacher progress and satisfaction on completion of the program and as part of “graduation” ceremonies and negotiations for future deliveries
- the program welcomes input from international advisors (for example, Mr. Dingji Cai, District Superintendent, Yuexiu District Education Bureau, Guangzhou, China) whose experience and perspectives could add to the quality of the program and keep its offerings up-to-date and relevant to district teachers
- promotional materials used are target client specific and created on a “just in time” basis for immediate impact during business meetings.

According to African wisdom, “it takes a village to raise a child.” In the case of the Professional Specialization Certificate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language, it takes highly diverse and committed teams to deliver this program on campus at the University of Victoria or on site on foreign soil. Team members’ contributions have collectively resulted in the success the program has enjoyed to date. Through this program, participating international teachers of English and our UVic program instructors and facilitators mutually benefit from the balance attained between theoretical and practical aspects of the language teaching profession. It is hoped, however, that the greatest impact of the PSC in TEFL is on the success of students in English as a foreign language classrooms.