

16th Annual Research Symposium
TESL Ontario, November 12-13, 2015

Report submitted by
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The 15th Annual Research Symposium was held as part of the 42nd annual TESL Ontario Conference in Toronto from November 12-13, 2015. Based on a decision by the Conference Committee, the Research Symposium addressed two topics. The topics selected had been suggested by conference participants and were topical in the literature.

- English in the Workplace
- Formulaic language - a promising way to think about vocabulary building

The two topics strands were each presented in a three-hour session that included time for presenters to respond to questions arising from their presentation and for symposium participants to engage in discussion with the presenters. All three topics were well attended by between 50-100 participants, reflecting the overall drop in conference participants in the last couple of years. A brief synopsis of each of the three symposium topics follows:

English in the Workplace

Thursday, 12 November, 2015, 14:15 – 17:15 hrs.

Presenters: Tracey Derwing, PhD, University of Alberta & Simon Fraser University
Andrea Strachan, MEd, Touchstone Institute
Julia Williams, MA, and Margaret Heeney, PhD, Renison University College, University of Waterloo

Tracey Derwing presented insights from two different English in the Workplace research studies that involved non-native and native English speaking employees. Her presentation *Opening the Window on ESL in the Workplace* illustrated some of the challenges and successes of workplace programs and offered recommendations for future consideration. With *Who Recommends the Higher Language Test Score for Workplace Readiness: Language Specialists or Employers?* Andrea Strachan drew attention to some of the challenges in setting cut scores for internationally educated professionals. Julia Williams and Margaret Heeney's presentation *Workplace English Language Proficiency Assessment Outcomes* described the development of a profession-specific language test. The presentation highlighted some of the key components involved in supporting effective language assessment within workplace contexts.

Formulaic language - a promising way to think about vocabulary building

Friday, 13 November, 2015, 14:15-17:15 hrs.

Presenters: Lina AlHassan, PhD Candidate, Carleton University
Randy Appel, PhD Candidate, Concordia University
Stuart Webb, PhD, University of Western Ontario
Alisa Zavialova, PhD Candidate, Carleton University

In Learning all the Parts of the Puzzle: Focused Instruction of Formulaic Sequences Through the Lens of Activity Theory Lina AlHassan presented a study in which she explored the possibility of teaching formulaic sequences to support reading and writing in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) teaching. Randy Appel presented results from his investigation of non-native English speaking writers' use of formulaic sequences in *Formulaic Sequences in L2 English Academic Writing: Proficiency level differences*. Stuart Webb explored a specific type of formulaic sequences, collocations, in his paper *To what extent do EFL students know the collocations of high frequency words?* Finally, Alisa Zavialova reported on a pedagogical intervention aimed at helping learners in a Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program acquire formulaic sequences and master their pragmatic roles in *Explicit Instruction of Formulaic Expressions and Second Language Pragmatic Competence*. All four presenters discussed implications of the studies presented for teaching and learning vocabulary.

Part of the research symposium is the publication of the proceedings in a special refereed issue of *Contact*. The co-editors of the proceedings, Dr. Hedy McGarrell and Dr. David Wood have set up a Reading Committee consisting of experts on the topics addressed to assist with reviewing the manuscripts. Manuscripts have arrived and the review process has started; the projected publication date of the proceedings is 31 May 2016. The issue will be published through the TESL Ontario website and be available to teachers, researchers and language professionals throughout the world, wherever access to the Internet is available.

Many thanks to presenters, participants and TESL Ontario staff for their continued support of this event.