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Preface

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Second Language Pedagogies (Vol. 1): From Theory to Practice

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In February 2012, Dr. Clive Thomson, then the Director of the School of Languages and Literatures (SOLAL) at the University of Guelph, led a team of his colleagues to successfully launch the first International Second Language Pedagogies Conference (SLPC) in Guelph. Quickly becoming an annual event, the SLPC has evolved into a unique occasion where practitioners and researchers come together to share their research, theories, approaches, methodologies, experimentations, successes, and failures in second language pedagogies with the common goal of advancing the art of second language teaching. The successful realization of SLPC2, again at University of Guelph, SLPC3 at University of Toronto Mississauga and SLPC4 at Wilfrid Laurier University has led to the celebration of SLPC5 at the University of São Paulo, Brazil. With two full days of presentations, panels, workshops, and social events, it is the manifestation of a sustained interest in exploring, sharing, and advancing best practices in second language teaching and learning.

The approach of SLPC5 presented an opportune moment to celebrate the conference's growth by publishing its first proceeding. The result is a collection of selected conference presentations and contributions from like-minded supporters of the conference, which combine to echo the spirit and philosophy of SLPC. Our contributors range from those whose primary research focus is in second language pedagogies to those who, even with other principal research backgrounds, excel in their innovative approaches to second language teaching, owing to their commitment to enhancing student engagement and to continuously improving the second language teaching and learning experience. This first volume is a testimony of the growth and positive impact SLPC makes in the domain of second language teaching and learning. Our efforts to respect the authors' views, approaches, and philosophies result in a volume which presents a wide scope of innovative projects and pedagogical styles.

In his article, Paolo Frascà examines a method for language teaching developed in Italy, where it is well documented that a great percentage of the population does not speak a foreign language. Despite years of instruction in schools, Italians have not mastered English, the most sought after foreign language in the European Union. In response to this systemic failure, the Associazione Culturale Linguistica Educational (ACLE) created a new method for teaching English. The Rational, Emotional, Affective Learning (REAL) method has its theoretical foundation in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and employs multiple pedagogical approaches, including total physical response (TPR), communicative language teaching (CLT), learner autonomy, and teaching to accommodate different learning styles. The REAL method rejects language learning as an abstract activity based on knowledge of the rules of a language and characterised by inauthentic activities that are limited to the classroom as an assessment driven environment. Instead, the central principles of the REAL method are that students must be fully immersed in meaningful language learning activities that will equip them to function in real world communication and to help them achieve real world objectives.

Laurie Massery reviews multiple research findings on peer evaluation—also referred to as peer assessment—as an effective pedagogical tool in second language teaching in the higher education context. Although findings vary within the literature, Massery's examination leads her to conclude that peer evaluation practice is more instructive for students giving feedback (evaluators) than for those solely receiving it. She also points to the finding that even when students accept peer evaluation, they do so partially, preferring at least some evaluation performed by their instructor. When incorporating peer assessment in her own classes, Massery employs a variety of tools and practices for both student and instructor, including random groupings of students, alternating roles within the groups, rubrics, progress reports, and others. In her

conclusion, Massery advises instructors to adopt peer evaluation, to use it regularly, and to take advantage of the tools she showcases in her article.

Addressing the increasing reality of large-sized university classes, Teresa Lobalsamo and Ramón A. Victoriano-Martínez discuss the evidence of decreased student enthusiasm for these classes, accompanied by a reduction in student achievement of learning objectives. Furthermore, they discuss evidence showing a decreased rigour in the design of course objectives and assessments, as well as a reduction in the development of associated skills, like deep thinking and critical analysis. Development and application of effective learning strategies are also negatively impacted. In a worrisome observation, they note that these shortcomings apply not only inside these high enrolment classrooms, but also in other learning situations. The authors recount practical strategies employed in their own large foreign language classes (75 and 300 students) with the objective of providing a creative, challenging, and engaging learning experience for their students. While the profiled strategies also function perfectly in smaller classes of all disciplines, the ones described here are modified for use in large foreign language classes.

Sébastien Ruffo discusses a course he delivers which focuses on accuracy and richness in oral performance or "Speaking text." Ruffo acknowledges that while he teaches French language courses, his areas of expertise do not include second language pedagogies, a situation very familiar to many university instructors of second languages. With an eye to marrying his areas of research with his teaching, Ruffo creates a course which promotes students' oral performance skills as they produce a series of recordings of selected reading material. These readings include traditional or canonical literary texts as well as more current non-literary texts and situational scripts. His project allows students to show their mastery of various tones, styles, and registers, suitable to each type of text, in their oral delivery in French. He argues that this approach teaches students how to orally interpret such written texts, thus enabling better comprehension and deeper text appreciation. This project is unique in its style and premise with a strong focus on performative skills of orality, facilitated by the use of technology.

In their article "Exploiter la littérature jeunesse en français, adopter des approches plurilingues, utiliser des albums bilingues", Françoise Armand, Elodie Combes and Catherine Gosselin-Lavoie present the ELODiL project (Éveil au langage et ouverture à la diversité linguistique), which valorises Quebec's multicultural and plurilinguistic society as a means to foster in Québec's youngest learners of French an appreciation of not only that language, but also those of immigrant Quebecois families. The authors present multiple examples of learning activities which showcase the diversity of first languages and cultural experiences represented in Quebec's French language classrooms. For example, they argue that reading and listening to children's stories in French as well as in other languages positively impacts students' mastery of French while improving cultural awareness and openness to the first languages of non-francophone students. The benefits are two-pronged: non-francophone students are encouraged in their study of French when their own language is valorised, and Francophone students come to appreciate other languages and may be encouraged to study one. In both cases, other cognitive capacities such as critical thinking and moral reasoning are developed while a tolerant, inclusive atmosphere is created in the classroom, and by extension, in Quebec society.