



UMBC TESOL Program Newsletter

Special Feature - International Student Voices

EDITED BY KENEISHA MURRELL

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Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.

-John Dewey

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International Student Voices: Landy Andriamiarisoa Zetina

Coming to us from the island nation of Madagascar, program alumna Landy Andriamiarisoa Zetina began the MA TESOL in 2009. With her native language being Malagasi, Landy began learning French as a second language in elementary school. Her interest in English was prompted by travel, and the realization that it opened the door to communicating with a world of new people. Having ten years of experience teaching ESL in various countries including India and South Africa, as well as teaching Malagasi to English speakers, Landy was confident that she was in the right field when she arrived in Baltimore.



Landy Andriamiarisoa Zetina currently teaches at the ELI on campus.

Still, the English she encountered was surprisingly foreign. Shocked by the plethora of options one has to choose from at a local Starbucks, she faced the challenge of deciding between "lattes" and "iced lattes" and "espressos". "What kind of English is this?", she wondered as she remembered years of teaching her students to say, "May I have a cup of coffee?" Landy also had to adjust to the difference in power distance she experienced in the US. The informality between students and professors was at first confusing, but she speaks fondly of how teachers like Dr. Nelson helped her to develop an approachability with her own students.

Landy reports that her experiences have also helped her develop a greater sense of empathy for her students having had a taste of the cultural and linguistic challenges they face each day. She especially enjoys teaching intro level classes because, as she says, "I've been there". She knows how mentally exhausting it is to speak a foreign language all day long. She knows there is a limit to what students can process in a given period. Graduating in 2011 and working at the ELI, she has lived out her passion for working with beginner students. While it is initially challenging to communicate with them, it is extremely rewarding for her to see the vast progress they make in the beginning stages.

When asked if she has any advice to offer current students, she quickly responded, "expect the unexpected." She described the roller coaster of emotions a teacher can experience, feeling inspired by students' progress one day, and feeling like she hasn't succeeded in teaching them anything the next. This roller coaster is "a part of the process of learning," she reminds us. This is the predictably unpredictable process we have all dedicated our lives to facilitating. So, buckle up!

Written by Keneisha Murrell

International Student Voices: Yaya Sekou Ballo



Yaya Sekou Ballo is an MA TESOL student, as well as a graduate assistant and instructor at the ELI.

For me, becoming an ESOL teacher is what I call “the accidental discovery of my true nature, prompted by circumstances.” In other words, I naturally loved to learn and share, and I still do. However, my particular interest in English language was prompted by a broader interest in Britain and the United States, and anything that came from these countries. I wanted to speak English and visit, or even live, in one of these countries. I also love soccer. I was the captain of my team and one of the best players in street soccer, but my dad wanted me to study and reach the highest educational level possible.

When I graduated from the University of Bamako (the capital city of Mali) majoring in English Studies, my dearest dream was to become a professional soccer player for Manchester United, my favorite team. My elder brother told me about our government’s open recruitment opportunities for ESOL high school teachers. I applied a bit reluctantly because I was already playing in the reserve team of one of the elite division clubs in Bamako, and I hoped to get a contract to play

abroad the next year. But since our dad had passed away the year before, I didn’t want my mom to see me playing soccer with a university degree when I could help the family with a new job. I was recruited as an ESOL high school teacher to serve in Kolokani, a town about 105 miles north-west of Bamako in 2004.

So, I started a journey as an ESOL teacher that would last 9 years before coming to the U.S. for a master’s degree. The school board gave me 4 classes to teach, one of which was 11th grade L.L. (Languages and Literature), where English and French were the absolute dominants subjects. I was 24, the youngest teacher in the school, and I didn’t have the slightest idea about the immensity of the task. I went through the guidelines of the ESOL curriculum, bought additional books, and subscribed to the Catholic public library of the town which had more books for teaching ESOL than our high school library. I decided to make English the sole language of the class for the students and for myself, using French only for clarification purposes. I gave my students more work using English than any other class in the whole school. They thought I was crazy, and sometimes I thought I was too (laugh!), but I was determined to meet the expectations of the curriculum and make my students the best of the school. “This young and crazy teacher thinks we only have English to learn,” was what my L.L. class monitor said to his friend one morning as I was entering the classroom.

Well, at the end of the school year, all of my L.L. students successfully advanced to the 12th grade. My colleague (the French teacher) and I received congratulations from the school board, the parent association, and our other colleagues. My students were so happy to be able to speak, read, and write in English so much better than they had expected that they delegated five of them to thank me and apologize for calling me the “young and crazy teacher.” Seeing their happiness, admiration, and respect for me, a young and novice teacher, and taking note of all the good I could do to change my students’ lives definitely convinced me to put a stop to becoming a professional soccer player and to devote my life to teaching ESOL. I was even happier when 100% of my former L.L. students passed the National Baccalaureate Exam the following year to get into university. Many of them have already graduated from university, and are teaching ESOL at different levels now.

Full Circle Moments: From Student to Teacher

An Interview with Sherry Lyons

This semester we had an opportunity to catch up with Sherry Lyons, who is currently an adjunct instructor in our ESOL program. For current students, it is always interesting to learn from those who are a few steps ahead of us. Here is what she had to say.

Sherry, what area was your undergrad study in?

I did a triple major in Marketing, International Business, and French at Towson University. I am a native Marylander.

How ambitious! What years did you study in our ESOL program?

I was a student from 2008 – 2009. Then in 2010, I completed a graduate certificate in distance education. While in the ESOL program, I planned to complete the K-12 certification process and to get a certificate in distance education. I wanted to cover all of my bases so that I would have the opportunity to teach in a variety of contexts. Ultimately, I decided not to pursue the K-12 option, but continued to take courses to complete the distance ed. certificate, finishing in 2010.

What initially piqued your interest in ESL education?

After sustaining an injury that changed my life significantly, I was in search of a new path and purpose, especially in my work life. Not unlike many others who have entered this profession, I have always been drawn to studying different languages, to traveling, and to learning about different cultures. In my quest to find what would be next on the professional horizon for me, ESOL education as a profession actually found me when I answered an ad for ESOL volunteers at CCBC. As a volunteer with CCBC, I worked with two ESOL instructors who suggested that I apply for a position as an instructor to teach my own class since they both felt I was “good with the students.” I gathered my courage and applied and was offered a position as an instructor in CCBC’s ESOL program. Although I wasn’t a trained educator at the time, I enjoyed my work in the classroom and loved my students but felt uncertain about how I was guiding my students through the language learning process. Driven by a strong desire to better serve my students, I decided that it was time to learn more about the ‘art and science’ of teaching ESOL, so I enrolled in the MA TESOL program at UMBC. Since then, I’ve been on a wonderful journey of discovering more about myself as a professional, learning how to be a better instructor, and serving my students.

How many years have you been an active part of Maryland TESOL?

I’ve been a member of the executive board of Maryland TESOL for 5 years. I started as the treasurer for 2 years, then 2nd VP, 1st VP, and now I’m serving as the current president.

What has that been like?

My time on the board has provided me with opportunities for significant personal and professional growth and a chance to develop leadership skills that I might not have been able to do otherwise.

What are your goals as president?

My primary goal for this year is to continue to forge a strategic approach to meeting the professional development needs of Maryland TESOL members, to develop our advocacy efforts as an organization, and to strengthen and expand the reach and presence of the organization across Maryland. With these goals in mind, we organized our 2017 Annual Fall Conference, which brought ESOL professionals from across the state together for professional development workshops on various topics. In the spring, our Interest Section Chairs are planning targeted professional development events for the diverse teaching professionals we serve in the areas of adult education, higher education, and teacher education to name a few. On the advocacy front, the Advocacy Interest Section Chairs recently organized a team of board members to meet with Representative Elijah Cummings’ staffer to discuss Maryland TESOL’s work, to help bring ELs to the forefront, and to ask for his continued support of education, ELs, and the DREAM Act of 2017. Additionally, while we are expanding our reach to ESOL professionals in other parts of the state, we have set the priority of establishing Interest Sections for Western Maryland and the Eastern Shore.

What are your current research interests?

I am interested in leveraging technology to enhance ESOL instruction. My interest in technology for the ESOL classroom was inspired after taking a course in our program, by the



Sherry Lyons currently serves as the ESOL Program & Instructional Coordinator at the Montgomery Coalition for Adult English Literacy

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Recognition & Recent Endeavors



Alumna, **Codie Chaudoin**, of Anne Arundel County Public Schools will be spending the year at Queen Rania Teacher Academy in Amman, Jordan. One of only 140 U.S. citizens selected by the U.S. Department of State for the prestigious English Language Teaching Fellowship, Chaudoin will conduct teacher training for English network teachers in public schools. She will also develop short courses and professional development sessions for local teachers, prepare materials for ELT workshops and support design, training, and implementation efforts for an early-grade reading project.

The MA TESOL Program and the **Language Center of Universidad de Piura (UDEP)** in Peru signed an agreement of academic collaboration on June 30th, 2017. TESOL student, **Ging Shamberger**, will be developing and facilitating professional development workshops to EFL teachers at UDEP in the summer of 2018.



Please join us in welcoming Baby Yuran to our UMBC ESOL community! She is a 3 month-old explosion of cuteness and joy. Apparently she is quite the little patriot as well. Yuran's mom, **Mengdi Zeng**, is a third-year student in our MA TESOL program. The name Yuran is from a part of Buddhist scripture that says, "Talking or keeping silent, moving or being still, I always follow nature." Her parents want her to follow her own nature in whatever she does — to simply be herself.



FULL CIRCLE continued from page 3

same name, taught online by Dr. Silvio Avendaño. This course, as well as those taken in the distance education program, helped to spark my interest in the use of technology to enhance teaching and learning. Our learners will face increasing technological demands across many contexts and settings (elementary/secondary classes, post-secondary coursework both face-to-face and online, and as thriving members of the workforce). Being sure to incorporate the use of technology in our instructional practices will not only have a positive impact on language learning, but will also provide crucial opportunities for learners to develop important digital literacy skills. These skills will serve them in all aspects of their lives—academically, professionally, and personally.

What advice would you offer to current ESOL education students?

Beyond being ready for a lifetime of learning and honing their teaching practice, I would encourage current students to be open to opportunities that will undoubtedly come their way. These opportunities, especially early on, will help form the foundation of their professional lives. Being ‘yes-minded’ and taking on opportunities and challenges will help with learning not only what they like to do and areas where they excel, but also what they don’t like to do and areas where they may wish to pursue more professional development.

You have always worked in adult education. Do you have anything you would like to say to adult ed. students in particular?

Anyone interested in teaching in an adult education context should definitely be aware of the very real challenges that exist for instructors like the shortage of full-time teaching positions and lack of benefits. Despite these challenges, however, know that working with adult learners comes with many rewards as you see them achieve their educational, professional, and personal goals through the process of learning English.

ESOL CLUB



This fall, the ESOL club sponsored an afternoon meal in quaint downtown Ellicott City at the restaurant, La Palapa.

We hope you can become involved in the ESOL Club next semester! We will be looking for input as we plan future events. Interested in planning or helping?

Contact: esol@umbc.edu

CON“GRAD”ULATIONS!



NEW HORIZONS



1. Peter Lomuscio (2017) celebrates an “ESOL Thanksgiving” in his new role as ESOL teacher at the Digital Harbor High School (*Baltimore City*)

2. Dinesh Perera (2017)—2nd grade ESOL teacher at Gaywood ES (*Prince George’s County*)

3. Kursten Pickup—6-12th grade ESOL at Teacher Academy for College and Career Exploration MS/HS (*Baltimore City*)

4. Ali Railing—Itinerant Pre K-5 ESOL Teacher (*Frederick County*)

Summer & Fall 2017 Graduates!

Summer Certificate Awardees

Mary Luisa Abiva

Beatriz Hernandez Moreno

Jacqueline Murphy

Britta Sparks

Abigail Vazquez

Christina Verrette

David Weeks

Summer Master's Graduates

Peter Lomuscio

Sarah Nicole Manger

Margit McLaughlin

Ryan Plaisance

Ashley Thomas

Fall Certificate Awardees

Allison Gross

Jennifer Walker

Marianne Cholakian

Miranda Abadir

Ruth Seidenspinner

Fall Master's Graduates

Akvilina Petrutis

Dinesh Perera

Jacob Wines

Judi Davidson-Wolf

Kathryn Sherwick

Megan Scharmann

Meghan M. Walrath

Nicole Belcastro-Shaver

Paola Castillo Pella

Takaaki Honse

Vathany Say