



The Informal English Language Learning Podcast

EPISODE #1: EVERYDAY ADAPTATIONS FOR INNOVATIVE ELL PROGRAMMING

Podcast Show Notes

For newcomers, English language skills are an important factor in settlement and integration. They reduce isolation, contribute to community connections and a sense of belonging. English skills are needed to find and retain viable employment, and for workplace communication and safety. Through language, newcomers can build independence in accessing services, and reduce dependence on social services. English skills increase newcomers' ability to fully participate in BC society. These are objectives of the BC Settlement and Integration Services program, and why English language training is such an important service.

Some newcomers like those with temporary immigration status, are not eligible for the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada or LINC program. Those who are not eligible still need language training. That's where informal language training comes in. It's why almost all BCSIS service providers offer Informal Language training like conversation groups and tutoring for English practice.

The flexibility of informal English training programs can be ideal for newcomers who are experiencing change and uncertainty. There's benefit from classes that are not as structured as LINC, yet still help meet their need.

Creative, budget-friendly approaches to informal English language learning are vital for service providers to support their clients. In times of constant change, there is greater need for flexibility, adaptability, and innovation. There is remarkable work being done and value in sharing and learning from one another, and that's what this podcast is all about.

In the podcast, four language training experts with BCSIS service provider organizations share their everyday adaptations for innovative informal language programming. They have taken many small ideas and used them to build successful programs that can be readily adopted and adapted. Podcast listeners can pick up ideas to try out at their agency.

The intention is to spark new ways of thinking. And that's very much the point of this podcast.



Angela

Head of ESL / Education at Inasmuch Community Society

Angela has been teaching since 1994. She has worked at language schools and universities in the UK, Japan, and Canada. She has an MA and PhD in Linguistics. Her teaching specialties include EAP and English for Settlement. She has written and run new EAP programs at various language schools. In 2015, she introduced the English program at a transition house for refugee claimants in Abbotsford. She continues to teach and enhance the program there. Angela manages a team of amazing, dedicated volunteer teachers. She teaches part-time on the MATESOL program at Trinity Western University.

Angela speaks about the distinctive characteristics of their informal ELL programs during typical times and the effective solutions for service continuity implemented during the pandemic. Inasmuch serves refugee claimants who are ineligible for most other language services. Informal English language learning is much less structured than Portfolio Based Language Assessment (PBLA) and is well-suited and effective for newcomers with temporary status. A rigid program may not address the needs of newcomers whose lives are in flux. Training delivery adjusts according to the unique needs of the individual learners, and what works for them at the current point in time. Angela shares free or low-cost online resources for language training that she has researched and implemented with positive results.

ANGELA'S RESOURCES

One-stop-shop

Janis's ESL Links includes links to websites covering many aspects of life in Canada such as geography, festivals, accommodation, getting around, and more. It has links to ESL resources grammar, listening, quizzes and a lot of extra activities. <http://www.issbc.org/janis-esl/links.html>

Canadian Culture Guides

BC Newcomers' Guide answers questions about how to settle into life in B.C. The Newcomers' Guide will answer your questions and help to make your transition quicker and easier. There are videos on the website, too. <https://www.welcomebc.ca/Start-Your-Life-in-B-C/Newcomers-Guides>

Discover Canada: The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship helps newcomers to study for the citizenship test. It contains information about the history of Canada, how our government works, symbols of Canada and its regions. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/discover-canada.html>

The Canadian Encyclopedia.

<https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en>

The Canada Guide is a reference website for all things Canadian. Its great source of information on Canada for students, teachers, homeschoolers, immigrants, tourists and ESL teaching. <http://www.thecanadaguide.com>

Video learning about countries, cultures and Canada:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyhOI6uRlxryALIT5yifldw>

Best of The Reader is a series of e-books for adult literacy and English as an additional language. This site has e-books, a teachers' guide, and a calendar of special days and holidays. <http://www.bestofthereader.ca/>

Settlement.Org offers valuable information and interactive activities for ESL students at all CLB levels. There are clear language vocabulary, glossary and language exercises. It's useful for ESL teachers, mentors and volunteers. There are audio files within many exercises to improve pronunciation. <http://eslcorner.settlement.org>

Video Lessons

ENGvid Free English Video Lessons offers online video lessons of teachers explaining all areas of language, along with customs as well (search by topic). <https://www.engvid.com>

Can Learn English videos explain different features of Canadian English. <https://www.youtube.com/user/day8787>

Mad English TV ESL Lessons has videos explaining various aspects of life and language in Canada. https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2-SI2qqn8uRURiWLuYvTufL_sPRGO8IX



Alysha Baratta

Impact Producer

Alysha Baratta leads the Social Innovations Hub for Options Community Services in Surrey, BC. The Hub tests new services through research and co-design projects with newcomers. Alysha has an M.A. in Human Geography and has special interest in how structures and systems affect refugee resettlement. Over the past 10 years, she's worked with immigrants and refugees on community-engaged projects. Alysha is certified in TESOL and taught English in Chile, Brazil, the Czech Republic, and France. Along the way, she picked up new languages and perspectives.



Shokhan Darwesh Qadir

Impact Apprentice at Options Community Services Society

Shokhan has two roles in Immigrant Services at Options. She works with the Service Delivery Improvement program as Impact Apprentice. She also works with the Moving Ahead Program as the Outreach Case worker in Kurdish and Arabic. She has a BA in English Languages and Literature and an MBA in International Management and Leadership. Shokhan has more than 13 years of work experience with Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons with notable International Humanitarian organizations. She believes that you will be successful only when you believe in and love what you are doing, and that is why she works in the Humanitarian sector.

Alysha and Shokhan discuss the Humans Understanding Humans (HuH) Culture Café program. The program offers facilitated online conversation circles as an opportunity for newcomers to connect, learn, practice their English language, and meet somebody new from the community. It's open to all language learner levels and immigration status groups. The program is founded on the premise everyone has something to teach and everyone has something to learn. Through a relaxed, informal exchange of information, which includes a role-changing through a pre-designated guest presenter from amongst the group, participants learn about dimensions of another culture, including nuances of Canadian culture. They practice English skills in a larger group setting as well as small, one-to-one breakouts. The program is a social activity that reduces isolation as well as a learning opportunity that fosters a sense of connectedness and belonging through remote service delivery.

ALYSHA & SHOKHAN'S RESOURCES

Humans Understanding Humans HuH Culture Café website.
<https://wearehuh.com/>

Culture Café Digital Conversation Cards. View the cards and language-switching function.
<https://wearehuh.com/cards/>

Make your own conversation cards... coming soon! HuH Culture Café wants to share the tools to host accessible and dynamic conversations online. A web-based tool is in development. Anyone can create multi-lingual conversation cards that can be shared by picture, embedded onto a website, or submitted to be featured in the HuH card gallery.
<https://wearehuh.com/cardmaker/>



Leonne Beebe

Community Literacy Co-ordinator Agassiz Harrison Community Services

Leonne Beebe is an adult literacy and numeracy specialist. She has a BEd and MPE plus a TESL certificate. She is the Agassiz-Harrison Community Services Literacy Co-ordinator. She is also an English instructor in the Upgrading and University Prep Department University Fraser Valley or UFV. Leonne has taught community-based and post-secondary multi-level literacy English classes to both first and second language students for over 35 years. Leonne integrates “Learner-centered Active Learning” activities into her classes to help students participate, reflect and self-assess their learning process and progress.

Leonne speaks about community-based drop-in online synchronous ESL classes. The informal language classes develop newcomers’ knowledge of the community and current events. They focus on conversational language and reading skills by using timely local news articles found in the local newspapers’ e-editions. The emphasis is on pronunciation and vocabulary, using the written article to show how words are pronounced and what they mean. In a conversational discussion, participants share what was new, interesting, and most helpful from the class’s activities. Leonne uses many cost-effective approaches and resources for informal English instruction. Like the other speakers, she uses role-changing to strengthen participation from the students. Her informal language classes encourage connectedness with the community, improve awareness of Canadian culture and current events, and are an essential component in the enhanced integration of newcomers from all immigration groups.

LEONNE’S RESOURCES

Blackboard Learn and Collaborate Distance Learning System
<https://www.blackboard.com/teaching-learning/learning-management/blackboard-learn>

<https://www.blackboard.com/teaching-learning/collaboration-web-conferencing/blackboard-collaborate>

Timely articles from the local newspapers’ e-editions for reading and conversational practice. E-newspaper articles are recreated into large-print PDF format that can be shared in online classes. They build awareness of current events and local knowledge.

This includes adapting materials to educate newcomers about Indigenous Awareness and COVID-19 protocols.

Leonne uses a variety of cartoons, stories, and pictures to help participants find the meaning in the message. Music can have an important COVID-19 message such as Neil Diamond’s Sweet Caroline rendition “Hands Washing Hands”.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sPLgsV_Ms3Q



HOST & PRODUCER

Lori Cameron

AMSSA Provincial Integration Program Manager

Lori Cameron is Provincial Integration Program Manager at AMSSA, responsible for sector supports for BC Settlement and Integration Services (BCSIS). Lori is passionate about sharing knowledge that will support and improve settlement outcomes for newcomers.



GUEST INTERVIEWER

Julie Ship

AMSSA Language Program Manager

Julie Ship is an educator, former English as an Additional Language instructor, and now AMSSA's Language Program Manager.