Building capacity for the scholarship of teaching and learning in linguistics in Canada

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1. Teaching and learning in linguistics

As a field, linguistics might be considered a late bloomer in many respects. For example, unlike related fields such as anthropology, psychology and sociology, in 2018 "the discipline of linguistics [had] not issued an official statement on race or racial analysis" (Charity Hudley et al. 2018: 2). And unlike many disciplines that study human behaviour and thought, "linguists have been slow to join [the] trend" of attending to researcher positionality (Bucholtz et al. 2023: 2). The field's attention to teaching and learning is relatively mature compared to these other issues, but it is still young in the context of most university disciplines, gaining traction only within the last decade.

Kuiper's (2011) collection was perhaps the first published work to focus on teaching practices specific to linguistics. The book was useful precisely because it was so unusual. Even so, the book consisted of experienced teachers sharing their personal pedagogical practices – as one reviewer noted, "reading this book is like stumbling into a department coffee hour where all the best teachers are" (Lichtman 2012: 717). Learning from each other's practices is certainly valuable, but knowledge gained from one's personal classroom experience is different in nature to knowledge acquired through systematic, scholarly investigation of students' learning. Both kinds of work are important for advancing the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL).

The following year, the journal *Language* launched the Teaching Linguistics section as a venue for publishing SoTL work in linguistics; this had the effect of "align[ing] the LSA with other professional organizations that promote and uplift SoTL in their disciplines" (Hiramatsu and Martinez 2021: 407). But it still took another decade before the Linguistic Society of America (LSA) affirmed the scholarly merit of SoTL research (LSA 2022).

The past decade's increased attention to linguistics pedagogy coincides with the growth, at Canadian universities, in the number of full-time teaching-intensive faculty positions. All three editors of this special issue hold such positions. Not only do teaching-stream faculty teach more courses and more students than their tenure-stream colleagues, but many of us also conduct and publish SoTL research. The Canadian Association of University Teachers and several of its member associations objected to the creation of such positions, arguing that maintaining a research program is what distinguishes university teaching from high school teaching (Chapnick 2012, Ricketts 2012, Jungić et al. 2023). But before the teaching stream was created, the practical reality was that a large proportion of undergraduate teaching was being performed by contract and sessional faculty at low pay, with no long-term security and none of the protections of academic freedom. Full-time teaching-stream positions provide secure, adequately-remunerated employment for the colleagues who teach hundreds of students every year. And as

an Ontario report showed, "Faculty members who have secure employment commit to students, the department and their institutions because they have the time to invest in their role and develop their pedagogical expertise" (Vajoczki et al. 2011: 49). The SoTL work that teaching faculty carry out and share can thus enrich teaching and learning among tenure-stream faculty as well (Miller-Young et al. 2017).

One Canadian venue that afforded such enrichment was the Teaching in Linguistics Community of Practice (TiLCoP). Formed in 2020 during the early days of the COVID-19 lockdown, TiLCoP includes members from across Canada. The group holds regular virtual meetings to discuss teaching strategies, share resources, and support each other through challenging situations. Beyond the rewards to the individual members of the community of practice, members of the group also collaborated to produce teaching materials that are widely used across Canada and around the world, including *Word to the Whys* (TiLCoP 2020), a podcast intended as an accompaniment to an introductory linguistics course, and, perhaps most notably, the significantly revised and expanded second edition of *Essentials of Linguistics* (Anderson et al. 2022), an open-access eBook for introductory linguistics courses. The Canadian Linguistic Association has also recently devoted increased attention to teaching and learning, with sessions on linguistics pedagogy at its annual meetings in 2021 and 2024, and, of course, this special issue.

The growth in pedagogical work complements and intersects with similar work outside Canada, including publications (e.g. Zuraw et al. 2019, Punske et al. 2020, Gregory et al. 2022, and Kogan forthcoming), teaching-focused conferences and workshops (e.g. the 2023 Conference on Scholarly Teaching and SoTL in Linguistics, the Workshop on Teaching Phonology at the Annual Meeting on Phonology 2021, and the Workshop on Inclusive Teaching in Semantics at the 31st Semantics and Linguistic Theory conference in 2021), and professional groups (e.g. the LSA's Scholarly Teaching in Linguistics Special Interest Group and Faculty Learning Community on SoTL in Linguistics).

2. The value of circulating pedagogical findings

Boyer (1990) coined the term *scholarship of teaching* (now usually known as *scholarship of teaching and learning*) as an inherent aspect of scholarship that is the responsibility of all scholars. Much work has been done since to attempt to define SoTL (Cross and Steadman 1996; Glassick et al. 1997; Prosser and Trigwell 1999; Kreber 2002, 2005), especially how it is distinct from the practice of scholarly teaching (Richlin 1993, 2001, 2003; Shulman 1999; Smith 2001), if at all (Wagenaar 2000, Atkinson 2001, Salvatori 2002). However, this has proven difficult, as SoTL can take many forms (Trigwell et al. 2000). It can be qualitative, quantitative, or both. It can focus on a narrow issue in a single discipline or encompass broader interdisciplinary concerns. It can involve reflections on one's own experiences, surveys of others' experiences, or planned experiments that measure student outcomes under controlled conditions. It can describe new methods, provide new tools, or elucidate new perspectives.

Despite ongoing disagreement about what exactly SoTL looks like (especially between senior and junior faculty; Secret et al. 2011), there is broad consensus that it is valuable, though often still not appropriately *valued* (Young 2006, Schroeder 2007, Gurung et al. 2008, Webb 2019). In particular, a focus on teaching is often stigmatized as a distraction from disciplinary research, which often counts disproportionately more towards tenure and promotion (Braxton et al. 2002, Cashmore et al. 2013, Masika et al. 2016). Part of this is likely due to SoTL being less

read (Weimer 2008) and less cited than disciplinary research, which decreases the impact factor of SoTL-focused journals, and thus, their relative weight in promotion decisions (Fanghanel et al. 2016). Additionally, while teaching excellence and SoTL may be touted as priorities at the institutional level, there are increasing pressures from governments, donors, and society at large for universities to demonstrate tangible outcomes that favour traditional research, especially in certain fields (Poskanzer 2002, Benneworth and Jongbloed 2009).

A common element among competing definitions of SoTL is that it should result in "an artefact, a product, some form of community property that can be shared, discussed, critiqued, exchanged, [and] built upon" Shulman (1993: 7), which is a key value of SoTL. The communal nature of this work gives it impact beyond a single classroom. We can and should learn from each other, and this was perhaps no more evident than during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the emergency shift to online education in 2020, many of us suddenly found ourselves in desperate need of tools and skills we did not have. Even though we have largely shifted back to in-person education, there is a strong continuing desire for sharing pedagogical knowledge (Arya et al. 2022, Berdahl 2022). The pandemic gave us an opportunity to innovate our pedagogy, and we realized we could do better by looking to our peers for new ideas. Linguistics especially has been prone to recycling familiar materials, which can lead to ideological and methodological insularity. Having access to a diversity of approaches to teaching can give us insights and inspirations that we may not have come up with on our own.

This is something we already understood from disciplinary research. Every field of scholarship has constant new innovations, results, and methods, and there is significant pressure for faculty to actively seek out and keep up with cutting edge research in the discipline. However, there has been less pressure for faculty to do the same for SoTL, so there is more need for it to be widely distributed (Myatt et al. 2017). Increased visibility of SoTL matters for SoTL methodology, too. Scholars typically receive significant training in the standard research methods and conventions of their disciplines, but they receive little if any training in SoTL, which may use very different methods than the discipline itself (Kelly et al. 2012). Sharing SoTL thus not only helps faculty understand how to teach more effectively (Berenstein 2013), but it also helps to demystify SoTL so faculty can conduct their own pedagogical research and to contribute to broader scholarship.

There are also many other practical benefits of sharing SoTL. There is a wealth of evidence that pedagogical innovations and teaching teachers how to teach have positive impacts on student learning (Cilliers and Herman 2010, Waterman et al. 2010, Trigwell 2013, Voelker and Martin 2013, Condon et al. 2016, and many more). SoTL brings value to the university in satisfying pressures from stakeholders, by serving as a demonstrated record of an institutional commitment to teaching excellence (Peseta 2007). Finally, SoTL is also important for equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). Many linguistics students go on to work with marginalized populations (in language revitalization, speech-language pathology, language teaching, etc.), so they need to be well informed about linguistic justice (Grover et al. 2022), which is a major topic in recent linguistics pedagogy (Calhoun et al. 2021; Cépeda et al. 2021; Anderson et al. 2022; O'Leary et al. 2023; numerous chapters in Charity Hudley et al. 2024a, 2024b; Mallinson 2024).

SoTL in linguistics is still behind many other fields (Witman and Richlin 2007), though as discussed in section 1, many advancements have been made in recent years. This special issue is our attempt to continue filling this gap, by bringing together a variety of pedagogical methods and insights that we hope will inspire many more such collaborations and projects in our field.

3. These papers

The articles in this special issue all exemplify Felten's (2013) best practices in SoTL, namely that they are focused on student learning, are grounded in a particular university context, use appropriate methods, and were conducted according to ethical standards with student-participants' engagement and well-being in mind. This issue provides a means to accomplish Felten's fifth principle, "going public," making what has been learned available to the linguistics teaching community in Canada and beyond. The works here are all examples of innovation in linguistics teaching and address a variety of aspects of a university course.

Some involve innovative means of assessment. Kaili Vesik and Kathleen Currie Hall present a method of exam design interlinked with exam preparation, by sampling exam questions from a database that is made available for students to study. Sara Sowers-Wills assesses students' command of concepts in phonology through their creation of a constructed language. Angela George and Hortensia Barrios use digital storytelling as an authentic assessment (Swaffield 2011) in an applied linguistics course. Other articles in this issue focus on teaching practices, for example Lex Konnelly, Pocholo Umbal, and Nathan Sanders argue for the use of diverse names in example sentences to make instruction more inclusive. Julianne Doner, Lisa Sullivan, Emilia Melara, and Heather Yawney focus on designing a linguistics curriculum that includes explicit instruction of writing in the discipline.

All of the articles in the issue are engaged with SoTL literature and apply concepts from education in their work. For example, Doner and colleagues introduce the literature on Writing Across the Curriculum, while George and Barrios review the use of digital storytelling in a variety of classroom types, and Vesik and Hall review the literature on the testing effect in learning and memory. Sowers-Wills engages with the literature on the use of constructed languages as a pedagogical tool, and Konnelly and colleagues engage with the literature on EDI in teaching.

Two of the articles also introduce practical resources that other linguistics instructors can freely access and use. Vesik and Hall provide their Python script for exam generation (see https://github.com/kvesik/examgeneration), and Konnelly and colleagues provide their Diverse Names Database (see https://ledir.ling.utoronto.ca/) as a means for instructors to easily choose diverse names for use in example sentences.

In addition to a general aim to support student learning, two important themes that emerge from this collection of papers are fostering inclusion in linguistics teaching and encouraging students to connect their linguistics course material with their everyday experiences.

Here we outline a number of highlights that readers should take away from each of the articles. Konnelly and colleagues' "On the use of names and example sentences in the linguistics classroom" supports the goal of advancing social justice in linguistics by promoting a sense of belonging among all students in the class, no matter their background. The article describes the Diverse Names Database, a freely available resource that provides an easy means for instructors to use diverse names in example sentences in the classroom as well as for research articles.

Vesik and Hall's "Improved student learning through active retrieval practice and random-sampled exams" begins with concern about students' long-term retention of concepts during a course and after its completion. Citing the literature on the testing effect in learning and memory, they then present a method of capitalizing on this effect in their class assessment structure.

Doner and colleagues' "Why aren't we teaching writing?: The advantages of early explicit writing instruction in linguistics" argues for explicit instruction in writing beginning at the introductory level in university courses, to build skills often needed at higher levels. The authors emphasize that the ability to structure arguments, something that is often touted as being an advantage of an undergraduate degree in linguistics, is something that should be explicitly taught. Further, the instruction of writing is argued to be a way to support marginalized students in the linguistics classroom, for example those who speak English as an additional language.

Sowers-Wills's "Phonology from the inside out: Constructed language as a pedagogical Tool" examines the use of constructed languages as an active learning approach in a project-based phonology course. In the course, examples of phonological systems in natural languages and constructed languages were presented along with instruction in language universals and typology. One innovation of this work is that it suggests that a multi-part, creative project can be part of a course even at the introductory level.

Finally, George and Barrios's "Teaching language attitudes through digital storytelling projects" uses digital storytelling as a means to interrogate language attitudes in a combined undergraduate/graduate course. Students created projects on topics related to language identity and culture, for example the experience of being a heritage speaker. George and Barrios's article includes a practical weekly breakdown of the digital storytelling project that could be the basis of such a project in other courses.

Each of these articles communicates both broad goals in linguistics instruction, such as the inclusion of all students in linguistics courses, as well as practical methods for advancing these goals.

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