

## Johanne Mednick Myles



**When I ask Johanne Mednick Myles why she chose a career in English as a Second Language** education, she replies that she “fell into it.” What started out with a secondary school teaching diploma turned into a fulfilling profession in the ESL field. Johanne has travelled around the world, created and coordinated many of the current ESL programs in Kingston, and advanced the world of academia and research as it pertains to ESL.

**When Johanne graduated from Queen’s Faculty of Education**, her intention was to teach science, physical education, and outdoor education. However, an opportunity to volunteer for a YWCA women’s development project aimed at early school leavers presented itself in Zambia, and she took it. Back in Canada a year and a half later, with a husband and twin girls, Johanne decided that teaching ESL would not only allow her to work part time and concentrate on her family, but also to have better prospects teaching overseas. She took the ESL Part One Additional Qualification (AQ) course at Queen’s University. What then began as searching for a teaching opportunity turned into exactly the right opportunity.

**Johanne defines her experiences in ESL in the early 80s** as the pre-LINC era. She became the coordinator of volunteers for an adult parent and preschoolers ESL program, referred to as Newcomer Language and Orientation classes, run out of Princess Street United Church. She also taught in ESL programs at St. Lawrence College on a casual basis. A large percentage of students in both programs were refugees from Poland, El Salvador, Vietnam and Cambodia. In these early days of teaching ESL in Kingston, educators faced the challenge of creating curriculum and teaching multilevel classes while trying to adapt to students’ needs.

**In the late 1980s Johanne and her husband moved their family across the world to Indonesia.** This was the first time Johanne began teaching EAP. In Indonesia she was employed by both the British Council and the Indonesian Australian Language Foundation. This experience was a turning point for Johanne, as not only did she grow professionally, but she was also surrounded by colleagues who had postgraduate degrees in linguistics. The setting was professional and the teaching rigorous. Curriculum development was a large priority.

**Inspired by her experiences in Indonesia, Johanne returned to Kingston in the early 1990s** and registered in a Master's program at the Queen's Faculty of Education. Still working part time at St. Lawrence College in the newly created Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) and short-lived Labour Market Language Training (LMLT) programs, Johanne began to study education theory and conduct research specifically in ESL writing. At this point she noticed a change in educational practices at the college; it was thought that immigrants should focus on learning English not only for survival purposes, but also for the workplace.

**In 1994, upon completion of her Master's degree,** Johanne found new employment teaching international students EAP at the Queen's School of English. Here she had a unique opportunity to observe the impact of ESL classes on student performance within specialized academic programs. For example, she taught engineering students who had not met the Faculty of Engineering's standards to pass the required English test. As a result, they were required to take spring/summer classes and receive advanced standing to graduate. What intrigued Johanne was the fact that their English language proficiency did not seem to affect their grades in their academic classes as much as would be expected.

**In the fall of 2000, Johanne pursued a Ph.D. in Education at Queen's.** Inspired by her former engineering students, the purpose of her thesis was to investigate the workplace experiences, particularly communication experiences, of ESL interns to find out if and how English language proficiency affects workplace performance. She discovered that there are actually many factors that contribute to students' workplace success, such as learning strategies and cultural orientation.

**After completing her Ph.D., Johanne continued her involvement with Kingston post-secondary institutions.** For a time she returned to St. Lawrence College as a

professor and coordinator of the ESL program that is still operating today. She is currently teaching online ESL AQ courses for Queen's. Not being restricted to a classroom has enabled her to teach these courses in many different regions around the world, such as Vietnam and Africa.

**Johanne's influence is evident in many of the ESL programs in Kingston.**

However, there is a lot more we will see in the future from Johanne. Besides co-authoring the book, *Teaching ESL in Canada*, over the past couple of years she has been working on a project funded by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, the focus of which is the creation of an online curriculum framework for adult ESL instruction. She is also awaiting the publication of her second book which focuses on English language learners K-12 and issues affecting their learning.

***Johanne served on the TESL Ontario board as an Ontario Research Committee Member in 2010, and on the TESL Kingston Affiliate Chapter Executive as Program Coordinator (1992-93), Membership Secretary (1997), President (1993-96) and Affiliate Representative (2006-2011).***



***Heather Hosick is a writer and educator who has found her niche in teaching English as a second language. She began her career in Korea teaching ESL to children. Now she teaches ESL in Kingston to teenagers and adults. What she finds personally rewarding is hearing so many unique stories from across the globe. By speaking to ESL professionals in our area, she discovers the stories in our own community.***