

## **Dr. Marilyn Abbott**

Marilyn Abbott earned her doctorate from the University of Alberta in 2005, where she specialized in Measurement, Evaluation, and Cognition in the Department of Educational Psychology. She also holds a MEd (1999) in TESL, and a BEd (1986) in Secondary Education. Marilyn is currently an assistant professor in the TESL program in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Alberta.



### **Research Interests**

Marilyn is primarily interested in the impact of learning and teaching strategies on learning outcomes. Her specific research interests include ESL reading strategies and assessment; issues of equity in access to academic content and testing for ESL learners; specific language factors that contribute to the ESL learner reading skill development; and pedagogical practices that enhance ESL learning.

## **Keynote and Sessions**

### **Literacy Basics: Tips for Teaching EAL Students**

#### **Description**

English language learners who have limited literacy and formal schooling in their first language face exceptional challenges when learning English in the Canadian context. A number of factors influence the ways that English literacy develops and the progress that different EAL students will make when learning to read in English, including levels of literacy in the first language and in English, characteristics of the first language, oral language proficiency in English, educational background and experience with formal learning, cultural background and educational perspectives, and personal goals for learning. The goals of this presentation are to explore why these factors need to be considered when planning instruction for EAL literacy learners, and to provide practical suggestions and strategies to increase limited literacy learners' chances of successful English language development.

### **Effective Reading Strategies for EAL Students**

#### **Description**

This presentation will reflect the cognitive componential view of reading that is dominant among both first language (L1) and second language (L2) reading researchers (see Grabe, 2009). A componential view of reading is central to understanding how reading skills contribute to reading comprehension and individual differences among readers. Marilyn will begin by outlining some research findings that have implications for effective reading skill development. Then she will describe several useful reading activities that can successfully promote the development of key reading skills necessary for efficient reading comprehension. Activities will focus on the impact of oral skills on reading skill development, intensive reading, ways to improve reading for information, and tips for choosing just the right book. Audience members can expect to leave with several practical reading skill development activities that are easy to prepare and use in the EAL classroom.

Reference: Grabe, W. (2009). *Reading in a second language: Moving from theory to practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## **Promising Practices for EAL Students in Content Area Classes**

### **Description**

EAL students often face language related difficulties when they are integrated into core subject area classes. The purpose of this session is to explore basic strategies to increase EAL students' chances of successful English language development in content area classes. Marilyn will describe strategies that can (a) make lessons more engaging and relevant; (b) encourage higher-level, critical thinking skills; (c) enhance learning; and (d) support equity in access to academic content for EAL students.

## **Learner's Conference Topics**

### **Jump Starting Language Learning: Strategies for Success**

#### **Description**

EAL students need to develop a repertoire of strategies that can assist them in improving their communication skills, reducing their anxiety levels, and achieving their overall language learning goals. The main objective of this workshop is to increase learners' awareness of language learning strategies by exploring two popular language learning strategy classification schemes.

### **Reading Strategies That Work**

#### **Description**

Reading strategies that promote successful comprehension deserve explicit attention in the EAL classroom. A solid understanding of what reading strategies are, including where, when, and how to use them appropriately can significantly improve one's reading abilities. The purpose of this presentation is to promote EAL students' awareness of several key reading strategies that have the potential to improve their reading skills.

For more information about Dr. Marilyn Abbott, please visit <http://www.ualberta.ca/~mabbott/>