



TC Spotlight

Peter Allison

September 17, 2018

Our poem had something to do with drinking cocktails on the beach.

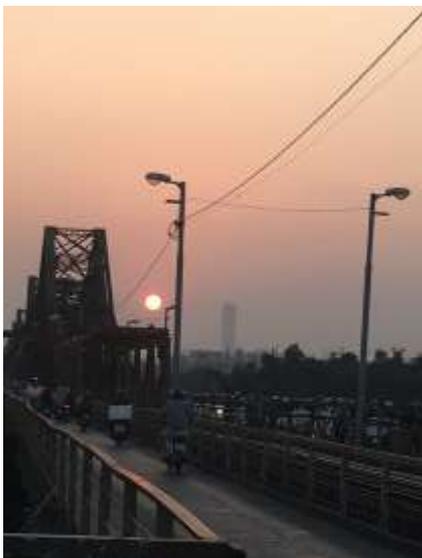
- **From the UK**
- **University of Derby,
University of
Westminster,
University of
Sunderland**
- **currently teaching at
an international
school in Hanoi,
Vietnam**

Tell us about yourself and your work recently. I've been living and working in Hanoi for just over two years now, it is a very challenging city to live in, but it has its charms. In August 2017 I changed employers and moved from teaching English to teaching Computers and Business at an international school, there is still a lot of English to be taught as over 90% of our students are either Vietnamese or Korean. In Hanoi I cycle to work most days and hold my own amongst the masses of motorbikes and, sadly, the increasing number of cars. I'm not sure my lungs like it though, Hanoi sometimes beats Beijing for air quality.

What drew you to TC? Before TC I had lived and worked in Osaka, there my job wasn't well paid and the hours were long. When I moved to Tokyo and found myself working sociable hours for some pretty decent money I found I had a lot of time on my hands and no friends to spend it with. I saw an ad on gaijinpot for the course and went along to an open day to find out more, glad I did because I met some great people who became great friends.

Describe your path from TC to now. I left Japan in the spring of 2012 to go and work in Bahrain for the British Council (BC), I wanted more experience teaching learners with a different first language. In Bahrain I qualified as an IELTS examiner, and have only recently stopped examining. Bahrain was great, but the allure of Saudi across the bridge was too much for me and I got a job there. I still travelled to Bahrain about once a month to enjoy the notorious Friday brunches with my friends there. After four years in the Persian/Arabian Gulf I came back to Asia and worked for the British Council here in Hanoi. After 18 months working for the BC here I felt like I'd learnt as much as I could from them and so sought an alternative job, that's where I am now. The jump back into regular school teaching (I had worked as a secondary school teacher in the UK before coming to Japan) has been exhausting, but I am enjoying it. One of the biggest challenges is dealing with the snobbery from some colleagues regarding EFL/EAL teachers, I don't bite my tongue often.

What is your favorite thing about the place you live now? Being able to cycle everywhere in the city, the traffic is horrible and so is the pollution, but the speed of the traffic is lower than 25 kph and that means I can cycle as fast and sometimes faster than it.



Long Bien Bridge in Hanoi on Peter's cycle path to work, built by the French during the colonial times

What did you learn at TC that ensured you would never be the same again? This is a tough question, I learnt so much and it's hard to pinpoint one precise thing, but I would say my confidence in my academic writing increased so much. I had some great professors and their feedback and encouragement gave me the confidence I have now.

What is a favorite memory from TC? Writing poetry in Dr Hruska's K-12 module, and then performing it pretending to be drunk with my two group members. Our poem had something to do with drinking cocktails on the beach.

What class/teacher/classmate has had a lasting effect on you? So many to name, but I helped one classmate though her IELTS test (this was before I was an examiner). Her commitment and diligence impressed me greatly.

What is your favorite thing about your current job? The hardest thing? Favourite: having lots of CPD opportunities. Hardest: remembering all my students' names, especially the Computer students because I mainly get to see the backs of their heads.

What is your advice for somebody who is trying to get into your field? Don't just rely on being a 'native' speaker, Vietnam is famous for being very easy for anyone to get a job teaching English, do some proper study and get a Trinity or CELTA qualification, you'll enjoy the work a lot more and won't become as bitter as many do. Other than that, be prepared to meet many mediocre managers who hate teaching and so get out of the classroom to avoid students. Do what you enjoy and forget the bad people.

Have you found TESOL theory and practice relevant to/useful in any other fields? How? It definitely comes into my teaching now, not just the extra materials I prepare for my students who are still developing their English to be able to pass whichever exams they're taking. I've used jazz chants in IGCSE and IB lessons, they're a good way to remember the sequence of theories and things.

Share a recent classroom/work episode.

in a science exam:

Q: Name two instruments that can be used to measure voltage and amperage.

A: piano and violin

What motivates you?

Not tolerating fools gladly

What has been the biggest challenge in your career? How did you overcome it?

That has to be my situation now, and certainly in the term before Christmas.

Adapting to a very different way of being

managed and of sharing materials I found the first term exhausting, demoralising, and just awful. I am still split between two departments, one department's manager is atrocious and the other is amazing. The amazing manager keeps me calm and has ensured that in the next academic year I will be working for him and not the other one. So by talking to people who care I got a good solution.

What is the secret to your success? What success? Do what you enjoy, don't deliberately annoy people, speak your mind when you feel wronged, and always stand-up for the underdog.

What would you do if you could take a one-year sabbatical? Take ballroom dancing lessons every day.

What advice do you have for others starting at TC now? Be adventurous with your non-core subject choices, challenge yourself by learning something different. Enjoy your studies, don't just turn the wheel.

