How to participate in a Twitter Chat?
By Rome Lavrencic

Among the many social media platforms out there, Twitter is one of the best that affords teachers access to inspiring lesson ideas and activities, new resources (often free), professional development, latest information on research and more – all in 140 characters or less. What a time saver!
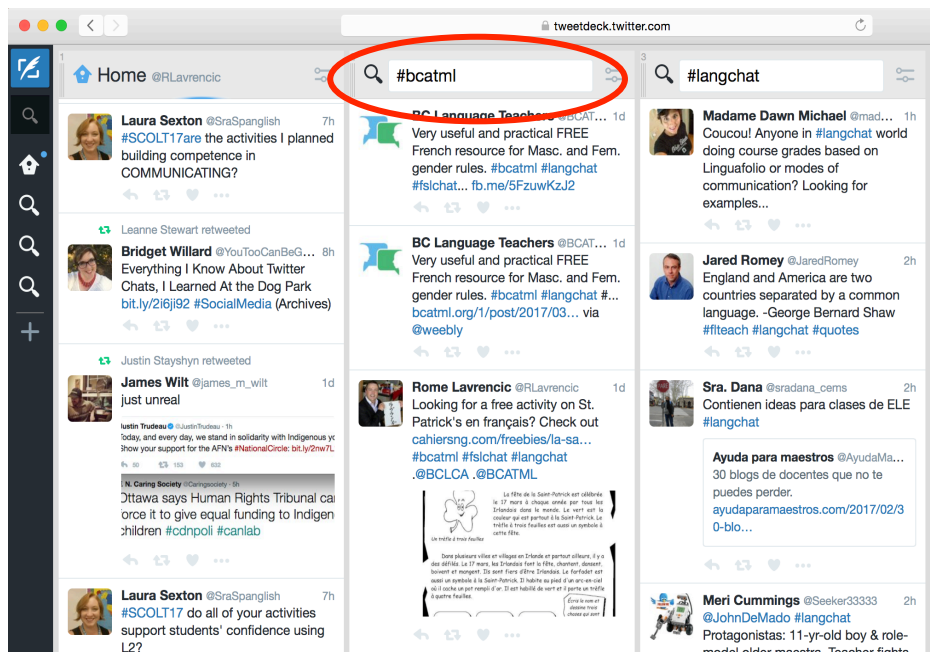
For second language teachers, two popular weekly Twitter chats are ***#langchat*** (Thursdays at 5 pm; Saturdays at 7 am), and ***#fslchat*** (Sundays at 6 pm). BCATML has held three Twitter chats to date and our next one will be held Monday, April 24, 2017 at 6 pm. It will provide a venue for BC second language teachers to chime in and share their thoughts, concerns and suggestions for improvement over the recently released draft curricula for Second Languages (other than French). Participating in a Twitter chat can be confusing and daunting at first if one is not properly prepared for the format, speed, and having the right platform in which to participate. There are a number of free tools out there to help the beginner and seasoned professional alike.

For those with no Twitter account:
Simply visit www.bcatml.org and scroll down to the bottom of the main page to locate three widgets (or live feed windows). The middle one tracks tweets with the hashtag **#BCATML** which will be used for our Twitter chat. Teachers without a Twitter account can read along with the chat, but will not be able to send or respond to any tweets they read.
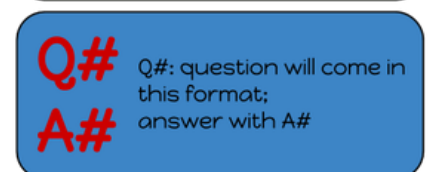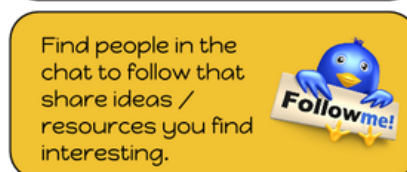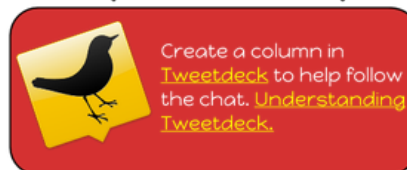
For those with a Twitter account:
There are many platforms to use when participating in a Twitter chat. One can simply follow a hashtag within Twitter's platform, however, keeping pace with a Twitter chat mixed with other hashtags can be distracting. Two platforms to alleviate this are TweetDeck (www.tweetdeck.com) and Hootsuite (www.hootsuite.com). Both are free to use and link to your Twitter account after a simple registration process. For the purposes of this article, let's focus on how to use TweetDeck even though both operate very similarly to one another.

After successfully linking TweetDeck to your Twitter account, type the hashtag you wish to follow at the top of the column's search field and voilà TweetDeck will do the rest for you! It will automatically sort every tweet tied to that particular hashtag and provide you with several options to perform various tasks.

Tips on Participating in a Twitter Chat

Create a column in Tweetdeck to help follow the chat. Understanding Tweetdeck.

When you find someone you agree with retweet or favorite the tweet.

Find people in the chat to follow that share ideas / resources you find interesting.

Q#: question will come in this format; answer with A#

At the bottom of each tweet, from left to right, are four icons allowing you to reply, re-tweet, like or do more. Select the single arrowed icon (reply) and write your response to the sender of the original tweet. Don't forget to include the same hashtag in the body of your tweet to allow other users to follow the discussion. Remember to keep your response to 140 characters maximum, including spaces. Be sure to scan through the other tweets in this column to see if there are other tweets to which you wish to respond, or see if someone has replied to one of your own tweets.

BCATML's Twitter chats typically follow a structured "start to finish" format organized in a Q1/A1 format. Moderators will tweet out about 4-6 questions in key intervals over the hour-long chat. Participants generally start their tweets with the answer number of the question to which they are replying. For instance, if the moderator tweets: "*Q1: What are elements that you like in the draft curriculum? #BCATML*", participants should respond with: "*A1: I like the non-prescriptive nature of the content & curricular competencies #BCATML*". Participants can ask and respond to all tweets by including the agreed upon hashtag, in this case **#BCATML**. If participants omit **#BCATML** from their tweet, other members of the Twitter chat will not necessarily see the tweet as it will not come up automatically in the TweetDeck column created earlier.

We hope you will join us on **Monday, April 24th, 2017 at 6 pm** and lend your voice to the discussion around the draft version of the Second Languages curricula (other than French). Members of BCATML's executive who are also on the curriculum writing teams will take your feedback to the Ministry in order to make revisions to the existing drafts.

#BCATML
Twitter Chat
Monday, April 24, 2017 at 6pm

Topic: Feedback on the Second Languages draft Curricula

Join the chat using your Twitter account and hashtag #BCATML or follow along on BCATML's website at the bottom of the page! www.bcatml.org

Steps to joining BCATML's Twitter chat:

1) Link your Twitter account to TweetDeck or Hootsuite.
2) Login to TweetDeck or Hootsuite on Monday, April 24th, at 6 pm
3) Add a hashtag column **#BCATML** to your TweetDeck or Hootsuite dashboard
4) Respond to the moderator's questions using Q1/A1 format and include **#BCATML** in your reply
5) Engage and reply to other participants' tweets by using #BCATML in your tweets
6) Check www.storify.com for a history of BCATML's Twitter chat afterwards.
7) Have fun!