

Ohio TESOL Journal

Call for 2015 Conference
Proposals

Culturally Relevant
Read-Aloud

Saudi Arabian Students
and Oral Academic
Presentations

Service eLearning

Writing Strategies for
the ESL classroom

One Teacher's Summer
Journey



Spring 2015

<http://ohiotesol.org>

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Ohio TESOL Conference
in conjunction with
the Lau Resource Center / Ohio Department of Education

Advocate, Advance, Achieve

October 30-31, 2015
Greater Columbus Convention Center
Columbus, Ohio

Ohio TESOL welcomes proposals for sessions at its 2015 conference. Proposals are being accepted for non-commercial sessions. Please read this entire page before submitting.

General Presentations: This Call for Proposal form is for submissions that are non-commercial in nature. You may submit your general proposal electronically at <http://tinyurl.com/otesol15>. In return for your presentation, one presenter will receive free registration to the conference. Submissions are peer-reviewed by a panel and results will be announced in August. **Proposals are due by June 12, 2015.**

Proposals are accepted for the following types of sessions:

Demonstrations / Workshops (Practice-Oriented Presentation):

50-minute sessions with substantial audience participation. Demonstrations involve the actual doing of a task, or series of tasks. Demonstrations of computer or technology activities in the computer lab are welcome. "Make it and Take it" activities are also encouraged.

Papers (Research-Oriented Presentation):

50-minute sessions. These are mainly of a presentation format (40 minutes) followed by 10 minutes of questions and answers and discussion. This format is often an oral summary of a research project.

Panel Discussion:

50-minute sessions, with 3 or 4 panel members, leading to substantial audience discussion; one specific topic should be pursued by all speakers, while the coordinator introduces speakers, summarizes their approach to the topic, and

leads the discussion. Submissions should include a clear description of the thematic focus, the proposed contents of the discussion, and a list of the active participants. Topics can include research or practice. For example, with respect to research, a panel could offer several points of view on a controversial subject such as the pedagogical value of explicit grammar instruction.

Technology Fair:

A 50-minute session where participants walk around to different stations and interact with various presenters on a technology-related topic. Many possible topics suitable for computer related technology can be pursued, from a program that you have created to an innovative use of a product. For example, a demonstration of a particular website that you have used in the classroom to help students learn. This session is not for commercial exhibitors.

Poster Presentations:

Posters will be on display during a set time to be announced later. Presenters will be expected to remain at the presentation site (a bulletin board) for approximately half an hour in order to discuss their topics with attendees. Poster presentations are designed to depict a topic by means of pictures and brief notes. Many possible topics suitable for posters can be pursued, from research notes to a detailed lesson plan. For example, a language learning field trip for intensive English students could be depicted with pictures, maps and samples of materials.

Graduate Research / Panel:

Graduate students are invited to discuss their research projects with conference attendees. Up to three students with similar topics may be scheduled for one concurrent session;

2015 Conference Information

the 50-minute time slot will be divided equally among the presenters. Proposals may be from individual students or a group interested in working together.

Proposal Format:

- Title of Presentation (15 words or less)
- Brief Description (30-40 words)-This information will be included in the conference program.
- Abstract (200 word maximum)

Proposals on all topics of relevance to teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages at all levels (P-12, adults, higher ed and teacher ed) are encouraged. Feedback from previous conferences showed that the following topics are of interest:

- Preparing students for the new PARCC assessments
- Suggestions for teaching grammar/writing
- Low-literacy ELLs (P-12 or adult)

- Ideas for parent or community nights/increasing parent involvement
- Collaboration between classroom teachers and the ESL teacher
- Low incidence school districts
- Implementing the Common Core with ELLs
- Sessions geared toward paraprofessionals
- Cultural information on ethnic groups new to Ohio
- Special needs English language learners
- Ways to integrate technology into the classroom
- Reading Recovery and ELLs
- Collaboration between refugee resettlement providers and educators
- Basic information for people new to the field
- Preparing college-age students for the rigors of university classrooms

Presenters are encouraged to submit 4-5 page articles of their presentations to the Ohio TESOL Journal. 

Notes from the President

What an amazing time to have the opportunity to speak for Ohio TESOL!

I want to begin by saying thank you. The 2014 Conference was the biggest and best yet. We were able to network and learn alongside 879 fellow colleagues who are dedicated to the continued support of English Language Learners, from early childhood to adult, from theory to practice, and all of the spaces where those worlds blend together. It is always my favorite annual conference, as committed educators come from around the state, the country, and the world to learn new strategies, share best practices, spread new research and theory, and band together for ELLs. Thank you for continuing to spread the word about this conference and encouraging your colleagues to attend. Advocacy begins with our continued commitment to professional growth and development.

Each year, we review your comments and thoughts so that we can see what you love (Bol Aweng was an overwhelming hit) and what you would like to see revised (unfortunately, the thermostat at the Convention Center is out of our control). Because of your positive feedback about the venue as a whole, we are excited to announce that we will be back at the Convention Center again this year, as we come together for Halloween weekend, Oct. 30-31. We are also excited to announce that we will be focusing on a theme we are seeing you demand more strongly each year. As English Language Learners continue to be our fastest growing school

age population, and our focus on their continued growth and achievement becomes ever stronger, we are proud to be focusing on those key areas, in our 2015 Conference theme “Advocate, Advance, Achieve”. John Segota, from International TESOL will be our keynote speaker. His areas of specialty involve advocacy, especially through public policy and community outreach, issues that are at the heart of much of our work.



Though it may feel as though the 2014 conference just ended, we are already moving strongly in the direction of the 2015 conference. We are excited to put together what will surely be our next biggest and best.

Thank you,
Elizabeth McNally 

Culturally Relevant Read-Aloud: Expanding Readers' Language Experiences and Cultural Awareness. The Case of Somali Literature.

By Olga N. Shonia and Philip Bendure

Patty Bruns (pseudonym) is a sixth grade teacher at an intermediate school in a suburban district of Franklin county, Ohio. Like many other districts across the county, her school is experiencing a demographic change as more refugee families from Somalia are making Columbus their new home. These students are bringing unique cultural traditions and literacy into the classroom acquired from their homes and communities.

As educators, we recognize that our students do not come to us as *tabula rasa* - blank slates - and it is our responsibility to engage with their backgrounds and life experiences to create a meaningful and culturally-relevant educational *praxis* for everyone involved. By structuring classroom participation in ways that allows students to build on what they are already proficient in (Au, 1980; Brooks, 2006; Lee, 2000; Moll, & Amot-Hopffer, 2005; Sipe, 2000), teachers can influence student learning in powerful ways (May, 2011). And yet, how often are we, when choosing curriculum material, biased by our own cultural lens and preferences without realizing that we are missing out on important opportune teachable moments? As we reflected on this bias, we began exploring new resources; we were encouraged to strive to be intentional about the choice of reading material we utilized in our classroom, and thus further cultivate the cross-cultural exchange in our *praxis*.

In our classroom, where the linguistic and cultural majority were Somali students, we engaged read-alouds as a procedure that allowed for positive use of culture, going beyond the broad levels of culturally relevant teaching (Delpit, 1995; Foster, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Jimenez & Gersten, 1999; May, 2011). As educators, we often do not know enough about our students' home languages and liter-

acies. Engaging culturally-relevant read-alouds let students to be seen as "knowers and active participants who can offer important contributions in their learning" (Pappas et al., 2002, p. 441), accounting for language socialization by means of such classroom interactions (May, 2011).

Using authentic Somali literature and books about Somali culture encouraged connection to our students' own stories.

Read-aloud is an activity that stimulates students' imagination, models good reading behavior, enriches vocabulary, and encourages a lifelong enjoyment of reading (Ada, Munoz-Ryan, & Yee, 2014). Sharing books with young children offers exposure to ways of thinking about other

human beings. For the child, illustrations and text help to create particular views of individuals as well as groups of people – complete with messages about what other cultures are like (Mendoza & Reese, 2001).

The books we recommend here come from the Somali Bilingual Book Project of the Minnesota Humanities Center based in Minneapolis, MN. We particularly appreciate these books as the editions are bilingual where, along with English, a reader finds phonetic presentation of the material in Somali. Our students responded really well to this choice of reading material; they felt empowered by these books as not only did they get to discuss and share their home culture, familiar folklore and literary narrative with their peers and teachers in English, but also to teach them some of their home language.

The books used in our series of culturally relevant read-alouds included:

- *Wiil Waal: A Somali Folktale* (retold by Kathleen Moriarty)

- *The Travels of Igal Shidad/Safarada Cigaal Shidaad: A Somali Folktale* (by Amin Amir, Illustrator; Kelly Dupre, Narrator; Said Salah Ahmed, Translator)
- *Dhegdheer, A Scary Somali Folktale* (by Marian A. Hassan and Betsy Bowen)
- *The Color of Home* (by Mary Hoffman)

In addition to the traditional Somali folklore literature (the first 3 books), we made sure to include a resource that provided our students with the context on the Somali refugees and causes for immigration. We used Mary Hoffman's *The Color of Home* for such a background-building reading.

Sonia Nieto (2004) points out that culturally relevant read-alouds are an excellent choice because English language learners experience identity struggles. Using authentic Somali literature and books *about* Somali culture encouraged connection to our students' own stories. Such stories and discussions stemming out of them can help in setting the stage for an entire unit, for instance, on the topics of immigration and community building. Below we include a sample lesson plan that can be adapted based on the choice of the book from our culturally relevant read-aloud series.

Culturally Relevant Read-Aloud Series

Lesson book: *The Color of Home* (or *Wiil Waal*).

Language Objectives: Students will be able to write a paragraph using proper capitalization, and other writing conventions (indentation, punctuation, length of paragraph). Students will be able to derive meaning from text using listening, reading and viewing strategies.

LEP Standards: Language Domain – Writing (LEP students will develop writing skills required for academic achievement and for communication in socially and culturally appropriate ways).

Standard 4.3: Write using writing process. Organize and draft a paragraph based on pre-writing activities.

Language Domain: Listening Comprehension (LEP students will develop the English listening skills required both for academic achievement and for communication in socially and culturally appropriate ways).

Standard 1.5: Make inferences and predictions when listening to speakers.

Assessment: Student writing responses.

Procedure:

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Students listening to teacher's reading the story
- 3) Discussion as read-aloud progresses
- 4) Writing strategies review
- 5) Student work on writing

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Materials: *The Color of Home*, World Map, Elmo projector or an overhead projector, teacher's hand-written writing sample.

1. Lesson introduction:

- Talk about different cultures around us.
- Background building: discuss different genres (if using folktales) and what do such stories have in common (e.g., lesson to be learned, "moral of the story")
- Vocabulary for *Color of Home* (put on board and practice): hajab, Qu'ran. Proper names used: Hassan, Fela, Naima, Musa, prayer mat, Somalia, Somali, Mogadishu, Mombasa.
- Vocabulary (if using *Wiil Waal*): Sultan, gullet, slaughter, greed, generosity. Proper names used: Wiil Waal.
- Prediction and preview: discuss what students think is going to happen).

2. Read the book.

3. Discussion of the reading:

- Possible themes to explore (if using *Color of Home*): feeling homesick, feeling scared, feeling excited, feeling uncomfortable.
- Possible themes to explore (if using *Wiil Waal*): giving advice, following advice.

4. Writing strategies revision:

Background building, connection to previous discussion on rules of writing.

Remind of academic vocabulary previously discussed: "express" and "describe".

5. Introduce writing prompts:

- Writing prompt 1 (if using *Color of Home*): Describe a time in your life when you felt home sick.
- Writing prompt 2 (if using *Color of Home*): Describe a time in your life when you felt scared.
- Writing prompt 1a (if using *Wiil Waal*): Describe a time in your life when you had to give someone advice.
- Writing prompt 2b (if using *Wiil Waal*): Describe a time in your life when someone else gave you advice.

6. Teacher's anchor response on ELMO (remind of strategies to use when writing: making a web for their response, "cheeseburger" writing style, i.e., beginning, middle, end; good paragraph has 3-5 sentences, indents, commas, periods, proper capitalization, "stretch the truth" – use detail).

7. Go over teacher's response on Elmo Projector before student writing. Highlight proper writing conventions.

Teacher's Sample Responses

These sample responses appear on Elmo Projector as a handwritten note to model how students should approach writing.

Describe a time in your life when you felt scared (if using *The Color of Home*):

Last time I felt scared was during my recent trip to Georgia. During our visit to my kids' grandparents' country house my son, Alex, got bitten by their dog: a Great Dane, named Nika. Nika does not like when anyone interferes with her eating. It so happened that Sandro was trying to stop her from eating the fish which he thought would hurt her with its sharp bones. It was pretty scary to me, but Alex handled it very well and let the doctors take care of him. He learned his lesson of being aware of a dog and, amazingly, still adores Nika.

Describe a time in your life when someone gave you advice (if using *Will Waal*):

Mr. Smith loves his wife. Last year before Valentine's Day, he asked his wife what she wanted. His wife replied, "Nothing, all I want is your love." Later that day, Mr. Smith was talking to his mother. She asked him what he was going to get Mary for Valentine's Day. He told his mother that his wife only wanted the love of her husband. Mr. Smith's mother started laughing. She said that usually women do want something special on Valentine's Day. Mr. Smith bought roses for his wife and took her to a romantic dinner. His wife was thrilled! Mr. Smith's mother gave him great advice. He was very glad that he listened to his mother. 

2014 Ohio TESOL Awards

Three exceptional teachers received awards at this year's Ohio TESOL Conference held at the Columbus Convention Center on November 14 and 15, 2014.

The 2014 recipient of the George Hertrich Service Award is Vicki Burlingame. Vicki teaches first grade ELLs at South Western City Schools, where she is a tireless promoter of literacy. Vicki is a past member of the Ohio TESOL Board and is a popular presenter at the conference. The George Hertrich Service Award recognizes outstanding contributions to the professionalism of our membership and dedication to furthering the ideals of Teaching English as a Second Language.

Chris Hill is the recipient of the Ohio TESOL Excellence in Teaching Award. This award is presented to a teacher who is considered by his/her colleagues to be an excellent teacher. Chris, who has taught at Ohio State for seven years, has been an outstanding instructor and coordinator in the American Language Program. He currently is an Academic Program Specialist at O.S.U., and has both instructional and technology/curriculum design duties.

Barbara Wookie received the Lifetime Achievement Award. This award honors an Ohio TESOL member who has made a significant contribution to the ESL teaching field. Barbara has taught at Columbus State Community College and the Ohio State University but has spent much of her career in adult education where she was an ESOL instructor, coordinator, and ABLE coordinator. Barbara is a past president of Ohio TESOL and has held other board positions.

Congratulations to our three outstanding award winners.

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Gottschalk Shows TESOL Audience “(How to Get) the Money!”

By Tim Micek

There were many interesting and informative sessions at the 2015 TESOL convention, which was held March 25-28 in Toronto, Canada. As a teacher educator who has many students pursuing the TESOL license, as well as some P-12 teachers pursuing the TESOL endorsement, I found Barbara Gottschalk’s “Show Me (How to Get) the Money!” especially worthwhile.

Gottschalk had four objectives for attendees: learn ten grant-writing tips, share grant sources, critique some grant proposals, and get motivated to apply! After asking participants to predict the content of her presentation, she used the acronym MONEY TALKS to organize it. For the most part, I quote her notes to explain her points:

Measure outcomes. “Grant programs want to know the curriculum standards you are planning to meet with the money they give you and how you will measure whether students have met them. This is sometimes hard for me to do,” Gottschalk owned, “because I’m often not the classroom teacher who is actually using the grant money.”

Obey the rules. “This seems like stating the obvious, but every tip sheet I’ve seen has mentioned this, so apparently it’s something many grant-seekers overlook. I’ve had the opportunity to listen in remotely to webcast grant reviews and heard the reviewers say things like, “Well, this applicant submitted word documents instead of PDFs [as] they were supposed to.” Not obeying the rules is a great way to get your application eliminated.’

Never start new. “If you already have something in place, grant funders will be more likely to give money to help you take it to the next level.”

Everybody involved. “Other things being equal, grant funders look favorably on programs that can benefit large numbers of students.”

Youth input. “Many programs emphasize this.” It’s difficult “with young children, but it’s important to show that students are actively involved in your project’s planning and execution. It’s even better if the students can actually take part in preparing the application.”

Tell a story. “For example, my first successful Target Field Trip grant was for the students in our magnet center for newcomers to attend a ballet performance of Aladdin.” It was a “pretty average idea but when I told the story of how many of the students in the newcomer program were from the Middle East and showed how we were going to build an entire study unit around the familiar story of Aladdin, it made a much more powerful request.”

Ask for action items. “Too often people apply for grants to buy something (“I want an iPad”), but . . . they should think of their grant request in terms of what they (or better yet, their students) are going to DO with the money.’

Learn what’s funded. “I’ve had proposals rejected by some grant programs—and then accepted by others. Often you can use sections from previous applications in other applications. I’m convinced the whole process is a lot like a job search; you’ve got to find the right grant program for your idea.”

Keep trying. Gottschalk gave the following list of grant programs that rejected her applications initially but accepted them later: Kids in Need Foundation, Target Field Trip grant, Target Arts in the Schools grant, State Farm Good Neighbor grant, and NEA Foundation grant. “This shows why you should keep trying!”

Sustainability. “Grant funders like to know that the gift they give will keep on giving.” To illustrate this point, Gottschalk showed a picture of the xylophones from her Kids in Need grant being used in a music class four years later. “It helped me get another \$500 for this music teacher to make his own set of xylophones.”

As the notes suggest, Gottschalk gave explanations, used statistics, and showed pictures to support her points. Her presentation was well organized and included a Q&A at the end. She was knowledgeable, sincere, and helpful.

In her reply to my email about her presentation, Gottschalk said that she has given this presentation twice and has been “stunned” at how few people have experience writing grants. She also pointed out that, according to the program, less than 25% of the convention presentations in the elementary

education interest section were given by K-12 teachers: the rest were given by individuals in higher education talking about K-12 or co-presenting with K-12 teachers. There's "nothing wrong with that, of course, but [K-12] teachers need to be encouraged to find their own voice. We need to hear from teachers in the real trenches!"

K-12 teachers, heed Gottschalk's call: submit your proposals to the Ohio TESOL conference and the International TESOL convention. 🌐

Tim Micek is Associate Professor of Education at Ohio Dominican University, where he directs the MATESOL. Tim would like to thank Ohio TESOL, from which he received partial funding to attend the 2015 TESOL convention.



Ohio TESOL First Vice President David Brauer at the 2015 International TESOL Convention.

2015 Ohio TESOL Awards Call for Nominations

Ohio TESOL Excellence in Teaching Award:
This award honors an Ohio TESOL member who is considered by colleagues to be an excellent teacher.

George Hertrich Service Award:
This award acknowledges outstanding service to Ohio TESOL, contributions to the professionalism of our membership, and dedication to furthering the ideals of TESOL.

Ohio TESOL Lifetime Achievement Award:
This award honors an Ohio TESOL member who has made a significant contribution to the field of TESOL through research, publication, leadership, public service, or by assuming an active role in educational advocacy.

More details on each award and how to complete a nomination can be found on the Ohio TESOL website or by contacting Emily Williams at eawohio@gmail.com. The deadline for nominations is August 31, 2015.

Saudi Arabian Students and Oral Academic Presentations: Findings from a Pilot Study

By Rimma Maddox

According to the Annual Report of the Institute of International Education (Open Doors, 2013), Saudi Arabian students are the fourth-largest group of international students in the United States (US). In the academic year 2012/13, there were 44,566 Saudi Arabian students in the US working on their undergraduate or graduate degrees or enrolled in the academic English language programs. After Kuwait, they are the second-fastest growing student population in the US. The US is the number one destination for Saudi Arabian students to study abroad (Denman & Hilal, 2011). Despite the large and increasing number of the Saudi students in the US, little research focuses on their academic language needs. This article reports on a pilot study conducted with Saudi Arabian students to inquire into some of the most difficult academic tasks they face and strategies they employed to overcome those challenges to succeed in the task. The audience for the article is language instructors and faculty working with Saudi Arabian students who are soon to commence or are already enrolled in undergraduate or graduate studies.

The study took place in the Summer Semester 2013 after the IRB approval was obtained. Data was collected via interviews and observations. Participants for the study were three Saudi Arabian undergraduate students, Adiba, Aariz, and Ahmed (all names are pseudonyms for anonymity purposes). Prior to the beginning of their studies at the University, they all studied the English language at an Intensive English School (IES, pseudonym). All of the participants started learning English in Saudi Arabia and none of them had ever lived in any English speaking country before they came to the US to pursue their higher education. Aariz and Adiba were observed during their biology class, while Ahmed was observed during his Public Speaking class.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to elaborate on the challenges of all four academic language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) identified by students. In this article, I focus on the data gathered through interviews, specifically on challenges related to oral academic presenta-

tions because academic presentations were the most widely discussed activity during the interviews with students. Students discussed giving presentations at IES as well as giving presentations in their content classes. Throughout the interviews, the role of the instructor in students' successful presentation delivery was among the most salient themes. Therefore, suggestions for faculty are offered based on students' interview responses.

Students shared some of the strategies they used to tackle the difficulties associated with giving presentations.

Oral academic presentations were identified by respondents as an important and beneficial activity for the development of academic language skills; however, students described it as the most complex and challenging task. The identified difficulties were mainly related to time management, nervousness, and language barriers (particularly pronunciation), which were connected to one another to a certain extent. For instance, adhering to the established time limit for the presentation posed a challenge to students due their inability to speak in a foreign language at a normal pace. One of the students below describes her experience from a university class in her first semester there:

When I do presentation in the class professors ask us to speak like... 'you have to, your presentation must be between 10 and 15 minutes'. Keeping time is very difficult for me because I usually speak slowly so I take time; I usually lose points because of the time." (Adiba)

What can we learn from Adiba's experience? Language instructors who are working with their students on building students' presentation skills must emphasize the importance of the time limits in the American classroom. Although Adiba successfully graduated from the IES and enrolled into a US college, she was not sufficiently prepared to deal with oral academic presentation time limits. As a result, she lost points on her presentation. Content instructors who teach Saudi students during students' first semester in college should acknowledge that it might be one of the very first times students give formal presentations in a university class. Emphasizing the requirements for presen-

tations in class, particularly time limits, might help Saudi students prepare more effectively.

Many students connected time management difficulties to what they labeled as a process of “doublethinking”, or, in other words, going back and forth between the two languages. Ahmed describes “doublethinking”:

When I am talking, presenting, I have this doublethinking in my mind. Before I speak I try to check to like how will I say it and that’s gonna take time. I... before I say the word, or say the sentence, I say it in my mind and then after I say it I check it again in my mind, like if I say anything wrong, like any grammar or mistake, I can fix it again, so I repeat the sentence again and say it correctly so that really distracts me, distracts my thought. That’s the challenge. (Ahmed)

As Ahmed’s quote demonstrates, students do not go beyond the time limit on their presentations by simply disregarding the requirements of the instructor. Presenting in a second language poses a tremendous linguistic challenge and “doublethinking” adds a certain amount of stress. To overcome this challenge, language instructors or faculty working with Saudi students should encourage students to practice their presentations several times with a timer. Another suggestion that could be made to students is preparing a presentation that is a couple of minutes shorter than what is required to guarantee staying within a given time limit and preventing students from rushing through and losing their train of thought at the end of presentation.

Interviews and observations revealed that giving a presentation made students extremely nervous. The reason is twofold: first, academic presentation is a novel task for many Saudi Arabian students. Their native schooling did not prepare them to speak up in front of the whole class; students are accustomed to remaining silent and listening to the teacher and speaking up only when they are called to do so. (Aljumah, 2011; Barnawi, 2009; Shaw, 2010). Secondly, the nervousness led students to make language mistakes, particularly in pronunciation or announcing certain words, sentences, or passages.

So how do they cope with the identified challenges? Students shared some of the strategies they used to tackle the difficulties associated with giving presentations. They unanimously explained that rehearsing as much as possible is the key coping strategy. Additionally, they suggested employing the power of positive affirmation. For instance, this is how one of the interviewees described preparing for a successful presentation:

Spend couple of hours, three hours, say it loudly and present it like even if there is no one there, but you make yourself comfortable. When I go in front of people it gives you like nervous [feeling]...So what I do is I try to forget everything and focus and make myself like as a king and they are my citizens. (Aariz)

Another student suggested that sooner or later one must try to stop thinking too hard at every utterance and “just speak”.

When I came here, I used to think before I speak, but now I just speak. I am not thinking about creating sentences before I speak because before I just think about the sentence: “is it right?” But now I just speak. I don’t think about that. Correct or not. (Adiba)

Language instructors, public speaking professors, or content professors could encourage their Saudi students to practice presentations utilizing the power of positive affirmation or to speak while imagining that they are “the expert”. The SA schooling culture is teacher-centered (Alqahtani, 2011; Shaw, 2009) as opposed to being the student-centered like in the US. SA students regard teachers as an absolute authority that “should not be questioned”, and consider any “disagreement in classroom discussions with teachers or peers is a sign of disrespect” (Barnawi, 2009, p. 64). Faculty should spend some time explaining the difference between the two schooling cultures and emphasize the importance of taking on the expert role when giving presentations.

The interviewed students have also suggested whenever possible to present in the middle and avoid the added stress of being the first to present. In addition, students expressed a desire to deliver presentations without grades. Ahmed suggested that professors should consider allowing students to present without grading students at the end of the presentation because without grade pressure, students would be able to get used to presenting without being overwhelmed.

When I am talking with like normal people, any mistake I do, I can talk freely, I can have confidence in myself and not have to overthink the stuff. If they [professors] focus too much on the language, you gonna become like overwhelmed. But I think it’s helpful way to do that... to make us talk without recording anything for like the sake of practice. That could help getting used to the crowd. (Ahmed)

During the interviews, instructor’s role in students’ successful presentation delivery was a recurring theme. Participants maintained that it was very important for them to know why they were doing what they were doing. Often, they felt that instructors lacked clarity in their explanation of what students needed for a solid presentation and students were unsure of the instructors’ expectations of presentations:

I find it hard to know what it is that the professor [wants] exactly...Most of the time it’s just “Ok, take the subject, take this topic, talk about it”. That’s it. I can talk about the topic from many different aspects...It’s just what that professor really wants from the presentation, so I can prepare for that, I know like specific thing he wants so I can reach that. (Ahmed)

When students knew the purpose of tasks and activities, they felt more engaged. They worked harder because they knew why they were doing it and how it would benefit them, even if the tasks were challenging and time-consuming. Language instructors should consider modeling the presentation to ascertain that students truly comprehend what is needed of them. Another suggestion that could help language instructors confirm that students understand presentation requirements is creating a grading rubric together with students, where students and instructors can establish what's important for the success of the task.

In this article, I offer a few suggestions on how to aid your students to prepare for and deliver a successful presentation based on interviews with three Saudi Arabian undergraduate students. To conclude, I must emphasize the following: each student is an individual and what works for one student might not be helpful for others. What's vital when working with any students is empathy, or, as one student suggested:

Imagine themselves they are in Saudi Arabia and they are studying biology in Arabic language and they haven't studied biology in English language. What they are expecting from the professor from the Saudi...Make [imagine] himself like 20 years old, in Saudi Arabia, all his study was prior was English. And let him study biology in Arabic language in the first year. Then they can understand how much difficult do we have. (Aariz)

What Aariz is communicating to us is that situating oneself in a completely different culture, shifting perspectives about priorities in school, the roles of teachers and students, as well as learning in a different language can be tortuous. Remembering this allows for a holistic approach to teaching Saudi students, and for being an empathetic and inspiring teacher. 🌐

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References for Service-(e)Learning: Benefits for Teachers of English Language Learners

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Service-(e)Learning: Benefits for Teachers of English Language Learners

By Cate Crosby

English language learners (ELLs) in U.S. public schools have more than doubled in the last two decades to over 11 million students (NCELA, 2008). Consequently, our K-12 teachers are being called upon to work with growing numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse students enrolled in their classrooms. Service-elearning provides teacher candidates an opportunity to gain the knowledge and skills they need to facilitate the academic literacy achievement of ELLs, and, at the same time, provide critical service to the community. This article discusses how I implemented service-elearning in an online academic reading and writing course, and the benefits of it.

Project Objectives

The project's overarching goals were twofold: 1) to prepare future teachers of ELLs to teach in a global society by gaining experience working with multicultural, multilingual learners; and 2) to provide teacher candidates the opportunity to apply Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Second Language Writing (SLW), Second Language (L2) reading theory and methods when working with ELLs. As a basis for the project, I drew on these components of Eyler and Giles's (1999) definition of service-learning: 1) learning through a cycle of action and reflection as teacher candidates worked with ELLs; 2) applying what the candidates were learning in the online classroom to their work with ELLs; and 3) self-reflecting on achieving both real objectives for the community of ELLs and their families and deeper understanding and skills as teachers. Moreover, I incorporated the pedagogy of service-elearning, which is a combination of: 1) traditional service-learning, where pedagogy and service are conducted face-to-face, and 2) an elearning approach, where communication is conducted via technology (Dailey-Hebert et al., 2008). The advantage of service-learning in an online environment allows for the expansion of service from local to global engagement.

Project Rationale

For this project, eight teacher candidates participated. Results from a pre-project questionnaire revealed that over half of the teacher candidates had some experience working with ELLs and academic literacy, and the other half had none. Sixty percent of the candidates reported they felt only

somewhat prepared to work with ELLs and academic literacy once they graduated. This strongly suggests that the candidates would benefit from working with ELLs and academic literacy prior to graduation, and that service-elearning would benefit them. Thus, I integrated a service-elearning component into an online academic literacy course to strengthen the candidates' learning experience by having them engage with ELLs and their academic literacy and, at the same time, serve the ELL population in their surrounding communities (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

For this project, eight teacher candidates, male and female, native and non-native English speakers, participated. Their teaching experience ranged from PK-12 to higher education to never having taught. They worked with 12 individual ELLs in PK-12, higher education, and adult education teaching contexts, and completed a total of 525 hours of service. The 12 ELLs served represented 6 languages other than English, including Spanish, Portuguese, Somali, Arabic, Chinese, and Mandarin. None of the candidates reported having had any one-to-one ESL tutoring experience prior to the service-elearning project. All of the service-(e) learning projects were completed face-to-face.

Project Implementation

At the beginning of the semester, I introduced the project requirements. These included: 1) candidates finding a service-learning agency at the beginning of the semester that provided them an ELL to work with from mid- to end-semester; 2) candidates keeping a critical reflection journal about their service-elearning experience; 3) candidates completing an online evaluation of their service-elearning; 4) candidates conducting themselves professionally; and 5) candidates completing a 10-20 page critical culminating reflection of their service-elearning experience.

The first half of the semester candidates logged information about their ELLs. In addition, they recorded their hours, the work they accomplished, and the teaching strategies they practiced. They then critically reflected on their experiences by responding to a series of open-ended prompts including their: 1) work with ELLs; 2) lesson descriptions; 3) SLA, SLW, and L2 reading theory; 4) SLW and L2 reading strategies; and 5) SLW and L2 reading assessments. In our

online course, specific discussion board topics and structured small-group discussions allowed candidates to share their experiences, questions, and insights about their service-learning with others in the course. At its completion, and as a comparative measure of their pre- and post-service-learning experiences, candidates were given a project evaluation.

Benefits of Service-eLearning

An analysis of candidates' critical reflection journal responses revealed that they were overwhelmingly positive about the service-learning work they completed with their ELLs. Three of the most frequently reported benefits were: 1) the opportunity to apply SLA, SLW, and L2 reading theory in the service-learning experience; 2) a change in their attitudes toward working with ELLs; and 3) perceived higher self-efficacy as teacher candidates.

The service-learning project provided candidates with practice in teaching academic literacy to ELLs at their level of understanding. They were able to experience firsthand the academic and sociocultural challenges of this learner population. The most frequently reported impact service-learning had on participants was providing them the opportunity to apply SLA, SLW, L2 reading theories in a real world context. Their journal reflections evidenced much active practical application. They reflected on their use of a variety of techniques as well as their incorporation of a number of academic literacy teaching methods in their work with ELLs. Candidates often listed "tips" discussed in class that they used when working with their ELLs, e.g., speaking clearly and slowly, using gestures to aid comprehension, and supplementing instruction with pictures. Many entries also contained an assessment of the candidates' implementation of the "tips," such as, "They definitely helped" and, "The approaches worked." For most of the participants, this course was an introduction to theories and methods in teaching reading and writing to ELLs and the first time they obtained experience applying it. One candidate declared, "I was astounded at how well these reading/writing approaches worked." Service-learning gave teacher candidates the opportunity to think through and work on aspects of their teaching specifically related to teaching reading and writing to ELLs, such as understanding written literacy in the students' first languages. Another candidate noted, "It has helped me understand what kind of reading and writing support I will need to provide for the ELLs in my classroom, and how to differentiate instruction for the needs of each student."

The second most frequently reported impact of service-learning was a change in participants' attitudes toward ELLs. In general, teachers with limited experience in teaching reading and writing to ELLs have less supportive beliefs, attitudes, and practices. Youngs & Youngs (2001) have found that teachers have a change-for-the-better attitude toward ELLs with research-based professional development that focuses on specific training on teaching academic literacy, and direct interactions with these students.

In reviewing the participants' reflective journals, I found more positive and open attitudes toward working with ELLs and their academic literacy. Many candidates expressed negative emotions toward working with ELLs prior to service-learning, but shifted their perspective as they persisted with it. For example, one candidate commented, "When the project was first assigned, . . . I was intimidated by the thought of working with an ELL and teaching reading and writing. But as I spent time with them [ELLs], I learned that it is not as intimidating as I thought and that it is actually a positive experience." Another shift in attitude that surfaced, and could not have come from studying course materials alone, was that participants gained a greater understanding of the difficulties ELLs face in working on their reading and writing. One candidate reflected, "Unless you [work] one on one with an ELL, you do not fully understand their struggle when it comes to improving reading and writing in a second language."

Finally, the third most frequently reported impact service-learning had on participants was a perceived higher self-efficacy as teachers of ELLs and of academic literacy. According to Bandura (1977, cited in Spradlin & Parsons, 2008, p. 63), self-efficacy is confidence in one's own ability to handle a task at hand. A realistic sense of one's own strengths and abilities is a key first step in building self-efficacy, as well as a key step in achieving success in working with ELLs and their academic literacy. Service-learning allowed teacher candidates to examine how prepared they felt to work with ELLs and teach them academic literacy. One participant summed up the experience, ". . . I believe this class and this project gave me the tools and confidence I needed to work with an ELL student and academic literacy . . . I feel that I have a better understanding of the different levels of academic literacy proficiency as well as many new strategies for teaching academic literacy to use in my future classroom!" Teachers who have higher self-efficacy are more committed to teaching and willing to adopt educational innovations, and bring greater planning, organization, enthusiasm, and clarity to their teaching. Service-learning gave candidates an opportunity to assess and reflect not only on their abilities to teach academic literacy to ELLs, but also on their preparedness to work with them.

The dramatic increase in the number of English language learners in K-12 schools makes it imperative for teacher preparation to develop teachers' abilities and talents to effectively and successfully work with this group of learners. I have demonstrated the positive impact that service-learning had on teacher candidates and their ability to work effectively with ELLs. 

Dr. Cate Crosby is Assistant Professor of TESOL at the University of Cincinnati. She's an avid cyclist, and, to date has cycled in thirteen states and in three countries.

Q: Skills for Success 4 Reading and Writing (Level 4)

By Natasha Chenowith

If you are looking for a useful, current, and attractive textbook, you may want to consider using *Q: Skills for Success 4 Reading and Writing* in your ESL classroom. This text would be appropriate for intermediate learners in intensive English language programs. The first several pages of the textbook outline the learning outcomes for each unit in terms of reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, and critical thinking. Each unit not only has a theme, but also a relevant guiding question that students explore throughout the unit. For example, the theme of unit one is power and responsibility and the unit question is “What makes someone a hero?” (Daise, Norloff & Carne, p. vii). As the title suggests, the text is intended to teach reading and writing, but grammar and vocabulary are also incorporated into the activities. Furthermore, there are sections devoted to promoting critical thinking skills. The unit themes in the book include power and responsibility, appearances, growing up, health, art, food, work and education, and nature (Daise, Norloff & Carne, 2011). The topics in this textbook are interesting and current and I think they could stimulate some real discussion in an intermediate ESL classroom. Finally, the pages are very nicely organized and are printed in full color.

The teacher’s guide for this series includes not only the answer key for the activities in the book, but also teaching strategies, a section on 21st century skills and critical thinking, and a CD that includes “a customizable test for each unit” (Daise, Norloff, and Carne, 2011, p. xiii). The authors also list the textbook’s website, www.oup.com/elt/teacher/Qskillsforsuccess, as a place where teachers can find additional resources to help them teach from this textbook. Each student textbook comes with an online access code so that teachers can assign, track, and grade homework through the online practice website (www.Qonlinepractice.com). This is a helpful tool that allows the teacher to easily track student progress and manage student learning. This tool is useful because the teacher can assess which concepts students are not grasping and use that information to inform his/her teaching plan in the classroom.

What I like most about this textbook is the fact that it is both current and useful. The chapters are not repetitive and the readings are actually interesting. I also like the fact that the

authors stress the importance of critical thinking skills and not only language skills. Throughout the book, students are asked to give their opinions and question the texts that they read. This is an important higher level skill that that is often neglected in language teaching because teachers are so focused on teaching the mechanics of the language instead of teaching students how to think about language.

Overall, I think this textbook is both practical and interesting. Students from different cultures would like this book because it incorporates several universal themes and topics. This is one of the few second language textbooks that I have encountered that promotes both language skills and critical thinking skills. 🌐

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The Hijab: An Expression of Identity or Oppression?

By Irena Joseph

It was a recurring situation: Muslim women in my Advanced Reading and Writing class felt prejudiced against because of their head covering, commonly called the hijab. The prejudice was caused by people's lack of knowledge about this piece of Muslim women's clothing. My writing course included an assignment where students needed to write a cause and effect essay about prejudice. Students were supposed to choose and describe a group of people suffering from prejudice, analyze the causes and effects of the prejudice, and discuss possible solutions. The majority of Muslim women in my class during the period of three terms chose to write about the prejudice they experienced because of the hijab. In their essays, they expressed surprise and incredulity over people's ignorance of their faith, described their feelings about people's prejudiced questions and actions, and defended their right and obligation to wear the hijab. Through reading the women's essays and interacting with them in and out of class, I learned valuable lessons about the complexity of this individual, religious, and cultural symbol.

The meaning of the term hijab ranges "from the covering of one's body (including one's hair) to modest behavior" (Selod, 2008, p. 1360). There are other terms as well: veil, khimar, jilbab, niqab, burqa. Each of them carries a slightly different meaning and includes a significant amount of geographic variability.

My students took painstaking effort to describe the hijab as a symbol of their identity and religious affiliation. "I wear the hijab because God asked me to do it," Fulwah told me. For her, the hijab represents modesty, an important virtue, makes her feel safe and comfortable, encourages people to respect her, and makes her a visible member of Muslim community. She cannot imagine her life without it.

The women made it clear that their religion encourages them to dress modestly but does not force them to wear the hijab. They criticized the media, which are eager to represent the hijab mainly as a symbol of oppression of women. They found truth in Selod's (2008) description of media influence: "The media often represents Muslim women who wear the hijab as primitive, backward and oppressed by showing images that appear antithetical to women in a democratic Western society" (p. 1360). My students were upset by the negative portrayal of Islam and the hijab in the media and saddened by people's acceptance of it. As Elham explained, "The theme 'women oppression' should be handled with caution when combining it with hijab, as it is not always the case. The best example to reveal this is the second and third generations of Muslim women immigrants.

Those generations were born and grown up on the principles of the free democratic Western society, yet they willingly chose to wear the veil." These women felt empowered by the hijab, not oppressed or impeded by it.

According to my students, the key to fighting prejudice against covered women is education. Both sides need to educate each other. The women realized they have an important role: to teach others about themselves and their faith by showing them who they are. Waad wrote, "If people understand the purpose of hijab and why women wear it, they maybe communicate more easily and in a respectful way with these women. To achieve this goal we have to educate people by many ways and tell them what the hijab is, and why it is an important part of Muslim women's life." While interacting with women such as these, open-minded listeners will be able to gain a more positive perspective on the hijab, one that reveals it as a symbol of faith, modesty, and simplicity.

I learned some valuable lessons from my students. First and foremost, I became more aware of the stereotypes and prejudice against women who wear the hijab. I learned that the women are surprised by how little we know about their religion and culture. I was saddened by the shock they felt at some of the questions they received. The women made it clear that we should not assume they are oppressed because they are wearing the hijab. It is true that some women are forced to wear it, but the women I taught were not. Finally, as a teacher, I realized that we should get to know our students, which breaks down barriers and stereotypes better than anything we hear or read. By reading Elham's, Fulwah's, Waad's, and other Muslim women's essays in my class, I was reminded of something quite obvious, which Fulwah put succinctly as a piece of advice: "Believe that we are normal women like others, but we dress differently."



Irena Joseph teaches in the LEAP Intensive English Program at Wright State University in Dayton. She is grateful to Fulwah, Elham, Waad, and her other students for teaching her about their lives, including the hijab.

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A Technology Review of Lyricstraining.com

By Emily Dixon and Brittany King

There are thousands of websites for teachers and students to use in the ESL classroom. Some are great; some are not. The following is a review of a good website that can be used as a classroom activity or as an individual activity to reinforce listening and vocabulary through music. This website maybe more appropriate for middle school, high school, and adult students.

There is a human connection to music that makes it naturally alluring for teachers and students. Psychologist Howard Gardner developed and supported the Theory of Multiple Intelligences which claims this notion of learning. Music is one of the learning styles he identifies. It is also important to consider that music is a part of every culture. Each culture has a set of songs that are taught to children, so learning with music comes naturally to most people.

Many studies suggest that music is an effective tool when teaching languages. A study done by Cruz-Cruz (2005) found that elementary age students who learned vocabulary through songs could recall vocabulary much faster than students who learned without music. This is because students had lower anxiety, were more motivated, and the classroom felt more like a community, according to the teacher and students involved in the study. Medina (1990) also conducted research with elementary aged students concerning vocabulary acquisition of English and found that students who were learning vocabulary through music and pictures had higher gains in vocabulary acquisition than the subjects who did not.

Wilcox (1995) supports the results found in the Medina study but with adult students, finding that musical qualities, such as rhythm, tempo, and melody, can facilitate retention. More research has been done that also makes the case for music in language teaching for adult English learners. Ball (2011) states that her use of music videos in her adult ESL classroom is very useful because the students already know many of the songs. They are interested and engaged from the beginning, which enhances their learning. Ball goes on to say that the music videos can be used to cover a variety of different learning objectives. She found that the music videos help “build a higher level of vocabulary understanding” (Ball, 2011). She also uses these videos for discussions about American culture and cultural differences.

Using music and music videos facilitates learning by engaging the student in an interest that they already have. Because the students are interested, they are more likely to be

motivated to learn the objectives. It also lowers the affective filter of students so that they are more focused on learning rather than what their classmates are going to think. Music qualities aid in the retention of vocabulary, therefore lessons that involve music can be effective in language acquisition.

Music and visuals together can have a positive impact on learning and retaining new information which makes the website Lyricstraining.com a helpful resource for ESOL teachers. Lyricstraining.com is a free website that uses music and friendly competition to teach vocabulary and listening skills. It features songs in seven languages. The purpose of the website is to test a student’s ability to listen to and understand song lyrics. There are thousands of songs to choose from with varying levels of difficulty. Users can search by song title, artist or lyrics. Users can further customize their search by choosing a language and difficulty level. The site is very easy to use. Students can play as a guest or create an account and keep track of their high scores.

Playing the game is simple. The user chooses a language, song difficulty level, and a song. Then, each song has four levels which determine the percentage of words you have to fill in. Once the user hits play, the music video starts and the lyrics start scrolling. There are dots where words are missing, and the song will not continue until the user types the correct word. Be careful, though; if students take too much time to think, they will run out of time and lose. If students do not hear a word, they can repeat the line as many times as they want by hitting the delete button on the keyboard.

Lyricstraining.com is engaging because it covers many genres of music. The use of American pop culture is more attractive to high school and adult learners. Many students love music class and singing songs, so including music into a lesson can be a great way to get them excited about class. Teachers can choose a video that uses targeted vocabulary or grammar, so that students can commit the words or the pattern of grammar to memory via song.

There are a few drawbacks of Lyricstraining.com. One is that it uses Flash Player, which is an insecure add-on to most browsers. The site also tells users that they use their own cookies and that by continuing to browse on their site, the user has agreed to their use of cookies. Cookies are used to track a user’s habits on a site to customize the web page and to collect data. Unfortunately, the website does not work the way it is intended to work on a smartphone. The

way most smartphones play videos is not conducive to the typing task that is necessary to play the game.

Another drawback is that some music videos contain adult content. The best student audience for Lyricstraining.com is high school through adult students. Because of the nature of some music videos and the subject matter in them, lyricstraining.com may not be appropriate for middle school students and younger. It also may be inappropriate for some adults that have conservative religious or cultural beliefs. Of course, the teacher can choose the song when using the site as a group activity, but the teacher may not be able to monitor song choice on individual computers. Also students using this website must have some typing skills, so that they do not get frustrated if they cannot type fast enough. High school and university students would get the most enjoyment out of this because they can enjoy and relate to pop culture.

Depending on the resources of the school or institution, Lyricstraining.com can be used as an activity for the whole class or as a supplemental listening activity for students in an ESL computer lab. This website can be an excellent tool for learning and reviewing vocabulary and of course improving listening skills, despite some of the content and some of the troublesome add-ons and cookies associated with Lyricstraining.com. As long as the school has given the teacher permission to use the website, Lyricstraining.com can be a fun, free and culturally relevant listening activity for any high school or adult ESL classroom. 🌐

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Brittany King spent five years teaching English in Mexico before returning to Ohio to study an MA in TESOL at Ohio Dominican University. She loves volunteering with the immigrant community in Columbus and going dancing with her husband.

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Think, Write, Talk: Writing Strategies for the ESL Classroom

By Helen M. Vassiliou

The job of an ESL teacher should be one that merits an award of highest standing. Having a classroom filled with various levels of English proficiency, native language literacy, and educational experiences lends itself to the implementation of various forms of communicative activities for all students to actively participate in school. As students get stronger in their oral communication skills and begin to think and express themselves in writing, we must provide students with daily opportunities to write about what they are thinking so that they can openly communicate with each other and with the teacher.

Writing is essential to communication, learning and citizenship. It helps us share ideas, solve problems and understand the world around us. In a time of test preparation, we must make sure that we expose our second language learners to routine writing that is both strategic and enjoyable, yet incidental in its mission. As a curriculum consultant, I stress to ESL teachers the following recommendations for teaching writing: Dedicate time to writing where writing occurs across content and involves students in various forms of writing. Aim to increase student knowledge about how to write to convey thinking. Foster student interest and enjoyment by motivating them to write often about what they see and what they think. Teach basic writing skills to mastery through short engaging quick writes. Help students become better writers as they share their thinking through their words, and most importantly give students a reason to write.

While working with new teachers, I stress the importance of them setting the stage for why students are writing, with what I call PIE. This short tip helps explain to students that today's writing will be either to Persuade, Inform or Entertain, simply stated PIE. Sifting through my list of my top 4 writing strategies, I begin with demonstrating to new teachers how to use visual literacy in the form of pictures or posters with their students. Visual literacy is simply being able to interpret, negotiate and make meaning from the information presented in the form of an image. For this strategy I find a picture to display on the whiteboard. I like to use

pictures from Time Magazine on the internet as they have pictures from all over the world. After showing students an image, ask them to divide their paper into three columns: I think, I see, I wonder. Give students 3-5 minutes to jot down their initial interpretations of the image and record what they think about the picture, what they see about the picture and what they wonder about the picture. As they share, record what they say and capture the vocabulary and ideas they express to you. This activity then becomes one of claims and evidence. What the students think is the claim they are making about the picture, what they see is the evidence about the picture and what they wonder becomes something they can then research. I then share the caption that goes with the image. As I read it we either affirm or change our beliefs based on the accompanying text. This activity gives students the opportunity to use their acquired vocabulary in writing and in speaking.

Students love to ask questions and as teachers we should engage students in inquiry opportunities. The Question Blitz strategy is one where you can capture student thinking around a given topic. This strategy is both friendly and formative. To do this simply give students one topic (either from content or from discussion). Give students 2-3 minutes to write as many questions about that topic that they can think of. For example, when given the topic of ice cream the students inquired about how many flavors exist? Is the ice cream business lucrative? How do you get a job making ice cream? Through the questions posed, the teacher can see the vocabulary students used and the thought process of each student around the given topic giving the teacher a glimpse into student schema and background knowledge. Students can then decide on one question to research as a class through reading and internet searching giving them an interest in reading more about the topic to answer their question.

As we begin to expose students to more informational text and non-fiction reading passages, it is important for students to have a writing connection to capture the mental processes of reading. In the It Says/I Say strategy, students read a non-fiction or informational text. On a t-chart they write “It says” “I say” and record all of their observations and main ideas regarding the text under “It says.” They then reread or revisit the text and their writing to capture what they think about the text and the main ideas in the “I say” column. This strategy allows for argumentative writing where students are referencing a text with what they think, thus forming an argument.

Writing is essential to communication, learning and citizenship.

Since writing is the act of transmitting knowledge in print, we must have information to share before we can write it. Therefore reading plays a major role in writing. Through all of these strategies we see that reading and writing go hand in hand and are more interdependent than we thought. The relationship between reading and writing is a bit like that of the chicken and the egg, which came first is not as important as the fact that without one the other cannot exist. A child’s literacy development is dependent on the interconnectedness of reading and writing. As we expose students to more routing writing opportunities, we are able to capture their thinking and provide them with ways to communicate what they read, what they know and how they feel about a topic. I would encourage all teachers to try one of these strategies as a way to improve writing for meaning so that all students can be active participants in today’s English language classroom. 🌐

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Ten Steps to Improving College Reading Skills

By Aseel Kanakri

Ten Steps to Improving College Reading Skills by John Langan is one of the best books used nowadays in ESL reading classes. It is designed to teach English learners academic reading skills needed for success in college. This book is appropriate for upper-intermediate and advanced reading classes in intensive English language programs. The approach of the book, in which each chapter focuses on one skill and provides students with many exercises and reading passages to help them master that skill, makes it very accessible and easy to use. It also integrates reading and writing exercises. For example, there are whole chapters that teach students the difference between topics, main ideas, central points, major supporting details, and minor supporting details. Knowledge of these elements and their usage is essential for students to write essays in the writing classes. Another aspect that makes this book a great choice for reading teachers is its focus on extensive reading. It has over 650 pages that consist of hundreds of passages for reading both in and outside the classroom. Many of the topics of the readings in the book are general-knowledge-based; therefore, the students usually have some background knowledge of what they read and can make meaningful connections to the new material from their prior knowledge.

The skills taught in this book, including main ideas, sentence relationships, implied central points and making inferences, are badly needed by upper-intermediate and advanced ESL learners especially those planning to take academic classes afterwards. The book makes learning these skills fun by using a wide variety of current and interesting topics like human relationships and behavior, college athletes, college education, modern science and technology (Langan, 2014).

One more reason for using this textbook is the myriad of activities and exercises. Most of these activities are multiple-choice questions, which make doing them in class fast and easy. Due to the huge and extensive amount of exercises in the book, the teacher would not need to supplement the text with any outside material. The activities are good for in-class practice and for homework too. Each chapter has six review tests and six mastery tests. Teachers can choose to have the students answer the review tests in class and the

mastery tests at home. For testing, the book itself is supplemented with a test bank that has a big variety of tests and additional exercises. The author also lists the textbook's website, www.townsendpress.com, as a place where teachers and students can find additional resources like online presentations, extra tests, and PowerPoints.

The book also has many extensive reading passages which help students develop critical thinking skills and not only language skills. The teacher is not required to cover everything in the book because it is huge, so she can simply cherry-pick exercises and passages. It also has combined skills tests at the end which the teacher can use for extra out-of-class practice. The topics in this textbook are interesting and current and could stimulate some real discussion in an advanced ESL classroom. Overall, I have found this book to be of a great benefit to my advanced ESL reading class. My students enjoyed many of the readings in the book and regularly had very interesting discussions. They never had any trouble or difficulty working on the exercises which were mostly straightforward and self-explanatory, especially the fill in the blanks and the multiple choice questions. I am sure that Ten Steps to Improving College Reading Skills would be a very good textbook for any upper-intermediate or advanced ESL reading class. 🌐

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How I Spent My Summers...

One Teacher's Summer Journeys Toward Teaching English Language Learners

By Benjamin J. Hartnell

"Hello, Ben. This is Bev Good calling from Otterbein University to see if you would be interested in taking part in a federally funded program for TESOL endorsement."

And with that message left in August 2012, my journey toward teaching English Language Learners (ELLs) began.

After speaking with Dr. Good, I could not believe what she told me – that Otterbein was launching its Central Ohio English Learner Education Collaborative (COELEC) program thanks to a professional development grant from the U.S. Department

of Education. If it was a cold call, Dr. Good nailed it! How would she have known that the night before my wife and I had, after pouring over our finances, concluded that I would have to drop out of my graduate programs... which were, ironically, TESOL endorsement courses at Otterbein University? Whatever her reasons, or however she stumbled upon my name, it was meant to be.

Initial Reactions to the COELEC Program

What now? I was a member of the COELEC – another fancy acronym! I received tuition, a laptop, and grant money to use for supplies and materials in my classroom. After completing a linguistics course in Fall 2012 and a legal class in January 2013, members of the COELEC did not have any classes in the spring before reconvening in June for the "Summer Academy."

At first, no one really knew what to expect from the Academy, especially since this was the first time such a program had been implemented in Central Ohio. What my colleagues and I did know was that for five weeks in the summer we would attend two college courses on campus and tutor ELL students bussed in from Columbus for three weeks.

Wait. What? Tutor?

To be honest, I had very little experience working directly with ELL students outside the occasional, bright-eyed ELLs that took my freshman history class. And most of the time, these students sat looking bewildered as I ran around the

room, jumped on desks, and in a theatrical style, presented the lessons – all the while sporting one of my 65 bizarre costumes to engage learners in thinking about history through dramatic impersonations. Because of the rigorous pace, general

atmosphere of the class, and my "out of the ordinary" approach, the Guidance Department generally hesitated placing non-native speaking students under my tutelage.

With that said, this does not mean I am some sort of overbearing disseminator of knowledge reminiscent of the yardstick wielding draconian teacher from Pink Floyd's *The Wall*. I have a unique approach to teaching, but it is not a closed approach. I welcomed the opportunity at Otterbein and the COELEC program to improve my practice in a way that would benefit ELLs – and all students – in my history classes at Westerville North High School.

What Happened at the Academy?

Sheltered instruction and TESOL assessment were the focal points of the 2013 Academy, while integrating literacy into project-based curriculums was the focus of the Academy in 2014. Each of the teachers involved was assigned to work with one or two ELLs. I taught two Somali 9th grade students during the 2013 Academy and one Latino and two Somali middle schoolers in 2014. In 2013, we were expected to review the Ohio Test of English Language Acquisition (OTELA) scores to gauge language areas that needed attention, and we created assessments (and lessons) to show that we were capable of improving their scores in a matter

For five weeks in the summer we would attend two college courses on campus and tutor ELL students bussed in from Columbus for three weeks.

of three weeks. In 2014, OTELA was again used, but the assessment focus was on establishing reading and comprehension scores by using an informal reading inventory and project-based learning.

Students were with us for 50 minutes of instruction before being dismissed for a half hour lunch. The Academy instructors expected the teachers to accompany the students to and from the campus dining hall. Likewise, sitting with our students was encouraged in order to foster a relationship and to develop a broader understanding of the cultures within our classrooms. This allowed for small talk... as well as the chance to pick up some words in their own language. (And trust me, they love teaching you words! You just have to verify the words are ones you should be using in casual conversation!) Most teachers – myself included – found the lunch to be the most valuable time because of the bond between student and teacher that was created. We often found that our lessons carried over to the lunch table, which then carried over to the next day – and the next – and so forth.

The 2013 Academy

My 2013 students’ OTELA scores indicated they were familiar with American education and had some experience learning in English – even if I had no idea what OTELA stood for nor what its scores meant. (Sure, I had heard of it, but no one ever sat me down after a staff meeting and truly explained it. I just always assumed that the ELLs that graced my classroom were at or above the reading levels as the other students. Otherwise, why would they be in my class?) One of the first benefits of the Academy was being walked through actual OTELA scores and shown how to use the test to design instruction.

The intentional structure of the supplemental coursework we took in the morning before students arrived and in the afternoon after they departed was to give us a slew of methods and different approaches to instruction. The instructors and coaches (TESOL professionals from around Central Ohio) demonstrated the different ideas in class through simulations. This gave us a repertoire of ideas to “practice” on our students. (Personally, having the oppor-

tunity to practice these methods on “real” students and in “real” situations helped make this the most effective – albeit grueling - PD I have ever undergone.) Utilizing several sheltered instruction methods (predominantly small group and modeling), my two students were able to grasp the 20 key vocabulary terms and principles of American Government (which ranged from the difference between a republic and a democracy, the 27 Amendments, how a bill becomes a law, and so forth). A progression of their scores is shown in Table 1

The fact that the students showed up every day, knew the class routine, embraced my style of teaching, and worked well together demonstrates that there was genuine learning happening during the Academy. However, the data did show that the two students acquired a strong and near-perfect understanding of the academic terms and concepts that form the basis of American Government.

The 2014 Academy

My 2014 students’ OTELA scores presented me with a very different challenge. Unlike my students in 2013 that both spoke Somali and were relatively similar in their English proficiency, my students at the 2014 Academy spoke multiple languages (Somali, Spanish, and English) and were all over the OTELA spectrum; one student was “exited”, one was pre-functional, and another was intermediate.

The coursework that supplemented the 2014 Academy proved to be more challenging because it focused on literacy. And with a wide range of OTELA scores, I relied heavily on my instructors and coaches for ideas and help in implementing my vision for student improvement. Playing upon a common theme of “economic” literacy – and the fact that all three were pre-teen males who are the target audience for most consumer-based products – we discussed and analyzed advertisements, brand logos, tricks to sell products, Super Bowl commercials, and magazines. In the process, we identified 10 key economic terms (e.g., supply and demand, capitalism, profit, etc.). This topic piqued their interest, and, using leveled-reading, guided practice, and modeling, each student completed an advertising campaign in which they

Student	# of Key Am. Govt. Ideas	Day #1 # Correct (%) Time	Day #3 # Correct (%) Time	Day #5 # Correct (%) Time	Day #7 # Correct (%) Time	Day #9 # Correct (%) Time
Male	20	10 (50%) 18 min.	13 (65%) 17 min.	15 (75%) 12 min.	17 (85%) 11 min.	20 (100%) 9 min.
Female	20	16 (80%) 14 min.	18 (90%) 10 min.	18 (90%) 9 min.	20 (100%) 6 min.	20 (100%) 4 min.

Table 1. Student assessment scores of American Government concepts during the 2013 TESOL Summer Academy

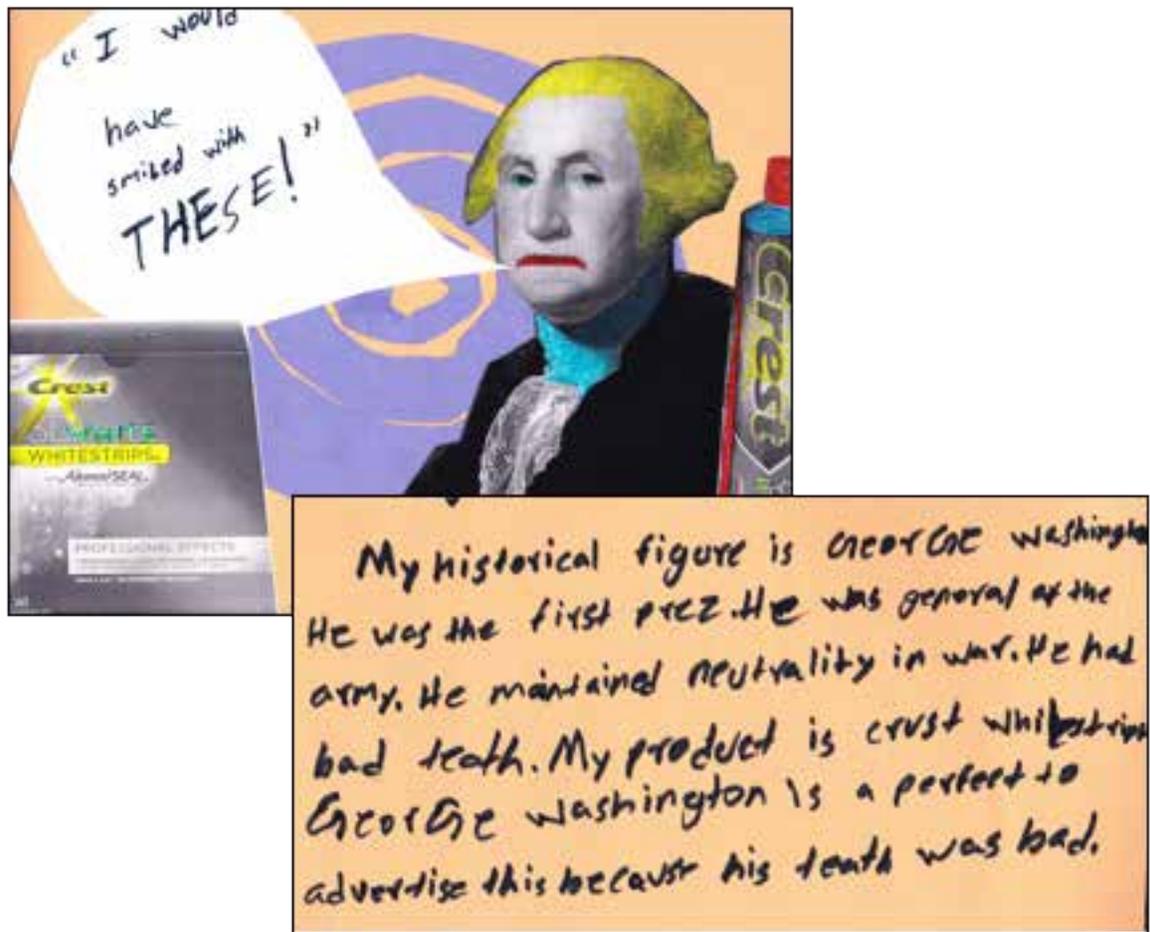


Figure 1. Student advertisement project from the 2014 TESOL Summer Academy

selected a historical figure and an appropriate product for this person to “sell.” (For example, one student used George Washington to sell Crest Whitening Strips. This demonstrated that he knew enough about Washington to associate the product with Washington’s poor dental “situation”. He drew this information from readings we pulled from the Otterbein Library. Then he created an actual advertisement and wrote why Washington was the perfect salesman.) Despite each of my students starting at different points in their skill level, all three turned out a product that showed incredible literary understanding and growth. A picture of the Washington advertisement is shown in Figure 1.

Academy Reflections

When it comes to professional development, most teachers groan, roll their eyes, and mutter, “Now what?” Otterbein found a way to create an authentic – and meaningful – PD program for educators. Getting immediate feedback as your lesson unfolded, as well as rubbing elbows with top TESOL advocates, is an experience you cannot replicate during a staff meeting, on-line, or during a PD weekend “getaway”. Being given a chance to develop a better practice with ELLs during the Summer Academy proved to be the greatest PD experience I have been provided in my 14 years as an educator. The Academy ideas and strategies have already been implemented in my own classroom where they continue to benefit not just the ELLs – but all of my students.

And to think it all started with a phone call that August night in 2012. 🌐

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