



Contents

MATSOL News

- 2 President's Message
- 4 Staffing Changes at MATSOL
HELEN SOLÓRZANO
- 6 The Next Generation ESL Model Curriculum and Resource Guide
HELEN SOLÓRZANO
- 10 First Annual Community College Mini-Conference
JUANITA BRUNELLE
- 11 First Annual Private Language School/Intensive English Program Mini-Conference
JOSHUA STONE
- 13 The LOOK Bill
HELEN SOLÓRZANO

Get Involved

- 15 Submit to MATSOL Publications

Reports

- 16 A Report from MATSOL's English Learner Leadership Council (MELLC)
ANN FELDMAN
- 18 What's Happening in MATSOL's Special Interest Groups (SIGs)?
- 22 An Update on Adult Basic Education in Massachusetts
STEPHEN REUYS
- 24 A Visit to Northern New England TESOL (NNETESOL)
KATHY LOBO & MELISSA LATHAM KEH

Opinion

- 26 ESL Teachers Matter!
**PAUL ABRAHAM, JANET CHUMLEY,
MICHAELA COLOMBO & CHRISTINE
MONTECILLO LEIDER**

Articles

- 30 Using Classroom Walkthroughs to Improve Teaching and Learning in Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) Classrooms
PAUL S. HAUGHEY, ED.D.
- 34 Critical Pedagogy in the SEI Course: RETELLING It!
**FLORIS WILMA ORTIZ-MARRERO &
ANDREW W. HABANA HAFNER**
- 40 CAPturing Performance
**MELISSA LATHAM KEH & EMILY
SPITZMAN**
- 46 Teaching the Structure of a Persuasive Argument
MONICA FILGO
- 49 Teaching a Prescribed Text to Students Who Aren't Interested: A Task-Based Approach
ISLAM KARKOUR
- 54 Using a Professional Learning Community to Promote Word Consciousness for ELLs
ALICIA SERAFIN
- 56 Making Lessons More Effective for Adult Learners by Focusing on Fluency
MARILIA MARTINS

Reviews

- 60 *xEdu, An Educational "Accelerator" Sponsoring New Educational Technology*
reviewed by **EILEEN R. FELDMAN**
- 62 *Weaving It Together, 4th ed.*, by Milada Broukai
reviewed by **STEPHANIE N. BROWN**
- 64 *Everyone Speak! Neungyule Education Build & Grow*
reviewed by **STEPHEN BRAND**
- 66 *Newsela: Teaching Current Events in the ESL Classroom*
reviewed by **JASON DRINKWATER**

President's Message

November 14, 2016

**Dear Members, Colleagues, and Supporters,
I hope you are having a successful school year!**

As your new MATSOL President, I look forward to working with you to continue MATSOL's efforts as the leading organization for educators of English language learners in Massachusetts. Our mission is to support your work by providing professional resources and training, fostering the development of language-learning curricula, bringing a strong voice in advocacy, and promoting equity for teachers and students. The recent national election and subsequent political wrangling will no doubt impact us all in the coming months. It is critically important that we not lose sight of our commitment to our students and their families. MATSOL will continue to be an active and vocal supporter of their rights.



I urge you to take advantage of MATSOL's resources. On our website, you will find industry news, a calendar of events and meetings, updates on legislative and DESE initiatives, job listings, and a list of professional development programs that we offer for teachers, administrators, specialists, and support personnel. We are currently expanding our connections with community colleges, teacher education programs, and private and independent schools in an effort to respond to the needs of all students and educators throughout the state. Your continued membership and support are critical to maintaining and expanding our member services.

We are delighted to see so many of you taking the time and effort to share your thoughts and experiences with the MATSOL community!

In this issue of *Currents*, you can read about recent MATSOL events, as well as the activities of some of our sister organizations. I call your attention, especially, to the reports on recent staffing changes at MATSOL (p. 4), the ESL Model Curriculum Project (p. 6), two recent MATSOL-sponsored mini-conferences (pp. 10-11), and the progress of the LOOK Bill (p. 13) which, as of this writing, is still under consideration in the legislature. There is an important "opinion" piece (p. 26) about

the role of public school ESL teachers, as distinct from their colleagues in SEI classrooms. And there are articles (pp. 30-59) on a variety of topics— issues in teacher education, techniques that school administrators can use to promote effective teaching, and classroom strategies that our members have found useful in preK-12 and adult classrooms in Massachusetts and overseas. Finally, we have four review articles (pp. 60-67), covering online offerings as well as printed books and textbooks. We are delighted to see so many of you taking the time and effort to share your thoughts and experiences with the MATSOL community!

If you have ideas or suggestions that will help to further our work, please contact any Board member to discuss them.

The MATSOL Board encourages members to engage with us by submitting articles and news, attending MATSOL events, and volunteering for tasks and assignments that fit your time availability, talents, and interests. If you have ideas or suggestions that will help to further our work, please contact any Board member to discuss them. And please do not hesitate to reach out to me at any time.

I hope your holiday season was filled with joys and memorable moments and that the remainder of your academic year will be most prosperous! 🍀

With respect and gratitude,

Vula Roumis

MATSOL President

vroumis@matsol.org

Staffing Changes at MATSOL

Helen Solorzano EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

solorzano@matsol.org

In November, MATSOL hired Ann Feldman as our new Director of Professional Learning, with the job of overseeing our contractual services and professional development courses. Ann has been involved with MATSOL for many years as a member, volunteer, and board member. She brings a wealth of experience as a K-12 teacher and program director, teacher educator, and also (before entering the field) as a small business owner. As a MATSOL member, she founded and led our Low Incidence Special Interest Group and the MA English Learner Leadership Council (MELLC), a group for preK-12 program coordinators and directors.



Ann Feldman

Ann is filling the position formerly held by Paula Merchant, who has stepped down to pursue other opportunities. We extend our heartfelt appreciation to Paula for the enormous contributions she has made to our organization over the past 20+ years. Paula first became involved with MATSOL in 1993 as a volunteer, running our job bank. She went on to join the MATSOL Board, serving as President in 2000-2001. In 2003, she was hired as MATSOL's first Executive Director (and only paid staff member) and later moved into the position of Director of Professional Learning and Contracts. MATSOL has grown and thrived under her leadership, thanks to her deep content knowledge, her forward-thinking vision, and her fierce advocacy on behalf of our students and our field. Paula led many of the initiatives that have allowed MATSOL to grow in strength and influence, most recently the ESL Model Curriculum Unit project and the Six Standards Coaching project. We will miss her presence on our staff, but know that she will continue to be involved with MATSOL in other ways.




Paula Merchant

In addition, in accordance with MATSOL's 2014 Strategic Plan, which set a goal to "[i]ncrease and sustain paid positions . . . to support programs and activities," we have introduced one *new* staff position—that of Event & Conference Coordinator. Teresa Kochis, who has been hired to fill this position, will have primary responsibility for the logistical side of organizing MATSOL events and conferences. Teresa joined our staff last year as Administrative Assistant, and we are excited to have her move into this new responsibility.

We would also like to congratulate Emily Graham, our Registration Coordinator, who has just celebrated her fourth anniversary on the MATSOL staff. Many of you know Emily through our membership renewal and conference registration processes. We appreciate her skilled support for our members.

We are currently seeking a part-time Administrative Assistant to fill the position that Teresa Kochis has vacated. For details, please see our job posting on the MATSOL blog <http://www.matsol.org/matsolnews-blog>.

As an organization, MATSOL continues to grow and professionalize. As our activities increase, the organization has needed—and is now able to support—increased staffing. However, despite the addition of the Events Coordinator position, MATSOL continues to operate with a very small staff, all part-time, so the volunteer contributions of our board and members continue to be extremely important. 

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to Paula for the enormous contributions she has made to our organization over the past 20+ years.

The Next Generation ESL Model Curriculum and Resource Guide

HELEN SOLÓRZANO

solorzano@matsol.org

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MA DESE) has released its new *ESL Model Curriculum and Resource Guide* (MA DESE, July 2016), the result of a three-year project carried out in partnership with MATSOL. The project also received support from the Northeast Comprehensive Center/WestEd, the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST), and WIDA, and included participation by more than seventy educators from Massachusetts school districts and organizations, including many MATSOL members.



The goal of this huge endeavor was to “produce recommendations on ESL curriculum development, create Model Curriculum Units (MCUs) for the use of educators in Massachusetts, and share the process itself for future use by districts and schools.” The project yielded a number of important resources for ESL educators:

- A definition of the focus of ESL instruction in Massachusetts
- Templates for an ESL Model Curriculum unit and lesson plans
- A tool to help curriculum writers operationalize WIDA English Language Development standards within the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks
- Twelve ESL Model Curriculum units spanning grades K-12, which serve as exemplars of ESL units that incorporate best curricular practices and the latest research in language acquisition
- A Curriculum Resource Guide
- Unit rubrics for measuring the quality of ESL curricula
- Professional development and other supports for ESL cur-

riculum developers, including ESL Model Curriculum Unit Facilitator Training (ELS MCU Fact) to prepare educators to facilitate implementation of the ESL curriculum

All of the resources are available on the MA DESE website (see reference below).

THE CURRICULUM RESOURCE GUIDE

The Next Generation ESL Project: Curriculum Resource Guide (henceforth CRG) is an almost 200-page document that provides the theoretical underpinnings of the project (Section 1), defines the focus of ESL instruction in Massachusetts (Section 2), introduces a Collaboration Tool to use in developing Next Generation ESL units (Section 3), and outlines curriculum development on the unit and lesson level (Sections 4 and 5). It also addresses considerations for choosing topics for ESL curriculum (Section 6), and lists additional resources for curriculum development (Section 7).

Section 2, which defines the focus of ESL instruction, begins by distinguishing between English Language Development (ELD) in ESL, as opposed SEI instruction in content areas such as math, history, and science:

The goal of English as a second language (ESL) instruction in Massachusetts public schools is to advance English Learners' (ELs) language development and promote their academic achievement. English language proficiency includes social and academic language in listening, speaking, reading, and writing (WIDA, 2012). ESL instruction provides systematic, explicit, and sustained language instruction, and prepares students for general education by focusing on academic language while also attending to social instructional language. Effective ESL instruction supports student success in school, including improvement of ACCESS scores and acceleration of academic achievement. It also supports long-term goals such as college and career readiness. ESL instruction, with its own dedicated time and curriculum, is a required component of any program serving ELs in Massachusetts (Sheltered English Instruction, Two-Way Immersion, Transitional Bilingual Education). (CRG, p. 17)

Some guiding principles (CRG, p. 17-19) are as follows:

- ESL is its own subject matter, taught by a licensed ESL teacher.
- ESL instruction is based on the research, theory, and pedagogy of second language acquisition.

- ESL educators must be knowledgeable about academic language across disciplines, but cannot be expected to be experts in all content areas and standards.
- EL language development is the shared responsibility of ESL and other academic teachers.
- EL education must also include considerations of cultural knowledge and ways of being.
- Considerations must be made for special populations (newcomers, SLIFE, students with disabilities, long-term ELs, gifted and talented ELs, etc.)
- EL instruction incorporates multiple forms of assessment to measure student progress.

This section clarifies some common misconceptions about ESL instruction and offers example scenarios that show how ESL instruction may be organized in different contexts and different types of programs.

THE COLLABORATION TOOL

As one of its essential Theories of Action, the CRG states that “Shared responsibility, expertise, and collaboration leads to EL achievement. . . . By coordinating and collaborating in planning ESL and content curricula, educators will support one another, share unique fields of expertise . . . , and take collective responsibility for EL achievement.” (CRG, p. 11)

Collaboration between ESL and content-area instruction is reflected in the design of the MCUs, which focus on key uses of academic language, integrated into meaningful contexts from content area standards. To assist educators in developing new units, the program offers a Collaboration Tool, which is designed to “generate collaborative discussions and planning between content and ESL teachers” during unit creation. (CRG, p. 44)

The goal of [the project] was to “produce recommendations on ESL curriculum development, create Model Curriculum Units (MCUs), and share the process itself for future use.”


FOCUS LANGUAGE GOALS

The MCUs are built around Focus Language Goals (FLGs) that originate in WIDA's Key Uses of Academic Language—recount, explain, argue, and discuss (Lundgren, 2015). These are further refined into "Micro Functions." (For example, for the function argue there are microfunctions such as to define a problem, describe the solution, and justify the claim using evidence (CRG, pp. 50-51).) The macro and micro functions are realized through "Key Academic Practices" such as "engage with complex academic language" or through items from the state standards. These three elements are combined into Focus Language Goals such as

Recount by sequencing events in stories to communicate a context-specific meaning.
key use micro function key academic practice or CCSS Stem

These Focus Language Goals provide a framework for ESL MCUs.

MATSOL FOLLOW-UPS

MATSOL is taking steps to promote the Next Generation ESL Curriculum through presentations at our 2017 Conference and a series of informational sessions for the educational leaders in our MELLC group (see the MELLC report on pp 16-17 of this issue). We are in the process of putting together a Next Gen ESL Task Force to plan additional supports for Massachusetts educators who want to use this powerful new tool. We encourage MATSOL members to explore the Curriculum Resource Guide, Model Curriculum Units, and other related resources that are provided on the DESE website under the heading "Next Generation ESL Project" at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/curriculum.html>. 

REFERENCES

- Lundgren, C. (2015).** WIDA: Introducing the key uses of academic language Minnesota English Learner Education (MELED) Conference. Retrieved from <http://www.slideshare.net/MELEdConference/wida-introducing-the-key-uses-of-academic-language>
- MA DESE (July, 2016).** *Next generation ESL project: Model curriculum units (ESL MCUs)*. Retrieved from <http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/curriculum.html>
- WIDA (2012).** *English language development (ELD) standards*. Retrieved from <https://www.wida.us/standards/eld.aspx>

First Annual Community College Mini-Conference

JUANITA BRUNELLE

jbrunelle@matsol.org

On Friday, October 21, MATSOL sponsored its first annual Community College Mini-Conference, with an attendance of over forty faculty and staff representing eleven community colleges and sixteen other educational institutions. The conference was held at the Framingham campus of MassBay Community College. MassBay Professor Jennifer Nourse hosted the event and Dr. Christopher La Barbera, Dean of Humanities & Social Sciences, extended a warm welcome to the participants.

Workshops were organized and led by the Steering Committee of MATSOL's Community College ESL Faculty Network, on the following topics: intake, assessment, and placement; transitioning ESL students; advocating for our programs; and changes in our programs. There was lively discussions about all these issues!

Eileen Kelley and Vivian Leskes, both of Holyoke Community College, delivered a keynote address on Advocating for Community College ESL Programs. The day closed with an update from the Steering Committee and a raffle.

The members of the Steering Committee of the Community College ESL Faculty Network are

Darlene Furdock, Middlesex Community College

Eileen Kelley, Holyoke Community College

Bruce Riley, Cape Cod Community College

Madhu Sharma, Mt. Wachusett Community College

Juanita Brunelle, a member of the MATSOL Board, serves as MATSOL's liaison to the committee.

We look forward to offering this mini-conference again next year. 

First Annual Private Language School/Intensive English Program Mini-Conference

JOSHUA STONE

juastone05@gmail.com

Thank you to everyone who participated, presented, and networked at the first annual MATSOL Private Language Schools/Intensive English Programs Mini-Conference on Saturday, November 12, at Boston University. A great time was had by all as we gathered to share knowledge relating to English as a second language in private language schools in Massachusetts and beyond. We enjoyed talking about current and future trends in the industry and brainstorming about how we can better the education of our students and the industry as a whole.

We had 112 registered participants who participated in 31 sessions in five time slots. Sessions were 50 minutes in length and covered a variety of topics ranging from professional development for teachers, English for specific purposes, and publisher information sessions, just to name a few. We express our appreciation to Boston University's Center for English Language and Orientation Programs (CELOP) for hosting the event, to National Geographic Learning/Cengage Learning for providing lunch, and to Dunkin Donuts for sponsoring coffee and breakfast treats.



There was lots to talk about at the Private Language Schools Mini-Conference.

The conference was organized by the Private Language Schools steering committee: Joy MacFarland, Rachel Kadish, Sarah DePina, and Joshua Stone. A

big thank you to Helen Solórzano, Teresa Kochis, and MATSOL for their assistance in organizing and carrying out this special event. We hope to have small meet-ups throughout the year to continue the great conversation, to stay informed about what is happening in our industry, and to plan ways that we can make a positive contribution.

We had 112 registered participants who participated in 31 sessions in five time slots.

Finally, thanks to all the participants and presenters for your involvement. None of this would have been possible without your willingness to come together and share your knowledge and expertise. We hope to do this again next year! **C**

For more information about the Private Language Schools SIG, please go to our website: <http://www.matsol.org/private-language-schools>.

The LOOK Bill

["Language Opportunity for Our Kids"]

HELEN SOLÓRZANO

solorzano@matsol.org

In summer 2016, both houses of the Massachusetts legislature took action on the LOOK Bill, for which MATSOL was one of the leading sponsors. This bill gives school districts the flexibility to offer bilingual programming without the need for waivers, and also establishes a state Seal of Biliteracy. The Massachusetts state Senate passed the LOOK Bill unanimously with bipartisan support. During the debate, Senate Ways and Means Chair Karen Spilka and Senate Minority Leader Bruce Tarr both voiced their support of the bill—it is quite notable that leaders on both the Democratic and Republican side would speak in favor of a bill on the floor. Just a few weeks later, in the flurry of last minute activity, the House passed their version of the LOOK bill.

However, the House version is quite different from the Senate bill and does not include the Seal of Biliteracy. You can read the Senate bill here: <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/189/Senate/S2395> and the House bill here: <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/189/House/H4566>.

This is the first time in fifteen years that legislators have taken action to recognize the value of bilingualism and address our one-size-fits-all English learner education mandate. We thank Senator Sal DiDomenico, Senator Karen Spilka, Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz, Representative Jeffrey Sanchez, Representative Kay Khan, and Representative

Alice Peisch for their leadership and support of language learning in Massachusetts. Senators Sal DiDomenico and Sonia Chang-Diaz published a very inspiring article about the need for flexibility in educating English language learners. You

This is the first time in fifteen years that legislators have taken action to recognize the value of bilingualism and address our one-size-fits-all English learner education mandate.

can find the article here: <http://commonwealthmagazine.org/education/flexibility-needed-in-educating-english-language-learners>.

Although we are disappointed that the two versions of the bill are different, we are hopeful that the Senate and the House will be able to reconcile the bill and include the Seal of Biliteracy, so that it can be sent to the Governor for his signature before the legislative session ends in December.

The Language Opportunity Coalition will continue to advocate for passage of the LOOK Bill and the Seal of Biliteracy. Through this project MATSOL, the Massachusetts Foreign Language Association (MaFLA), and the Massachusetts Association for Bilingual Education (MABE) have had the opportunity to come together in an historic and productive alliance that has built connections between language educators and that benefits all our student populations. We will continue to update you with news as we have it.

Additional information about the LOOK Bill can be found on the Language Opportunity website: www.languageopportunity.org.

MATSOL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AWARDED FOR ADVOCACY WORK

For their work with the Language Opportunity Coalition to advocate for the LOOK Bill and the Seal of Biliteracy, Helen Solórzano, MATSOL Executive Director, and Phyllis Hardy, Massachusetts Association of Bilingual Education (MABE), were honored with the Friends of Foreign Language Award presented by the Massachusetts Foreign Language Association (MaFLA). They received the award at the MaFLA Business Meeting on November 18 at the ACTFL 2016 Convention & World Language Expo in Boston. **C**



Phyllis Hardy, MABE (left) and Helen Solórzano, MATSOL (right), receive MaFLA's Friends of Foreign Language Award from Nicole Sherf (center).

Join a MATSOL Sub-committee or Task Force

For the latest listing of opportunities, please go to our new “Get Involved” webpage at <http://www.matsol.org/get-involved-with-matsol>.

Submit to MATSOL Publications

MATSOL E-BULLETIN

The MATSOL E-Bulletin is published monthly. It includes short (one-paragraph) notices relevant to ELL/ESOL education in Massachusetts. Submission deadline: the 25th of each month for publication in the first week of the next month. For more details, see <http://www.matsol.org/matsol-e-bulletins>.

MATSOL CURRENTS

There's a lot going on in the world of TESOL and ELL education, and we'd like all of it to be reflected in *Currents*! We want reviews of books and materials, reports on meetings and events, and articles on everything of interest to MATSOL members: adult education, PreK-12 education, bilingual and dual-language programs, community outreach, ESL in higher education, educator-preparation programs, professional-development initiatives, Intensive English Institutes, private language schools, teaching ideas, profiles of and interviews with significant figures, and discussion of issues that our members should be aware of. We'd also love to publish stories from students—about their adjustment to life in New England and their experiences learning English in our English-language programs and elsewhere.

We welcome articles with scholarly content as well as those that share interesting experiences or give practical advice. If you have something to share, don't hesitate to send it to us at currents@matsol.org. We will work with you to get your article or report into good shape for publication. For more details and a copy of our submission guidelines, see <http://www.matsol.org/matsol-currents> or write to the editor, Mary Clark, at mclark@matsol.org. 

A Report from the Massachusetts English Learner Leadership Council (MELLC)

ANN FELDMAN

afeldman@matsol.org



The Massachusetts English Learner Leadership Council (MELLC) meets four times a year at the Double Tree by Hilton Hotel in Leominster. Our membership is made up of approximately 85 district leaders of K-12 English learner education. According to MELLC's Strategic Plan of September 2015, the purpose of our organization is (1) to stay informed and provide support regarding best practices, problem solving and leadership training, and (2) engage in advocacy for our ELs and their teachers, administrators, and families.


The number one request from our constituents for the 2016-17 school year was for information about the state's new Next Generation ESL Curriculum Project (See the article by Helen Solórzano on p. 6 of this issue.) Our first meeting of the year, on October 14, featured a presentation by Boni-esther Enquist and Anne Dolan in which they walked us through *the Next Generation ESL Project: Curriculum Resource*

Guide (MA DESE, July 2016) and explained how the WIDA philosophy, standards, tools, and resources are integrated into this project. We then engaged in an interactive activity in which participants were asked to choose one of WIDA's "Essential Actions" (Gottlieb, 2013), along with an item from the *Resource Guide's* Theory of Action, and a Characteristic of *Next Generation ESL* and find connections among the three using sentence frames. As a follow-up activity, we participated in a RAFT activity (*RAFT | Reading Rockets*, n.d.) that required us to choose a stakeholder group such as the School Committee, administrators, ESL teachers, content teachers or specialist teachers and create an agenda for an

The number one request from our constituents . . . was for information about the state's new Next Generation ESL Curriculum Project.

informational session to introduce them to the *Resource Guide*.

Also in this productive October meeting, we heard from Sibel Hughes of the Office of English Language Acquisition and Academic Achievement (OELAAA) with updates about the newest version of the state's guidance document on the *Identification, Assessment, Placement, and Reclassification of English Language* (MA DESE, August 2016). Finally, Bonnie Baer-Simahk, from Fitchburg Public Schools, gave us an introduction to the new Six Standards of Effective Pedagogy coaching initiative (Teemont, 2015).

For our next meeting, scheduled for December 9, 2016, we will delve more deeply into the *Next Generation ESL Resource Guide*, using a jigsaw technique. Representatives who have started to implement this curriculum project will serve on a panel to talk about their successes and challenges. 

For additional information about MELLC meetings, please go to the MELLC website: <http://www.matsol.org/mellc-k-12-directors>.

REFERENCES

- MA DESE (July 2016)** *Next generation ESL project: Curriculum resource guide*. Retrieved from http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/guidance_laws.html
- MA DESE (August 2016)** *Guidance on identification, assessment, placement, and reclassification of English learners*. Retrieved from http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/guidance_laws.html
- Gottlieb, Margo (2013)** *Essential actions: A handbook for implementing WIDA's Framework for English Language Development Standards*. Retrieved from <https://www.wida.us/get.aspx?id=712>
- RAFT | Reading Rockets (n.d.)** Retrieved from <http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/raft>
- Teemont, Annela (2015)** Living critical sociocultural theory in classroom practice. *Minnetesol Journal* Fall, 2015. Retrieved from <http://minnetesoljournal.org/journal/fall-2015>
- WIDA (2012)** *Amplification of the English language development standards, kindergarten-grade 12*. Retrieved from <https://www.wida.us/standards/eld.aspx>

What's Happening in MATSOL's Special Interest Groups (SIGs)?

MATSOL's Special Interest Groups (SIGs) are member-led groups formed around areas of common interest:

The Community College ESL Faculty Network

English Language Educators of the Cape & Islands

Low Incidence Programs

Private Language Schools

Students with Limited/Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE)

Teacher Educators

SIG membership is open to all MATSOL members, at no charge.

SIG membership is open to all MATSOL members, at no charge. In addition to face-to-face and online meetings, most SIGs have e-lists to facilitate communication between members. For instructions about how to join a SIG or a SIG e-list, please go to our website <http://www.matsol.org/member-groups>.

Here's what's happening in MATSOL's SIGs:

THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE ESL FACULTY NETWORK

The Community College SIG spent the summer and fall planning for our October 21 mini-conference. (See our report on p. 10) This successful event took place at Mass Bay Community College, and we anticipate that it will be an annual event. We will also be active in planning higher education workshops for MATSOL's Annual Conference this coming June. Discussion is underway on how to expand our membership and stay connected with community college faculty and staff across Massachusetts. For further information, please write Juanita Brunelle at jbrunelle@matsol.org.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATORS OF THE CAPE & ISLANDS (ELE-C&I)

ELE-C&I is a regional organization of PreK-12 ELL educators on Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket. Our goal is to provide ongoing support to EL

educators in our area as they implement state and federal mandates for English learner education. Membership includes the following school districts: Barnstable, Bourne, Dennis-Yarmouth, Falmouth, Martha's Vineyard, Mashpee, Monomoy, Nantucket, Nauset Regional, Provincetown, and Sandwich. We meet four times a year on Cape Cod. Here is a summary of recent meetings:

[The goal of ELE-C&I] is to provide ongoing support to EL educators in our area as they implement state and federal mandates for English learner education.

June 2016: We listened to member presentations on Family Involvement and Building Community at the Building Level, and read Margarita Calderón's article "A Whole School Approach to English Learners." In the afternoon we heard a highlight from the MATSOL Conference called "Common Core Standards in Diverse Classrooms: Essential Practices for Developing Academic Language and Literacy," by Drs. Susan O'Hara, University of California Davis & Bob Pritchard, Sacramento State University.

September 2016: We met at the Cape Cod Collaborative to explore the following topics: SLIFE students, Intake Procedures, Building Community in Buildings, and Sustainable Family Involvement. We introduced our recently created website for sharing materials, <https://sites.google.com/a/dy-regional.k12.ma.us/elect>. Members would like to see more ELL professional development offered locally so as to avoid having to travel off the Cape.

November 2016: Sara Nino, ELL/SPED Coordinator for MA DESE's OELAAA Office, presented a workshop entitled "Sharing Responsibilities For and Distinguishing Among Our Language Learners, our Students with Disabilities, and Those that are Both." We then spent some time reviewing MA DESE's new *Educator Effectiveness Guidebook for Inclusive Practice*.

For further information please contact any member of our Steering Committee: Tricia Leon Finan (leonfinp@dy-regional.k12.ma.us), Christine Nicholson (cnicholson@falmouth.k12.ma.us), or Mary Ellen Caesar (mcaesar@doe.mass.edu).

REFERENCES

Calderón, Margarita (2016) A whole-school approach to English learners. *Educational Leadership* 73.5. Retrieved from http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational_leadership/feb16/vol73/num05/A_Whole-School_Approach_to_English_Learners.aspx

MA DESE (October, 2016) *Educator effectiveness guidebook for inclusive practice*. Retrieved from <http://www.doe.mass.edu/eval/guidebook>

LOW INCIDENCE PROGRAMS

The Low-Incidence SIG is a support group for MATSOL members who are working with ELLs in low-incidence school districts.

Activities include the following:

- sharing resources such as forms, parent manuals, translation resources, and curriculum resources
- exploring topics such as second language acquisition vs. language disability, language assessment testing, getting support from administrators, and CPR compliance issues
- getting updates on DESE initiatives and policy changes.

For more information about the Low-Incidence SIG, please go to our website, <http://www.matsol.org/low-incidence-programs>.

PRIVATE LANGUAGE SCHOOLS

The Private Language School SIG spent this past summer and fall preparing for our inaugural Mini-Conference, which was held at Boston University on Nov 12. (See our report on p. 11) We promoted the conference at regional meetings of the Association of International Educators (NAFSA), at the English USA Stakeholders Conference, and in the Boston Academic Directors group. We were pleasantly surprised by the number of proposals we received and by the number of participants who registered. This was a very successful first event, and we hope it will be the first of many!

For information about how to join MATSOL's Private Language School SIG, please write Joy MacFarland at joymacfarland@gmail.com.

SLIFE

MATSOL's SLIFE SIG met on Monday, October 24, from 10:30 AM-12 PM at Milford

High School in Milford, MA. The meeting was facilitated by Jenn Noorjanian, SLIFE SIG Chair, David Valade, DESE Urban ELL Coordinator, and Sara Nino, DESE EL-SWD Coordinator. Jenn Noorjanian began the meeting by providing historical context for the SLIFE SIG and sharing our vision for the future of this group. Then David Valade and Sara Nino gave a presentation on the SLIFE Guidance document (MA DESE, 2015), the SLIFE Expansion Project Charter (MA DESE, forthcoming), and the significance of SIMS SLIFE Field 41 data collection. The SLIFE Expansion Project will include Math and Literacy Assessment protocols. Since there is no one assessment available, the document will provide information on how to locate and/or develop appropriate assessments. DESE's Office of English Language Acquisition and Academic Achievement (OELAA) will be working with a DESE data team to identify who are SLIFE, how many SLIFE students there are in the Commonwealth, and where they are located.

For information about how to join MATSOL's SLIFE SIG, please contact Jenn Noorjanian at jnoorjanian@matsol.org. Upcoming meetings will take place on March 13, April 10, and May 8, from 10:30am-12:00pm at the Shrewsbury Town Hall, 100 Maple Avenue, Shrewsbury, MA.


REFERENCES

MA DESE (December 2015) *Massachusetts students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE): Definition and guidance*. Retrieved from <http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/SLIFE-Guidance.docx>

MA DESE (forthcoming) *The SLIFE extension project*.

TEACHER EDUCATORS

The Teacher Educator SIG meets every month via Go-to-Meeting. This fall's meetings (9/26 and 10/17) were dedicated to drafting an opinion piece about the role of the ESL teacher ("ESL Teachers Matter!"), which is included in this issue of *Currents* (p. 26). The Teacher Educator SIG is hoping to contribute a column to each edition of *Currents* with the goal of addressing concerns that we hear from the field. Our objective will be to identify issues that are relevant to teacher education and consider how MATSOL and its Teacher Ed SIG might provide support and advocacy for Massachusetts ELs and EL Educators.

For further information, please write to teacheredsig@matsol.org. Our next meetings are scheduled for January 23 and February 27 

An Update on Adult Basic Education in Massachusetts

STEPHEN REUYS

PUBLIC POLICY CO-CHAIR, MA COALITION FOR ADULT EDUCATION (MCAE)

reuys@verizon.net

The Adult Basic Education (ABE) system of Massachusetts, under the direction of the state's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)/Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS), provides classes in ESOL, basic literacy, high school equivalency preparation, math, citizenship, college and career readiness, and other areas for adult learners throughout the state. Recent news items include the following:

- The state's FY 2017 budget, which was approved by the legislature this past summer, funded the ABE line item (7035-0002) at \$29,468,517. This represents a \$1,780,480 cut from the \$31,249,000 that was budgeted last year (though that figure was later cut to \$30,749,000 in the round of "9C" cuts made by the Governor in January, 2016).

Data compiled by MCAE shows that, when adjusted for inflation, there has been a \$12.5 million "cut" in ABE funding over the past sixteen years. The result: fewer students served, high levels of teacher turnover, eroded effectiveness of services, and a concomitant reduction in positive results for our undereducated and limited proficient adult students.

MCAE is coordinating statewide efforts by students, staff, and others to advocate for increased funding and a recognition of the importance of ABE services as part of the Commonwealth's systems of education and workforce development. For the latest information on this year's budget request, along with information about when and how to contact legislators, please go to the MCAE website, <http://www.mcae.net>, and sign up to receive MCAE News and Alerts.

- At the federal level, new regulations have been issued for implemen-

tation of the recently-passed Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). MA DESE, which oversees our ABE system, will be issuing new open-and-competitive Requests for Proposals for program funding sometime in the next fiscal year. While we are pleased that funding for the federal ABE system has been reauthorized, MCAE and other ABE advocates are concerned that the new regulations, under which programs will be assessed largely on the basis of how well their students achieve employment-related goals, may result in programs opting to serve primarily higher-level students who have a greater likelihood of achieving these goals, to the detriment of the beginning and lower-level students who need our services the most. **C**

A Visit to Northern New England TESOL (NNETESOL)

KATHY LOBO

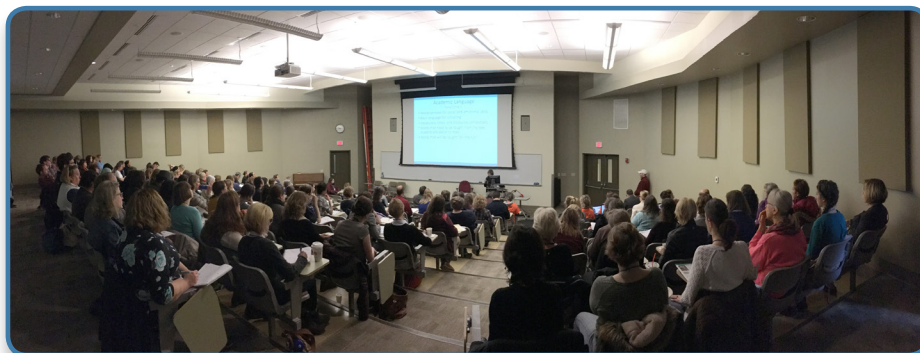
klobo@matsol.org

MELISSA LATHAM KEH

mlathamkeh@matsol.org

On November 5, MATSOL Board members Melissa Keh and Kathy Lobo drove to Gorham, Maine, to attend the annual conference of Northern New England TESOL. NNE TESOL is a tri-state TESOL affiliate that provides support for English language professionals throughout northern New England. The venue for the conference changes each year, with each state taking a turn—first Maine, then Vermont, next New Hampshire, and then back to Maine again. Since this is the third time that Kathy has attended the NNETESOL Fall Conference, she has been able to experience all three states and marvel year after year at the dazzling fall colors that line the highway on the drive north. Given this year's setting in Maine, Melissa was able to bring her son for a visit with his grandparents while she attended the conference.

Margarita Calderón's keynote address, entitled "Teaching Reading Comprehension to ELLs," walked attendees through evidence-based instructional strategies that can provide targeted assistance when comprehension breaks down. The last ten minutes of the presentation focused on the familiar Seven Steps Protocol for which Professor Calderón is well known.



Margarita Calderón addresses a rapt audience at NNETESOL.

Following the keynote, there were about forty talks and workshops to choose from, spread evenly over four session times—two before lunch and two after lunch. We had lunch with conference attendees and local students from the university in one of the university's dining facilities. Between the two of us we attended the following sessions:

“Would You Like Some Useful Feedback?”

“Making Meaning: Reflective Writing Practice for International Students”

“Exploring School-College Partnerships for Mutual Learning”

“WIDA Differentiation for Linguistically Diverse Students using ACCESS 2.0 Domain Scores”

“International Voices: Creating a Literacy Journal for Second Language Writers”


“Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching and the GO TO Strategies”

“Games in the ESOL Classroom”



Kathy Lobo poses with Mararita Calderón.

We found that attending a conference with a “conference buddy” is a good way to double the fun by sharing and debriefing on all that was presented and learned. The next NNETESOL Conference will be held on Saturday, November 4th, 2017, at the University of Vermont, Burlington, VT.

We are already in the midst of planning our own MATSOL Conference, scheduled for Thursday and Friday, June 1st and 2nd, 2017, with preconference institutes on Wednesday, May 31st, at the Sheraton Hotel in Framingham, Massachusetts. TESOL2017 will be held in Seattle, Washington, March 21-24. Consider joining us at both these conferences for some learning, sharing, and fun! 

ESL Teachers Matter!

Paul Abraham SIMMONS COLLEGE

paul.abraham@simmons.edu

Janet Chumley SIMMONS COLLEGE

janet.chumley@simmons.edu

Michaela Colombo UMASS LOWELL

michaela_wymancolombo@uml.edu

Christine Montecillo Leider BOSTON UNIVERSITY

montecil@bu.edu



Paul Abraham



Janet Chumley



Christine Montecillo Leider

In 2012, when the U.S. Department of Justice found that Massachusetts had failed to take appropriate action to “overcome the language barriers experienced by ELLs by not defining and mandating the preparation and training for teachers” (McCarthy, 2011), the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MA DESE) mandated that all in-service core content teachers must obtain a Sheltered English Instruction (SEI) endorsement. In 2014, this endorsement was added to the list of initial licensure requirements. SEI endorsement is earned through completion of a course that tries to prepare content teachers to make their subject matter accessible to English Learners (ELs) at all levels of proficiency and to teach academic language along with academic content. As of early 2016, almost 37,000 Massachusetts educators had earned the endorsement.

As teacher educators and members of the steering committee for the MATSOL Teacher Educator special interest group (SIG), we applaud this movement to make teachers responsible for language development in their content area. However, we are left wondering who, under this new framework, is ultimately responsible for the language development of our ELs? Can this wide distribution of responsibility for language instruction meet the needs of *all* ELs, including subpopulations such as newcomers, students with limited or interrupted education (SLIFE), and ELs with learning disabilities? What is the role of the ESL teacher and how does it differ from that of the core-subject teachers who have been SEI endorsed? Who is responsible to teach our students the language and skills that fall outside any particular

core-subject-matter discourse? Who focuses on oral language learning and the language of social communication? Who is responsible to provide schools with deep knowledge about language and second language acquisition?

We have no quarrel with the underlying philosophy of SEI instruction—namely, that language development must be supported throughout the school day. We agree that SEI teachers must adopt pedagogical strategies that support academic language development along with core academic content, and must find ways to make their curriculum accessible

to all children, including those who come from other language backgrounds. However, SEI is not a substitute for ESL instruction, which focuses specifically on the development of English. Like content-area teachers in math, science, or history, ESL teachers have a deep knowledge of their subject matter, which, in this case, is the English language, the process of language acquisition, and methods of teaching English to ELs. Although SEI-endorsed teachers play a valuable role in supporting the development of language across the curriculum, their preparation to teach language is in no way equivalent to that of the licensed ESL Teacher.


While we applaud the move to equip all teachers with the dispositions and strategies to work effectively with ELs, the ever-growing number of ELs in public schools means that the need for fully-licensed ESL specialists has grown, as well. In fact, the pressure to produce large numbers of ESL specialists has prompted MA DESE to fast-track ESL licensure, allowing practicing teachers to obtain an ESL license simply by taking a test and providing evidence of a practicum experience. This fast-track pathway to licensure does not provide schools and districts with the highly trained ESL teachers their students need. We see a trend emerging in which districts are asking SEI-endorsed core-content teachers to take on an ESL role that goes far beyond their preparation. We worry that Massachusetts may be unintentionally replicating the “submersion” model, in which ELs sink or swim in content classes and never receive the focused support in English language development that they require to succeed academically. Our concerns are especially serious for EL sub-populations that we mentioned earlier—our newcomers, SLIFE students, and students with special needs.

What is the role of the ESL teacher and how does it differ from that of the core-subject teachers who have been SEI endorsed?

In its *Guidance on Identification, Assessment, Placement, and Reclassification of English Learners* (August 2016, p. 16), MA DESE asserts the need to include “systematic, explicit, and sustained development of English as a Second language (ESL)” in all district programs that enroll any number of ELs. However, we believe that, in addition to describing the content of ESL instruction, DESE, along with MATSOL and MATSOL members, needs to reaffirm the essential role of ESL teachers, who have completed rigorous preparation programs that equip them with deep knowledge about how language functions, how it develops, and how it supports content learning.

SEI is not a substitute for ESL instruction, which focuses specifically on the development of English.

We also believe that expectations for SEI-endorsed core-content teachers need to be clarified. Core-content area teachers play a vital role in making academic content accessible to ELs, but, except for those at the highest levels of English proficiency, they cannot provide all the language supports that ELs need. This support is the responsibility of the ESL teacher. Core teachers and ESL teachers play important, but very different, roles. We need both of them, working together, to ensure the success of ELs in Massachusetts schools.

We welcome responses from teacher educators, SEI-endorsed teachers, and ESL teachers. Please e-mail comments or questions to teacheredsig@matsol.org. 

Editor's Note: MA DESE has recently released the Next Generation ESL Project: Curriculum Resource Guide (MA DESE, July 2016), which was developed in partnership with MATSOL as part of its project to develop ESL Model Curriculum Units. The guide addresses some of the issues that are raised in this article, especially the importance of ESL and the respective roles of ESL and SEI teachers. See the article about the Next Generation Curriculum on pg. 6 of this issue.

REFERENCES

MA DESE (2013) *RETELL: Rethinking equity and teaching for English Language Learners-Frequently asked questions*. Retrieved from <http://www.doe.mass.edu/retell/faq.xlsx>

MA DESE (July 2016) *Next generation ESL project: Curriculum resource guide.*

Retrieved from http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/guidance_laws.html

MA DESE (August 2016) *Guidance on identification, assessment, placement, and reclassification of English learners.* Retrieved from <http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/Guidance.docx>

McCarthy, E. H. (2011, July 22) EEOA review of MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. [Letter from the Department of Justice to the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education] Retrieved from <http://www.edweek.org/media/eeoacompliance-05mass.pdf>

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Paul Abraham is a Professor of Education and Director of the MATESL Program at Simmons College. He earned his master's degree in TESL at BU and his doctorate from Harvard. His teaching focuses on research, curriculum, and L2 literacy; his research focuses on the interface of ESL and language-based disability, and the application of research to practice.

Janet Chumley is an Associate Professor of Practice in the MATESL Program at Simmons College. She has a Master's degree in TESL from BU. She oversees clinical programming and teaches courses in English grammar, sociolinguistics, and the structure of English for reading teachers.

Michaela Colombo is an Associate Professor and Faculty Chair in the Graduate School of Education at UMass Lowell. She earned her master's degree and doctorate from UMass Lowell, with a focus on improving instruction for ELs. Her research and teaching is concerned with the preparation of content-area teachers to work effectively with ELs.

Christine Leider is a Clinical Assistant Professor of Language Education and Director of the Bilingual Education Program at Boston University. Her teaching and research focuses on language and literacy development for bilingual and immigrant children.

Using Classroom Walkthroughs to Improve Teaching and Learning in Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) classrooms

PAUL S. HAUGHEY, ED.D.

phaughey@bmrds.net



Effective instructional leadership is a central responsibility for principals, assistant principals, and department heads. Research shows that the principal is the chief driver of instructional improvement in high-performing schools (Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2007).

One essential component of instructional leadership is the interaction that principals have with teachers about their classroom practice. So in my first year as principal of Millville Elementary School, my primary goal was to establish a high rate of visibility throughout the school by making sure that teachers, staff and students saw me in the classrooms. I hoped to involve teachers as much as possible in conversations about their classroom practices and the needs of our students.

One practice I adopted was the classroom “walkthrough,” in which the principal or other administrator visits the classroom for five to fifteen minutes to identify key ingredients that make a difference in student success (David, 2007/2008; Johnston, 2003; Kachur, Stout, & Edwards, 2010). Observations are centered around a list of “look for’s”—specific elements of effective instruction that have been collectively identified by the principal and the teachers and that have been agreed upon during a pre-conference meeting between the principal and the teacher to be observed. The list should contain a clear description of specific observable behaviors, including instructional strategies, learning activities, behavioral outcomes, artifacts, routines, and practices. These are what the administrator will observe and record during the walkthrough.

Over the past couple of years, many of our faculty at Millville Elementary have taken the MA DESE's SEI Teacher Endorsement course—often called the “RETELL” course (Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners). One of the things I wanted to know was whether the teachers were using the instructional techniques they had learned in the course, and how those techniques were working in their classrooms. I wanted to support the teachers and help them to do the best job they could in their delivery of SEI teaching practices to English Language Learners (ELLs).

As I conducted my walkthroughs, I was pleased to see that the RETELL course had had a noticeable effect on teacher morale in our school. Faculty members who had taken the course demonstrated an increased awareness of ELLs and their background experiences, and they had gained a new appreciation of the importance of celebrating their students' cultures. For example, many teachers had had their students create flags and had hung the flag of each student's country of origin from their classroom ceiling(s).

As I conducted my walkthroughs, I was pleased to see that the RETELL course had had a noticeable effect on teacher morale in our school.

I also witnessed several SEI teaching strategies in action. Teachers were setting up predictable classroom routines by implementing strategies such as Calderón's (2011) “seven steps of vocabulary development,” a technique that they had learned in the RETELL course for introducing new vocabulary. These routines were helping to lower the students' affective filters and increasing their comfort level and willingness to participate in class. The teachers were also using “read-alouds,” another strategy from the RETELL course, in which pairs of students read aloud to one another and work together to review what they have read. This technique helped to promote teamwork, collaboration, and core values such as respect and responsibility. The students were improving their social skills and their ability to converse with one another and with the teacher.


In post-walkthrough discussions and during faculty meetings throughout the fall and winter months, I made it a point to revisit another SEI concept—differentiation through tiered instruction. To differentiate their writing instruction, the teachers began using “cut and grow” writing exercises, in which students “use scissors

to cut apart sections of their first draft and insert additional words, sentences, or other details before pasting/taping it back together and writing a final draft" (PETALLs, "Writing and Discussion Strategies"). As the year progressed, the teachers developed a variety of strategies to increase student participation and inclusion of all students and, over time, the students began to be able to differentiate their own learning according to what each one needed.

As a result of explicit instruction using the vocabulary and discourse techniques that the teachers had learned in the RETELL course, vocabulary gaps for our ELLs gradually decreased, and their reading skills began to build upon their oral language development. The students gradually acquired a deeper and richer vocabulary and found new confidence in their reading fluency and comprehension. I also noticed increased sophistication in the student conversations I observed with partners, in small groups, and with the teacher. But what *most* impressed me was the fact that the SEI teaching strategies were proving helpful to *all* the students, not just the ELLs. Teachers of ELLs were making the same observation during our classroom walkthrough debriefing sessions.

My classroom walkthroughs were an invaluable tool in encouraging conversations around ELL students and their needs, and reinforcing what the teachers had learned in the RETELL course. I, as principal, became more keenly aware of curriculum gaps and overlaps, and what sorts of professional development might be needed for our faculty and staff in the area of Sheltered English Immersion. The faculty and staff, in turn, reported that they had gained a common language and a set of common understandings around ELLs and their needs, and they had become more reflective about their teaching and more open to sharing the best practices that they had learned in the RETELL course. Finally, and most importantly, the ELL students who entered our school reported a sense of belonging and care that permitted them to make mistakes and learn English in a place that was safe and promoted good learning habits.

As a result of explicit instruction using the vocabulary and discourse techniques that the teachers had learned in the RETELL course, vocabulary gaps for our ELLs gradually decreased.

This is not to say that there were no growing pains. There were growing pains for all of us — too many to list within this article. However, we all had the same goal: to create an atmosphere where people trusted one another, learned together, and grew professionally. In this endeavor, the RETELL course and my classroom walkthroughs were important pieces that helped us identify and encourage effective teaching practices. 

REFERENCES

- Calderón, Margarita (2011)** *Teaching reading & comprehension to English Learners K-5*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
- Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, (2007)**. Using the classroom walk-through as an instructional leadership strategy. Retrieved from <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED495741>
- David, Jane L. (December 2007/January 2008,.)**. What research says about classroom walk-throughs. *ACSD, Educational Leadership*, 65:4, pp. 81-82.
- Johnston, H. (2003)**. Leadership by walking around: Walkthroughs and instructional improvement. *The Principals' Partnership*. Retrieved from <http://www.principalpartnership.com/feature203.html>
- Kachur, Donald S., Stout, Judith A. & Edwards, Claudia L. (2010)**. Classroom walk-throughs to improve teaching and learning. London: Routledge.
- PETALLs (n.d.)** Preparing excellent teachers of all languages: Writing and discussion strategies. Retrieved from <http://petalls.weebly.com/writing--discussion-strategies.html>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul S. Haughey, Ed.D., is an active member of MATSOL. He has over 26 years of experience in the field of education (preschool through graduate school) and currently works as a PreK-5 principal for the Millville Elementary School, which is part of the Blackstone-Millville Regional School District.

Critical Pedagogy in the SEI Course: RETELLing It!

FLORIS WILMA ORTIZ-MARRERO

fortiz@westfield.ma.edu

ANDREW HABANA HAFNER

ahafner@westfield.ma.edu

SEI has made me see that ELLs are really learning almost two languages: a social language and an academic language.

“Jennifer,” a pre-service teacher candidate



To provide Massachusetts teachers with a foundation in ESL pedagogy, the state-mandated SEI course offers an introduction to the theory of language acquisition, along with practical strategies for the instruction of English Language Learners (ELLs), and an overview of the WIDA framework (WIDA, 2012). However, after three years of work on Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) courses at Westfield State University (WSU), we see a need to be more intentional and critical with the sociocultural context of ELL education, and the cultural politics intertwined with language. In this article, we will ask, “How can the SEI course apply a social justice and equity lens to English Language Learner education?”

A CRITICAL PEDAGOGY LENS

Shor (1992) describes schools as “one of the several agencies to reproduce the dominant ideology that mirrors society’s economic and political agenda” (p. 175). Critical Pedagogy counters this tradition and promotes social justice and equity through a critical examination of domination and subordination in society (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1983). In a critical pedagogy framework, teachers and students engage in dialogue to deconstruct the relations of power that are expressed in language about race, gender, class, and other social categories.

As we prepare predominantly white, English-speaking, female pre-service teacher candidates at WSU, we are working to raise their level of consciousness about who they are, how they see the world, and how they view ELLs. Through

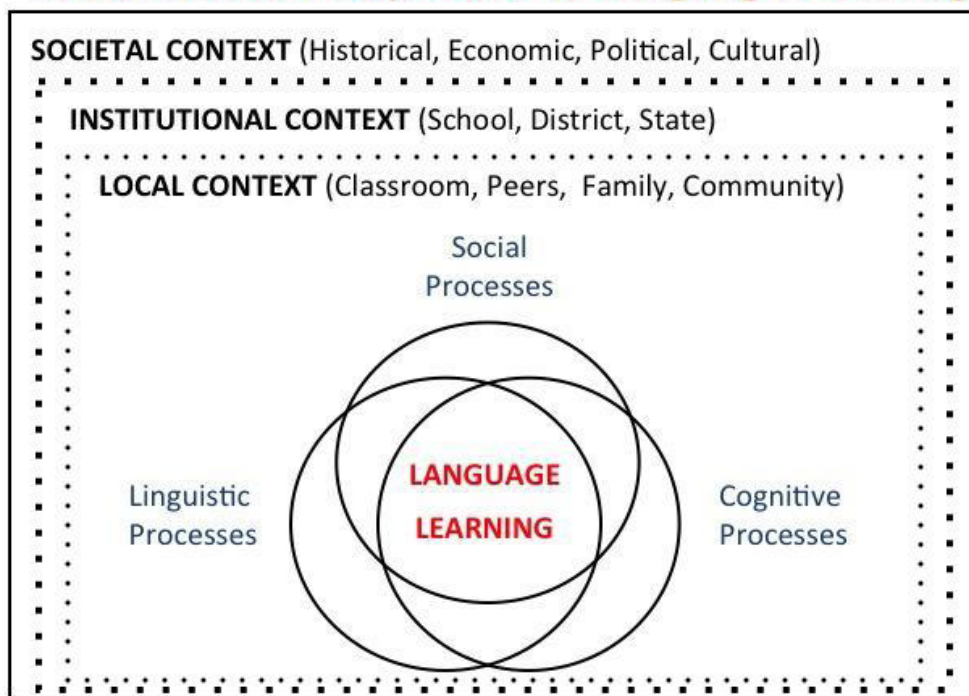
our on-going research project, *RETELLing It!*, we are studying how the integration of critical texts into the SEI course can give our pre-service teachers a stronger sociocultural perspective on language learning.

Our SEI course aims to add a critical praxis (theory-practice) approach to the core skills, knowledge, and dispositions that pre-service teachers need for working with ELLs. This theoretical framework challenges our pre-service teachers to consider *what* ideas and *whose* ideas are communicated or dismissed through language and texts. We introduce the Sociocultural Perspective of Language Learning model (Fig. 1) to integrate critical pedagogical perspectives with key principles of second language acquisition theory. This model guides our discussion of the language-teaching practices found in standard curricula and instruction. For example, we point out that the narrative of America's "discovery" can be taught in critical ways to recognize the unheard voices and narratives in our history. In this way, we connect language learning to the broad societal, historical, and political context that reflects our identity as a nation of immigrants.

Figure 1. Sociocultural Perspective of Language Learning in SEI
[Hafner & Ortiz, 2016]

Critical Text & Framework in SEI

Sociocultural Perspective of Language Learning



CRITICAL TEXTS & PRAXIS WORK

To begin and end the course, we show the independent short film *Immersion* (Levien, 2007), which tells the story of Moises, a Spanish-speaking immigrant ELL struggling with high-stakes assessment and an unsupportive school setting. The film tells a personal story that evokes empathy and advocacy for ELL students, their families, and their communities. In short glimpses, we see that Moises has strong family support with high hopes for his great math skills on his first high-stakes test. Beyond his interest in learning, his classroom efforts draw on cultural-linguistic supports from L1 peers, dictionaries, and visual aids. Yet his teacher has no apparent strategies or even intentions to scaffold Moise's explanation of his correct answer. Rather, he is laughed at for not yet being able to speak English and is left with a feeling of marginalization when a fellow newcomer invites him to skip the test and go for ice cream.

The film *[Immersion]* tells a personal story that evokes empathy and advocacy for ELL students, their families, and their communities.

Moises and the sociocultural framework follow us throughout the course, as we use critical texts to teach SEI strategies and teaching practices. For example, to teach word mapping (Peregoy & Boyle, 2013), we use the "illegal" vs. "undocumented" distinction; to teach partner reading (MA DESE, 2015), we use "Good Morning Boys and Girls" (Bigler, 2005), a text that focuses on gender stereotypes, along with "Read the Words, Read the World" (Walstram, R., n.d.). To teach reciprocal teaching (MA DESE, 2014), we use a 2013 news article about a Georgia town's first integrated HS prom (Klein, 2013); to teach the write-around strategy (MA DESE, 2013), we use a prompt on the state takeover of a public school in Holyoke where we have many classroom placements.

SHIFTING DISCOURSES

Data from our three-year study shows a transformation in the thinking of our pre-service teachers from a *deficit* perspective that characterizes ELLs as lacking linguistic and cultural resources to a more *asset* view. However, we do still find some deficit thinking in the discourse of pre-service teachers, even after they have engaged with critical texts and critical conversations and have successfully completed course assignments. For example, in her analysis of the film *Immersion* at the beginning of the SEI course. "Jennifer" (pseudonym), one of our pre-service teachers, criticizes the school and teacher: "school discourag-


es students,” “school is more concerned with scores than all student progress,” “students who don’t speak English slip through the cracks,” “no accommodation made for Spanish speakers,” and “school discourages talking to native Spanish speakers in Spanish.” However, her statements overlook Moises’ funds of knowledge and cultural-linguistic resources and thus subtly maintain a deficit lens. At the end of the course, Jennifer deepens her critique of Michelle, the young white teacher in the film, who is ill-equipped to provide the linguistic scaffolds that Moises needs to share his strong math skills, or the social supports he needs to avoid peer ridicule for being able only to repeat his correct answer, *forty*. While Jennifer’s end-of-course discourse shows a movement toward transformative learning, her response continues to overlook Moises’ language and cultural resources:

My new understanding of ELLs is that they are always being tested or evaluated on language even when doing content because language is used to present content. A lot of the things that people assume they know about ELLs can be misconceptions, like thinking ELLs will pick up the language completely on their own through social context.

Jennifer recognizes “misconceptions” about ELLs in second language acquisition theory; “ELLs are really learning almost two languages: a social language and an academic language,” she says. However, while she acknowledges a responsibility “to provide them with as much varied support as we can,” she still fails to emphasize Moises’ assets: his strong math skills, solid family support, high expectations, work ethic, and value for education. Her teacher-centered analysis serves to maintain the hegemonic discourse of ELL-as-limited, thus failing to recognize the broader sociocultural context from the critical lens of her own positionality. Indeed, the transformation we believe is necessary and possible in ELL education is a gradual and a long-term process and requires intentional effort toward both personal and professional development.

Data from our three-year study shows a transformation in the thinking of our pre-service teachers from a deficit perspective . . . to a more asset view.

TOWARDS A MORE CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

The examples given here illustrate our on-going efforts to integrate critical pedagogy and critical texts into our SEI course and to avoid reproducing the notion that mere implementation of SEI strategies as a one-size-fits-all approach will satisfy all equity needs for ELL students, families and communities. Our research shows the need to overtly articulate the intersection of teachers' culture-identity lenses with their understanding of ELL education and to foster reflective teaching practices that are socially conscious and culturally informed. The integration of critical texts into the pedagogical framework can encourage self-reflective, culturally relevant pedagogy and foster a critical approach to language and discourse that for more equitable ELL instruction. By adopting a critical pedagogy for SEI, we can challenge inequities in ELL education and help move SEI instruction to the frontline of educational and social transformation. 

[M]ere implementation of SEI strategies as a one-size-fits-all approach will [not] satisfy all needs for equity for ELL students, families and communities.

REFERENCES

- Bigler, R. (2005).** Good morning boys and girls. *Teaching Tolerance*. 28 (Fall 2011). Retrieved from <http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-28-fall-2005/feature/good-morning-boys-and-girls>
- Freire, P. (1970).** *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: Continuum.
- Giroux, H. (1983).** *Theory & resistance in education: A pedagogy for the opposition*. Amherst, MA: Bergin & Garvey.
- Hafner, A. H., & Ortiz-Marrero, F. W. (2016).** (Re)Interpretations & (RE)TELLings of equity for ELLs in SEI courses. Presentation at the 2016 Annual Conference of Massachusetts Educators of English Language Learners (MATSOL). Framingham, MA.
- Klein, R. (2013).** Integrated prom in Wilcox County in Georgia deemed a success. The Huffington Post. Retrieved from <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/news/wilcox-county-high-school-segregated-prom>
- Levien, R. (Director/Producer) (2007).** *Immersion*. Retrieved from <http://www.immersionfilm.com>

- MA DESE (2015, 2014, 2013).** *Massachusetts sheltered English instruction teacher endorsement course, Facilitators manual.* Malden, MA. Retrieved from <http://www.doe.mass.edu/retell/teacher-syllabus.docx>
- Peregoy, S.F. & Boyle, O.F. (2013).** *Reading, Writing and Learning in ESL: A resource book for K-12 teachers* (6th Ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education Inc.
- Shor, I. (1992).** *Culture wars: School and society in the conservative restoration.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Walstram, R. (n.d.).** On Paulo Freire's reading the world. University of Buffalo. Retrieved from <http://faculty.buffalostate.edu/wahlstrl/l-Search/frierereading.htm>
- WIDA (2012)** *Amplification of the English language development standards, Kindergarten-Grade 12.* Retrieved from <https://www.wida.us/standards/eld.aspx>

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Floris Wilma Ortiz-Marrero, Ed.D., Assistant Professor at Westfield State University, WMWP Teacher Consultant, and 2011 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year, has 23 years' experience in bilingual, ESL/ELL, professional development, researcher and teacher educator in SEI education.

Andrew W. Habana Hafner, Ed.D., Assistant Professor at Westfield State University, has 24 years of U.S. and international experience in bilingual, ESL/ELL, and literacy education as a teacher, trainer, curriculum developer, and researcher.

CAPturing Performance: Evaluating ESL Licensure Candidates with the Candidate Assessment for Performance (CAP)

Melissa Latham Keh

mlathamkeh@matsol.org

Emily Spitzman

emily.spitzman@bridgew.edu



Melissa Latham Keh



Emily Spitzman

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) piloted its new student teaching assessment, the Candidate Assessment of Performance (henceforth CAP), during the school year 2015-2016. The CAP is designed to align more clearly than the formerly used Pre-practice Performance Assessment (PPA) with the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework for in-service teacher evaluation (DESE, 2016).¹

As program supervisors during the spring and fall of 2016, we had the opportunity to experience the CAP process. In this article we will describe some of the new features of the CAP, including increased input from supervising practitioners, more self-assessment and goal setting, embedded subject-specific competencies, and the use of student evaluations. We hope to help you navigate the new procedures effectively, whether you are a program supervisor (henceforth PS), supervising practitioner (henceforth SP), teacher candidate (henceforth TC), or other person interested in the current landscape of student teaching. While our observations will be relevant to all fields, our focus will be on TESOL candidates.

INCREASED INPUT FROM THE SP

Under the CAP, the SP is expected to do 3-4 observations, advise the TC in goal setting, engage in calibration conversations, write formative and summative evaluations, and meet face-to-face with the TC to discuss progress. Thus when

¹ A complete comparison of the PPA and the CAP can be found in DESE's (2013) *Guidelines for the Candidate Assessment of Performance: Assessment of Teacher Candidates*.

choosing a SP, it is important to look for someone who has a thorough knowledge of professional responsibilities inside and outside of the classroom.

The relationship between the PS, SP, and TC will differ somewhat depending on the situation. For example, in our program, the TCs who were completing traditional practicums saw their SPs every day, but the TCs who were completing employment-based practicums sometimes had SPs from out-of-building who visited them primarily for required observations and meetings. Some of the SPs were already acting as mentors and had strong, working relationships with their TCs, while other SPs had just met their TCs at the beginning of the practicum. For this reason, we found it helpful to begin the process with a conversation among SP, PS, and TC about roles and expectations. As PSs, we often had the best understanding of CAP requirements and were able to offer insights and suggestions from our experience in a range of classroom settings. On the other hand, the SPs often had insider knowledge about the students, the school, and local politics.

The CAP is designed to align more clearly . . . with the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework for in-service teacher evaluation.

Since the CAP does not include elements from Standard III² of the teacher evaluation rubric from the Massachusetts Model System for Educator Evaluation, there is no specific mention of family or community engagement, such as conveying expectations about learning and behavior, fostering two-way communication, and so forth. However, the increased involvement of the SP can help the TC to develop crucial skills in this area. Ideally, the SP is connected to the cultural context and knows how to facilitate effective communication with ELL families.

The working relationship among the various stakeholders has the potential to be intellectually stimulating and idea generating. Upon completing their practicum experience, several SPs and TCs expressed an interest in taking on a leadership role in ESOL and possibly providing professional development to other teachers in the future. We plan to think strategically about how to encourage greater involvement from the SP, as some SPs provided TCs with valuable insights beyond the basic CAP requirements on topics such as intercultural communication and action research.

² Standard III, "Family and Community Engagement," includes indicators for parent/family engagement, collaboration, and communication.

SELF-ASSESSMENT AND GOAL SETTING

Within the first few weeks of the practicum, TCs complete a self-assessment, create a SMART goal and identify an assessment tool to analyze their impact on student learning. TCs need to self-assess as soon as possible, and cover not just their teaching in general but also their roles as ESL teachers. TCs in traditional student teaching contexts will need guidance and scaffolding in goal creation, to ensure that the action steps are achievable within the time available and that the goals are aligned specifically to TESOL Standards or CAP Essential Elements. Some of our students had to revise their goals several times, and they needed particular assistance in aligning their goals with area-specific standards while also including a language focus.

In order to complete the goal-setting step within the first few weeks, the PS may want to provide sample goals for the TCs to look at, and schedule time for an individual conversation with each TC. For TCs in employment-based practicums, the goal-setting procedure can serve as an opportunity to get feedback from their PS on goals that they have already created with their school-based supervisors. The PS and SP might also consider providing a student-learning measure that will help ESL TCs to think critically about their students' language development.

It is important, early on, to establish a plan for revisiting goals over the course of the practicum. TCs should not only *meet* their goals, but also *reflect* on them, and consider what their next steps will be. We used weekly journals and asked students to reflect on their goals in a final journal entry; another time, we will have students begin self analysis earlier on in their journal writing.

STUDENT EVALUATIONS

In the CAP, TCs are expected to administer student feedback surveys during the course of the practicum. For ELLs, the main hurdle in these surveys is that they are in English, which poses a challenge for lower-level students. To maximize the potential for valuable student feedback, we have the following recommendations:

- First, TCs might administer the surveys midway through the practicum and again at the end. This would serve to uncover any challenges that students find in the language of the surveys while also providing time for the TC to reflect on and adjust to the students' feedback.

- Secondly, TCs should ideally have someone conduct the surveys who can do oral translation for the students. If this isn't possible, then they can try to provide translations of key words, or have a translator/dictionary available for unknown words. The surveys could even be integrated into a language lesson where some of the vocabulary is pre-taught and used prior to doing the survey.
- Thirdly, lower-level ELLs should be given the “mini” or “short” form of the survey rather than the standard form, which is significantly longer. The SP or PS may advise the TC on selecting the appropriate form.
- Lastly, ELLs may need extra time to fill out the forms and may be able to provide better feedback if they are allowed to write a comment in either English or their native language on a separate sheet of paper. This could provide more context for the results and help candidates better understand students' perspectives beyond the questions on the form.

EMBEDDED SUBJECT-SPECIFIC COMPETENCIES

When giving feedback to our TCs, we wanted to make sure our comments were geared specifically to ESOL, but we found ourselves struggling to figure out where to place ESOL competencies on the CAP Rubric. Initially, we thought that ESOL specific competencies would fit well under Meeting Diverse Needs, but as we engaged further with the CAP we realized that each of its sections should include ESOL approaches and techniques. We therefore used SIOP features (Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2013) and some of the former PPA content-specific questions for ESL (MA DESE, 2013) to create a CAP framework that specifically includes ESOL best practices (See Table 1 on p. 44).

Throughout the CAP process, we should remember to focus when possible on TESOL research and practice, and bring relevant, current information about TESOL competencies into the conversation. Such meaningful connections and critical conversations during the Spring 2016 pilot strengthened our skills and our commitment to teacher education, fostered leadership in the SPs we cooperated with, and nourished the development of our TCs as they learned to work effectively with ELLs with diverse backgrounds and abilities. **C**

CAP Essential Elements	Ideas for TESOL Teacher Candidate Assessment
Well-structured Lessons	<p>How has the candidate used the WIDA frameworks to plan instruction?</p> <p>How are content and language objectives communicated to students?</p> <p>How is students' prior knowledge incorporated into the lesson?</p> <p>How is practice in all language domains (speaking, listening, reading and writing) evident in the lesson?</p> <p>To what extent does the language practice reflect the content and language objectives for the lesson?</p> <p>How is students' vocabulary knowledge built?</p> <p>How does the candidate promote interaction?</p>
Adjustment to Practice	<p>What adjustments are made for differences in students' English proficiency levels?</p> <p>How are the adjustments implemented and evaluated?</p> <p>Are a variety of formative and summative assessments used to make small-scale adjustments in instruction?</p>
Meeting Diverse Needs	<p>How does the candidate assess the needs of his/her students?</p> <p>What adjustments are made for differences in students' background knowledge and/or learning styles?</p> <p>How was the lesson planned and paced to maximize engagement and learning?</p> <p>How has the candidate incorporated evidence-based practices for ELLs?</p>
Safe Learning Environment	<p>How is the lesson culturally and linguistically responsive?</p> <p>How has the candidate demonstrated knowledge of cultural and socio-emotional factors in instruction?</p> <p>How has the candidate integrated native languages of students?</p> <p>How has the candidate modified his/her speech to facilitate students' understanding?</p> <p>How are students encouraged to engage in cooperative learning?</p>
High Expectations	<p>How has the candidate supported ELLs to achieve grade-level standards?</p> <p>How are higher-order thinking skills and learning strategies taught and practiced?</p> <p>What opportunities are there for students to use academic language?</p>
Reflective Practice	<p>How does the candidate continue to reflect on and refine the goals he/she set at the beginning of the practicum?</p> <p>How does the candidate use information, including data from student questionnaires, to inform his/her practice?</p> <p>What specific aspects of language teaching is the candidate reflecting on?</p>

Table 1: CAP Essential Elements with Potential TESOL-oriented Questions

REFERENCES

- Echevarría, J., Vogt, M., & Short, D. (2013).** *Making content comprehensible for English learners: The SIOP model* (4th ed.). Boston: Pearson.
- MA DESE (2013)** *Pre-service performance assessment (PPA): Guidelines for teachers*. Retrieved from <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/ppa/guidelines.pdf>
- MA DESE (2016)** *Guidelines for the candidate assessment of performance: Assessment of teacher candidates*. Retrieved from <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/cap>
- WIDA (2012)** *Amplification of the English language development standards, Kindergarten-Grade 12*. Retrieved from <https://www.wida.us/standards/eld.aspx>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We were inspired to write this article in part by a discussion initiated by Dr. Jeri Katz about how to focus on content-area-specific competencies in Special Education when using the CAP.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr. Melissa Latham Keh is an Assistant Professor and Practicum Coordinator in the MA in TESOL Program at Bridgewater State University. She taught English language learners at Belmont High School for 10 years and has served as both a supervising practitioner and a program supervisor for student teachers in a range of teaching settings.

Dr. Emily Spitzman earned her Ph.D. from the University of Rhode Island and is now an Assistant Professor in the MA in TESOL Program at Bridgewater State University. She taught academic English to speakers of other languages at Johnson & Wales University for nine years. Prior to that she taught adult immigrants and K-12 students in a variety of contexts. Her research has focused on critical intercultural communication, and she has facilitated service-learning experiences and intercultural dialogue inside and outside the classroom.

Teaching the Structure of a Persuasive Argument

MONICA FILGO

mfilgo@newbedfordschools.org



How can we teach the art of persuasive argumentation while simultaneously expanding our students' vocabulary and developing their oral fluency? The week prior to the Thanksgiving holiday, I presented a three-day mini-unit for my 4th and 5th grade English Learners with these very goals in mind.

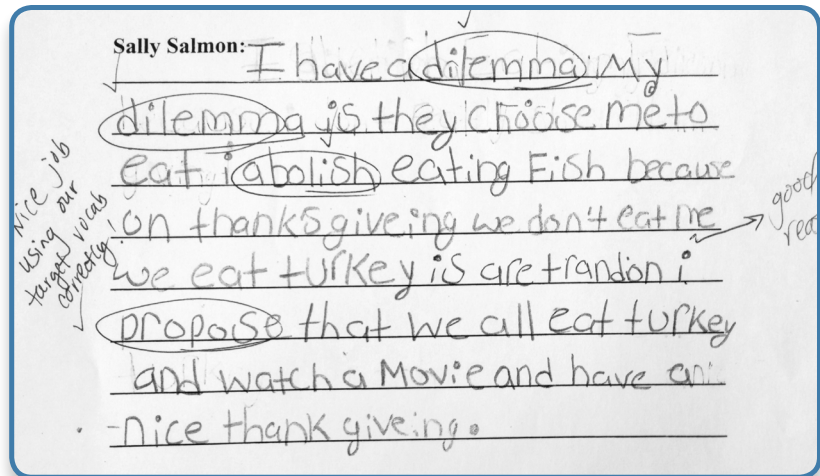
I was inspired by an on-line readers' theater play called "A Turkey Takes a Stand," in which a turkey couple goes before Congress to protest the traditional main course of a Thanksgiving meal. Their argument is successful, and it is decided that salmon will replace turkey on dinner tables everywhere. But at the end of the play a character named Sally Salmon comes before Congress to say that she now has a dilemma. There the author leaves us hanging.

I began the unit by demonstrating the structure of a persuasive ar-

<p>Dilemma: What is the dilemma in this text?</p>	<p>Thier go to get killed. a dilemma they want to change the main course of thank giving diner.</p>
<p>Abolish: What does the speaker want to abolish? How do you know?</p>	<p>Stop eating turkey turkey soup turkey sandwiches.</p>
<p>Propose: What does the speaker propose as a solution to the dilemma? Why?</p>	<p>have a diffent food have a barbeque hot dog fish squash stuffing</p>

gument, using the story *The Day the Crayons Quit* (Daywalt and Jeffers, 2014), which is written in the form of letters and postcards from a set of crayons to their owner, a little boy named Duncan. Each crayon has a problem that it wants corrected—everything from being overused to the question of which cray-

on should be used to represent the color of the sun. My students enjoyed this story and were soon able to analyze the structure of each crayon's argument. It was easy to adjust this activity to student needs by giving some students their crayon's dilemma in advance, while allowing other students to analyze multiple crayon perspectives, and by giving everyone the choice of which crayons they wanted to read about.



We then turned to the Thanksgiving play. I had already introduced three key vocabulary words—*dilemma*, *propose*, and *abolish*—that reflect the structure of this persuasive text: First a *dilemma* is presented (cruelty to turkeys at Thanksgiving), and then a solution is *proposed* which calls for *abolishing* the custom of eating turkey at Thanksgiving. I taught these words to the students, using Margarita Calderón's Seven Steps strategy (Calderón, 2011) along with the Frayer Model (Frayer, Frederick, and Klausmeier, 1969) for learning new vocabulary. We made frequent use of those words in our analysis of the play, and brought in a number of synonyms, as well, such as *problem*, *crisis*, *difficulty*, *issue*, and *predicament* as synonyms for *dilemma*.

To provide an opportunity for the students to practice their new vocabulary and demonstrate their understanding of the structure of a persuasive argument, I asked them to continue the play by filling in Sally Salmon's lines. What is her *dilemma*, and what does she want to *abolish*? What does she *propose* instead? How will she present her argument?

My students were highly motivated to argue for Sally Salmon's cause! The argument presented by the turkey characters had given them a model for the argument that Sally might make, and the results of the assignment showed their

ownership of the new vocabulary. In order to make their classmates laugh, they wanted to act out what they had written, and this motivated them to work on their oral fluency in order to share their writing.

This was an entertaining and productive mini-unit; students grew their academic language, their oral fluency, and their command of persuasive text structure while learning about American government and traditions and having a lot of fun in the process. **C**

In this play, a turkey couple goes before Congress to protest the traditional main course of a Thanksgiving meal.

REFERENCES

A turkey takes a stand. Retrieved from http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/reading/ReadersTheater/ReadersTheater004.shtml

Daywalt, D., & Jeffers, O. (2014). *The day the crayons quit*. London, UK: Harper-Collins Children's Books.

Calderón, M. (2011). *Teaching reading & comprehension to English learners K-5*. 67-83. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

Frayer, D., Frederick, W. C., & Klausmeier, H. J. (1969). *A schema for testing the level of cognitive mastery*. Madison, WI: Wisconsin Center for Education Research.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Monica Filgo is an ESL Teacher in the New Bedford school district, teaching at Parker Elementary, a Level 5 school undergoing the Turnaround process.

Teaching a Prescribed Text to Students Who Aren't Interested: A Task-Based Approach

ISLAM KARKOUR

Islam.karkour@unh.edu



THE PROBLEM

Not all teachers have the privilege of choosing the materials they use in their classrooms; in some educational institutions, teachers are required to follow a prescribed curriculum, sometimes known as a “teacher-proof” curriculum. Such an environment can be found in some institutions in the U.S., and it is fairly common abroad. I started my career in just such a situation when I taught English as a foreign language to third-year students in a middle school in Egypt, where I was required to follow a prescribed curriculum that was not immediately appealing to my students. In this article, I will suggest some strategies that I could have used to make the curriculum more accessible and more interesting for my students.

Middle school, in Egypt, covers a period of three years. The students are between thirteen and fifteen years old and have been studying English since the age of ten. In the first and second years of middle school they study a general English textbook, but in the third year they are given an additional text for extensive reading—in my case, *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, by Jules Verne. There are five one-hour classes each week, one of which is to be devoted to the extensive reading. There are 30-35 students in a class.

Theoretically, extensive reading is a very effective practice in teaching a foreign language. Nuttall (2005, p.129) argues that “the best way to improve your knowledge of a foreign language is to go and live among its speakers. The next best way is to read extensively in it.” In a more detailed study, Al-Homoud and Schmitt (2009, p. 384) argue that extensive reading plays an important role in improving reading comprehension, reading speed, and vocabulary. Another advantage of extensive reading, highlighted by Hedge (2000), is its ability to catalyze autonomous learning by providing students with opportunities to work individually.

Sadly, none of these benefits were achieved in my class. The students disliked the extensive reading classes and found the text difficult and boring. *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (henceforth JCE) was a poor choice for my students, but the problem was exacerbated by the teaching approach I used.

I, like many Egyptian teachers, used a traditional method in which the teacher reads aloud and the students follow along. This can be tedious for both teacher and students, because the students' role is entirely passive, and there is no real interaction with the text. I believe that a task-based approach like the one described by Willis (1996) might be a good solution to this problem.

The students disliked the extensive reading classes and found the text difficult and boring.

THE SOLUTION: A TASK-BASED APPROACH

Willis (1996, p. 68) recommends the use of “text-based tasks” that require learners to “process the text for meaning in order to achieve the goals of the task.” In this section, I will describe how two of her task types—comparison tasks and prediction tasks—could be used to make JCE more meaningful for my students. Willis (p. 80) suggests using texts that cover “a single event . . . by different media, e.g. a news story and a broadcast recording or the same news story from two different newspapers.” The two inputs I would provide are the novel itself, which is divided into ten chapters, and a film version with English subtitles. Films with English subtitles can be a very useful tool in teaching; they “promote a low affective filter . . . [and] encourage conscious language learning in ‘literate’ learners.” (Vanderplank 1988, p. 272). Vanderplank worries that Arab learners may have difficulty keeping up with the speed at which the subtitles change on the screen, but I think present-day Arab students, as compared to 1988, which was the time of his study, are much quicker at reading subtitles.

I will divide the film into ten parts, so that each part of the film matches its parallel chapter in the novel. Watching a section of the film before reading its parallel chapter will give the students some background knowledge and will activate their schema regarding the events and actions they will read about.

Of the several films that have been produced based on this story, the one I like best is the 2008 version, directed by Eric Brevig, which is a modern science-fiction version of the story. My main reason for choosing this film is that there are many differences between the film and the book, which is essential for the comparison task that the students will be doing. To make the comparison even more

interesting, the main characters in the film use Verne's book as a roadmap to guide them through their journey to the center of the Earth.

To make the reading more interesting and more challenging, I will employ two tasks, a comparison task and a prediction task, which will be alternated from day to day. If the students are doing the comparison task, then they will have to compare the film and the novel in terms of actions, characters, and so forth. The Brevic film does not follow the novel exactly. For example, the film is set in the 2000s, while the novel is set in the 1800s. This greatly changes the scientific assumptions that underlie the story—the film is based on modern science while the novel is based on beliefs that were prevalent in the 1800s. In the movie, the introductory scenes in which the characters discuss their plan for the journey take a place in a university laboratory full of earthquake trackers, monitors, digital maps, and computers, but in the book the scene takes a place in a traditional library. Another difference between the film and the novel is the use of the internet. In the film, one of the characters googles for information when needed, but in the book, the Internet has not yet been invented.

The relationships between the characters are also different. For example, in the book, Axel, one of the main characters, has a very respectful relationship with his uncle, who is also a main character, but in the film, their relationship is not nearly so friendly. The language is also quite different. The film uses modern American spoken English, while the book is in formal written British English. I will encourage my students to notice the differences between these two varieties of English.

Films with English subtitles can be a very useful tool in teaching.

After showing a part of the film, I will ask the students to read individually the parallel book chapter and to notice similarities and differences between the film and the reading. By having them read individually, I hope to foster their silent reading skills. Once the reading is over, the students will meet in groups of four or five to discuss the similarities and differences they observed, and to plan a report. To increase the students' feeling of autonomy I will let them decide the form of the report—either written or oral. They will be encouraged to return to the text during the discussion.

To provide variety in the class activities, I will also introduce a second text-based task, a prediction task. In this task, after watching part of the film, the students will work in groups to predict what will happen in the parallel chapter of the

text. They will prepare a brief written report of their predictions and then check their predictions by reading the chapter. When the reading is over, the students will come back to their groups to plan a report describing their predictions and comparing them to the actual events of the chapter. By comparing their own predictions to the actual events of the book, students will come to see the events of the story from three different perspectives: that of the original book, that of the modern film, and, finally, their own. I want them to learn that any story can be told in more than one way, which is believed to be an important critical thinking skill (Paul, 1988).

[S]tudents can be made interested in a text that is not immediately appealing to them if they are given tasks that push them to become more deeply engaged with the material.

CONCLUSION

I believe that students can be made interested in a text that is not immediately appealing to them if they are given tasks that push them to become more deeply engaged with the material. Tasks like comparing and predicting are believed to be helpful and effective in fostering students' involvement with the text and improving their thinking skills (Raths, Wassermann, Jonas, & Rothstein, 1986).

When teachers are required to work with a text that they cannot change, they may have to adapt their approach to meet their students' needs. Teaching *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* is difficult in the context in which I teach. Students find it boring and, as a result, they miss a potentially valuable opportunity to experience and learn from extensive reading. I believe that a task-based approach like the one I have described here may be a good solution to this problem. **C**

REFERENCES

- Al-Homoud, F & Schmitt, N. (2009).** Extensive reading in a challenging environment: A comparison of extensive and intensive reading approaches in Saudi Arabia. *Language Teaching Research* 13(4), 383–401.
- Hedge, T. (2000).** *Teaching and learning in the language classroom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Flynn, B. (Producer), & Brevig, E. (Director). (2008).** *Journey to the Center of the Earth* [Motion Picture]. United States: New Line Cinema.

Nuttall, C. (2005). *Teaching reading skills in a foreign language*, 2nd ed. Oxford, UK: Macmillan Education.

Paul, R. (1988). *The critical thinker: The significance for thinking of traits of mind. Teaching thinking & problem solving.* Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Raths, L., Wassermann, S., Jonas, A., & Rothstein, A. (1986). *Teaching for thinking: Theory, strategies, and activities for the classroom*, 2nd ed. New York, NY: Teachers College, Columbia University.

Verne, Jules (1998). *Journey to the centre of the Earth.* Giza: Egyptian International Publishing Company-Longman.

Willis, J. (1996). *A framework for task-based learning.* Harlow: Longman

Vanderplank, R. (1988). The value of teletext sub-titles in language learning. *ELT Journal* 42: 272-281.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Islam Karkour is a Ph.D. student in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of New Hampshire. His research interests are in foreign language education, intercultural competence, and curriculum design and development. He teaches Arabic as a foreign language at the University of New Hampshire. He earned his BA in Education from Al-Azhar University in Cairo, and his MA in Educational Technology and TESOL from Manchester University, UK.

Using a Professional Learning Community to Promote Word Consciousness for ELLs

ALICIA SERAFIN

pattisonalicia@gmail.com

One way to support ELL students in accessing content while growing their English language skills is by developing their word consciousness. With this

thought in mind, I developed a word consciousness project at the Whittier School in Everett, using Pearson's *Words Their Way* series. With a grant from the Linda Schulman Innovation Fund, I was able to purchase both a professional development library that was made available for all teachers to access and a set of introductory books. I then formed a professional learning community (PLC) that included teachers from Special Education (K-8), ELL, and elementary classrooms. Each participating teacher was given a copy of an introductory *Words Their Way* text to review for our meetings and to use in planning lessons.



Most of the teachers voiced enthusiasm about adding a spelling pattern component to complement their curriculum. I assured my colleagues that the *Words Their Way* routines could be built into their literacy blocks, and teachers familiar with the program confirmed that students can practice the routines in centers after initial modeling and guided practice. Our hour-long PLC sessions, held after school every other week, provided an opportunity for discussion and a time to answer questions, address concerns, discuss challenges, and celebrate successes. These discussions facilitated faculty collaboration as we implemented and explored this new program.

THE CONTENT OF THE SESSIONS


In our first session, we focused on benchmarking the students' knowledge of English spelling patterns, using the spelling inventories that *Words Their Way* provides for each level. For example, the results of the inventory might show that a group of students do not yet understand the spelling pattern for the -ed inflectional suffix. For that group the teacher would choose a sort that demonstrates the -ed spelling for all three pronunciations of this suffix ([t], [d], and [əd]). One

particularly rich discussion emerged regarding how to differentiate for a student whose inventory uncovered a gap in knowledge of short vowels. This led to a conversation about how ELL students like this one, who speak Romance languages, have to be explicitly taught that English has two vowel sounds (short and long) for each vowel letter.

For most PLC sessions, we began by discussing successes, challenges, and questions. Then we reviewed that day's chapter from the *Words Their Way* text and watched instructional videos from the Pearson website that showed routines that we were reviewing, with students participating in the lesson. We then practiced the strategies we were reading about and spent some time planning lessons for our classes and discussing how to apply the strategies we were learning to our own teaching situation. For example, we considered how students who had started to learn the *Words Their Way* routine could begin to participate in more challenging closed sorts in which, instead of the teacher providing the categories, the students work independently or with a partner to identify and evaluate possible categories of their own. As time went on, we shared teacher-made, innovative sorts (for example, for science vocabulary) and developed word sorts and word pattern "games" for student review.

RESULTS

Our students all demonstrated progress in their knowledge of spelling patterns over the course of the four months of the program. By mid-term, seven out of eight students in one group had moved up either one level or one whole stage. The initial inventory for these seven students had indicated that work should begin with short vowels, and their mid-term assessments demonstrated that all of them had mastered this concept. The one student who did not move up was the one whose initial inventory had shown that he already understood the concept.

The collaboration among our PLC participants, supported by the grant, helped us to learn a new teaching approach and adapt it to our own situation, with excellent results. However, although the support we received from our colleagues proved very helpful in mastering this new approach, many of us felt that we could also benefit from informal observations among PLC participants, to provide additional modeling and feedback. Thus, our next step will be a discussion with administration regarding the possibility of providing opportunities for PLC participants to observe one another's practice. 

Making Lessons More Effective for Adult ESOL Learners by Focusing on Fluency

MARILIA MARTINS

mariliafcaldas@gmail.com



In my experience teaching adult ESOL in both Brazil and the United States, I have found that teachers in both countries sometimes value linguistic accuracy at the expense of oral communication and fluency. This is especially concerning in the US, where adult learners need English simply in order to survive. For these students, English is urgent. If they do not speak English, they will not be able to buy food, find a job, take a bus, or interact with others. They need the language the moment they step out of the classroom.

As I gained more experience working with adult immigrants in the US and came to realize how pressing it is for them to be able to communicate in English, I began to move away from the textbook and create lessons that respond directly to my students' real-life needs. The topics include daily activities, job skills, work and occupations, transportation, shopping and money, and health matters, such as navigating a trip to the doctor and reading medicine labels. At the same time, I began developing strategies to increase speaking time and focus on communicative skills rather than grammatical niceties.

In every class, I try to dedicate a substantial portion of the lesson to activities that ask the students to use what they have learned to communicate with their classmates. I begin by providing some essential vocabulary. For a unit on Introductions, in which the students are asked to talk about their native country, I teach adjectives to describe climate and temperature (*cold, hot, sunny*), dimensions (*big, small*), and other potentially useful adjectives such as *beautiful* and *good*. I widen the vocabulary gradually as the need arises—for instance, scenery (*beaches, mountains*) and seasons of the year. I use an array of visuals—maps, posters, body language, and pictures—to make the meaning clear. For a unit on Jobs and Occupations, I teach the names of various occupations

and workplaces, but also the days of the week, time-telling, modes of transportation, and other relevant items such as *money*, *coworkers*, *pay*, and *like*. To practice vocabulary retrieval, I use manipulatives such as picture-word matching and games like Go Fish, or ask the students to mime or draw a word for others to guess.

If they do not speak English, they will not be able to buy food, find a job, take a bus, or interact with others.

Then, to get the students talking, I break them into pairs or small groups and give them “fluency cards” that contain a few guiding questions. For example, for the Introductions unit, the fluency card says

What’s your name?

Where are you from?

Tell me about your native country.

For the Jobs and Occupations unit, it says

What do you do?

Where do you work?

Tell me about your job.

To help the students answer, I give them sentence frames like the following:

My name is (name).

I’m from (country).

I’m a/an (job).

(Name) is a/an (job).

He/She works at a (place) in (city).

And to make sure they stay on task, I circulate, monitor, and interact. As I circulate, I hear utterances such as *My country is small, very hot. Food is good, job no good. No winter, summer and flowers. I no like snow. Beach is good, here cold. No like beach here. My country is beautiful and people nice.* I check the stu-

dents' comprehension of their classmates' answers by asking them to report to the whole group about their partners: *Maria is a cook. She works at a restaurant in Chelsea. She lives in Malden, transportation good, one bus. She likes schedule, she works Monday to Friday, she sleeps 2 am.*

After the students have worked for a while in pairs or in a small group, I have them walk around the room and go through the same conversation with other classmates. By the end of the lesson, they are able to speak fluently about the topic at hand, despite their limited grammar and undeveloped pronunciation. To encourage further conversation, I give them surveys, matching exercises, and role-playing activities. The result is that the students talk for a long time, sometimes more than I anticipated, sharing their feelings and experiences.

For reading practice, my students work with short texts that are related to their own lives—for instance, a story about a homemaker who needs a job, or a dialogue at the supermarket. These passages use language that the students need for daily functioning. To follow up on the reading, I ask comprehension questions that test critical thinking, not just “display” questions. For example, for a text with the passage *Now Lina works at a supermarket*, instead of only scanning questions such as *Where does Lina work?*, I ask questions that require interpretation, such as *Does she have a new job? How do you know that?* The focus is always on comprehension. Simply asking students to read a passage out loud does nothing to promote comprehension; some students can read aloud very nicely without understanding a single word. And scanning for words, although a good strategy, does not guarantee comprehension. *What is the main idea of the text?* is a question that I usually ask after reading. And, after receiving the answer to a yes/no question like *Does she like her new schedule?*, I follow up with a critical-thinking question like *Why?* or *How do you know?*

To make reading activities as meaningful as possible, I sometimes work with real life texts such as road signs. Since some of my students drive to school or work, I have them practice reading parking signs, using a set of cards that each display a sign, along with a handout that asks the following questions:

What's today's date?

What's today's day of the week?

What time is it now?

They are then given the prompt *Can you park here? If yes, for how long?* They have to decide whether they can park or not, and explain why.

I do not neglect grammar altogether; in fact, there is a grammar point for each lesson. For the Introductions unit, I focus on WH-questions and the simple present with the verb *to be*; for the Jobs and Occupations unit, the grammar focus is the third person simple present. I outline the structure on the board and have the students practice with worksheets. However, I do not ask low-proficiency students to write full sentences using particular verb forms just for the sake of grammatical accuracy. When asked *How long have you been here in the US?*, answers like *one year* or *ten months* should be sufficient, since they show that the student understood the question. My students are able to communicate quite well about their past weekend without using the past tense, as in the following conversation I overheard from one of my students who is a cook at a restaurant:


A: I'm very tired. Saturday, no good. Cashier sick, I cook, I wash dishes, I clean tables.

B: You cashier, too?

A: No. Manager is cashier. I'm cook, dishwasher, and busboy.

B: Three jobs? Good money.

A: No. Money no change. Same, same. I no like.

If there is a grammar topic that the students have not yet been taught, I do not correct them, but rather let them speak freely, as long as I can understand them and they understand one another. I agree with the Communicative Language teachers studied by Sato & Kleinsasser (1999, p. 505), who said that "errors should be accepted as a natural and inevitable part of language acquisition and ... ideas can be exchanged spontaneously in a foreign language without having linguistic accuracy." In teaching adult immigrants, our most important goals should be comprehension and communication. These students have an urgent need to communicate in real life, and that has to be our first priority. 

REFERENCES

Sato, K., Kleinsasser, R. (1999). Communicative language teaching (CLT): Practical understandings. *The Modern Language Journal*, 83(4), 494-517.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marilia Martins has ten years' experience teaching ESL. She earned a Bachelor's degree in Teaching ESL from UFRN in Brazil and a Master's degree in TESOL from the University of Southern Maine. She has been teaching at the Immigrant Learning Center in Malden for ten months.

xEdu, An Educational “Accelerator”

Sponsoring New Educational Technology

<http://xedu.co>

Reviewed by Eileen R. Feldman

efeldman@bhcc.mass.edu

Can technology assist educators in meeting the 21st century needs of students, communities, and society? Finland and Hong Kong, two educational systems ranking tops internationally, have answered “yes” to that question by using, testing, and adopting materials sponsored by xEdu, a technology “accelerator” based in Finland. xEdu works with startup companies who are creating educational programs for tech-savvy students and teachers across the cultural spectrum. Their programs have been used in Europe, Hong Kong, and Australia, and are now being piloted in the Chicago area, with plans to expand. The Kokoa Agency (<http://www.kokoastandard.com>), another Finnish company, evaluates the effectiveness of educational technology for consumers who want further information about the products.

xEdu works with startup companies who are creating educational programs for tech-savvy students and teachers.

The following are some xEdu-sponsored teaching materials that were introduced at a recent seminar in HongKong:

1. *Mightifier: Mastering Social and Emotional Skills* (<http://mightifier.com>) is a digital program in which, for five minutes, students anonymously give one another positive feedback about their strengths, while being monitored on the dashboard by the teacher. The company’s reported results show bullying down and mood/attitudes up, contributing to academic improvement.
2. *Revisely* (<http://revise.ly/en>) is a digital correction program for writing assignments that are distributed and collected online. Teachers can use this tool to give timely feedback and help students join online writing groups.

3. *Psyon Games* (<http://psyon-games.com>) are science-themed games in which teachers can direct students' learning online.
4. *EdVisto* (<http://www.ed-visto.com>) is a storytelling program on the Internet in which participants from many countries work on the stories in the program's template.
5. *NordTouch: Flinga* (<http://www.nordtouch.fi>) is a program in which the students answer their teachers' questions on mobile devices. It provides content through a browser, allows for comments and discussions, and offers answers and feedback on the mobile device.

The website also provides instructions for entrepreneurs who want to introduce their own educational products.

Information about xEdu's most recent startups can be viewed on the xEdu website, under the heading "Startups." The website also provides instructions for entrepreneurs who want to introduce their own educational products through xEdu. 

Weaving It Together, 4th ed., by Milada Broukai.

Boston, MA: National Geographic Learning/Cengage Learning, 2016.

Four volumes,

Book 1 ISBN-13: 9781305251649;

Book 2: ISBN-13: 9781305251656;

Book 3: ISBN-13: 9781305251663;

Book 4: ISBN-13: 9781305251670

Reviewed by Stephanie N. Brown

snbrown@hcc.edu

Milada Broukai's four-book series *Weaving It Together: Connecting Reading & Writing* is a first-rate comprehensive ESL series that incorporates reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, and critical thinking. The purpose of the series is stated in the title: It weaves together reading and writing to create comprehensive textbooks for the literacy-focused curriculum. This is a great resource for teachers who want to follow a textbook in its entirety, as well as for teachers hoping to use the text as a launching pad for further activities.

This is a great resource for teachers who want to follow a textbook in its entirety, as well as for teachers hoping to use the text as a launching pad for further activities.


There are four books in the series, gradually increasing in complexity and language level. All four books follow the same general outline: Eight two-chapter units with detailed, interesting reading and writing elements. Example topics from Book 4 include "Humanitarianism," "Gender," and "Issues for Debate."

- The reading sections use vivid language and sophisticated sentence structure. The readings are carefully chosen, challenging, and, most importantly, interesting for students; they address culture and identity from a multicultural perspective. Each reading is followed by vocabulary and grammar exercises, along with comprehension, discussion, and critical thinking questions that can easily be turned into larger reflection and communication activities.
- Each writing section begins with an issue in composition theory: a stage in the writing process or an aspect of the genre that is being presented. Multiple examples are given of each genre, along with exercises that ask for student

analysis. I found these activities to be extremely helpful in developing genre knowledge and genre awareness.

- The writing assignments are broken down into five steps: pre-writing, outlining, draft writing, revision, and editing. These steps help to give students a firm understanding of the writing process.
- Each unit ends with reflective questions, a timed writing topic, and some questions for internet research.

[This text] is versatile in terms of language level, provides interesting real-world readings, and supports students in their academic writing.

This is the best textbook series I have come across. It is versatile in terms of language level, provides interesting real-world readings, and supports students in their academic writing. Reading and writing are tied together in interactive, interesting, and thoughtful ways. My students often want to continue talking about the topic even after the assignment is over, and these lively classroom debates lead naturally into challenging essay topics. I have used questions from the text as the basis for concentric-circle discussion activities, reflective journal assignments, and classroom debates. I highly recommend this textbook series for busy teachers looking for an all-inclusive resource. 

Everyone Speak! Kids 3, by Shawn Despres. Seoul, Korea: Neungyule Education Build & Grow, 2012.

ISBN-10: 896694440X

ISBN 13: 9788966944408

REVIEWED BY STEPHEN BRAND

stephenbrand1855@gmail.com


In my third year of teaching EFL in South Korea, I found myself in a classroom surrounded by noisy, rambunctious 3rd graders, most of whom didn't care much about English grammar or the role it plays in asking a pedestrian for directions to the museum. This crowd was definitely more interested in getting out of the classroom and heading to the IMAX to see the new Avengers flick. However, luckily for me, I was distributing a new batch of textbooks with equally new bells and whistles: *Everyone, Speak! Beginner 3*, from Neungyule Education Build & Grow. This marvel of a resource was a cartoon-clad role-play book for students at the high beginner level, featuring a textbook, workbook, and multimedia CD. As if that wasn't enough, there were cut-out finger puppets in the back of the student book for the students to use for making the dialogue come to life.

This textbook worked wonders by providing various types of activities for the antsy and less-motivated members of my class. However, its real success lay in its accessibility for students who favored one "intelligence" over another. I am, of course, referring to Dr. Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, which recognizes eight categories of intelligence: verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, naturalistic, interpersonal, visual-spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, and intrapersonal. (Gardner, n.d.) According to this theory, individual students are generally stronger in some of these intelligences than in others.

I skipped the finger puppets and made use of these materials by having the students act out the dialogues, using the front quadrant of the classroom as their stage. It was amazing how deeply some of my previously recalcitrant students entered into the characters, and how closely some of the more distractible students paid attention when their own classmates and soccer teammates were propelling the lesson. Each lesson began with an audio track from the multimedia disc that is included in each copy of the Student Book and the Teacher's

Book. This provided a brief introduction of the lesson objective, along with vocabulary-building exercises and gap-fill dialogue. Then came the chance to take to the stage with partners. Some students thrived during the gap-fill, spelling, and dictation exercises, but others savored the collaborative group work and the blank spaces in the create-your-own-dialogue. Some expressed themselves better verbally, while other flourished kinesthetically. At the end of the quarter, while writing student progress reports, I found myself assessing students based on their particular strengths, which might have gone unnoticed had we stuck to more traditional approaches such as giving speeches or memorizing lines from a canned dialogue—activities that, to my students, would feel strangely adult and detached.

This textbook worked wonders by providing various types of activities for the anti- and less-motivated members of my class.

This textbook opened my eyes to the importance of recognizing multiple intelligences, something that I had heard about before but never exploited in my EFL classroom. My students appreciated the activities and the chance to shine in their preferred areas, and I continued to appreciate the effects of paying attention to multiple intelligences well after we had closed that little bright fuchsia book of wonders. Fortunately, this product is NOT specific to a Korean audience; it can be used in a variety of L2 cultural settings. English language learners in Massachusetts would find it accessible for sure! 

REFERENCE

Gardner, Howard. (n.d.) *A beginner's guide to the theory of multiple intelligences (MI)*. Retrieved from multipleintelligencesoasis.org/about.

Newsela: Teaching Current Events in the ESL Classroom

<https://newsela.com>

Reviewed by Jason Drinkwater

jdrinkwater@medford.k12.ma.us


The study of current events is a good way to help English Language Learners (ELLs) build vocabulary, reading comprehension, writing, and academic discussion skills. News reports about current events cover a wide range of subjects that connect to all areas of the curriculum, breaking down the artificial walls that often surround and isolate subject matter areas. Knowledge of current events also helps to develop informed citizens and lifelong newsreaders. Through this study, students learn and understand the importance of people, events, and issues in the news, some of which involve their own home countries and directly affect their lives. This can lead to deep academic discussion and writing. Through learning about and discussing current events, students develop the skills to engage in academic discussions outside of school with other people in their lives.

Newsela.com is a great free-access website that facilitates the teaching of current events to ELLs. (There is also a “professional” (PRO) version that can be obtained for a fee.) The website offers current articles on war and peace, science, kids, money, law, health, arts, and sports. It also offers text sets on science, literature, and social studies, as well as biographies, primary sources, and famous speeches. The articles are made accessible to all grades and reading levels by means of a tool that allows users to change the reading level to any of five grade levels between 2 and 12. Teachers can create an account and select and assign online readings to different classes. Common Core-aligned comprehension questions are provided with each article. This allows teachers to check student comprehension of the articles and clear up any confusions.

Newsela describes itself as “an education technology startup dedicated to transforming the way learners access the world through words. Newsela develops nonfiction fluency and critical-thinking skills necessary to master the Com-

mon Core standards for informational text." There is research to back up these claims. "Kids scoring below the 50th percentile in reading who regularly read Newsela articles and took quizzes saw an average increase of twelve percentile points in a three-month period." (Weller, 2016). The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) officially endorsed Newsela's 'Students Vote 2016,' a new feature that addressed the 2016 Presidential and Congressional elections. (Gorman, 2016)

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) officially endorsed Newsela's 'Students Vote 2016.'

My third graders were excited about the Presidential campaign after the first Presidential debate, and I turned to Newsela to teach them more about it. I printed out candidate profiles that explained where the candidates stood on important issues. The students read these profiles for homework and came into class the next day to share what they had learned. They couldn't wait to share their opinions on the candidates and their stances on the issues. This was a very effective lesson, because it used informational text to inform the students about a subject that they were already interested in. I capitalized on the experience by reviewing some of the aspects of informational text in class. I was also able to introduce the concepts of author's purpose and media bias. To practice persuasive writing, I then had the students write about which candidate they supported and why. For me, Newsela provided the resources to create strong and thought provoking lessons that engaged my students. I strongly recommend this website to my colleagues in K-12. 

REFERENCES

Newsela: Nonfiction literacy and current events. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://newsela.com>.

Gorman, N. (Oct. 13, 2016). National Council for the Social Studies endorses Newsela's 'Students Vote 2016.' *Education World*, Oct. 13, 2016. Retrieved from http://www.educationworld.com/a_news/national-council-social-studies-endorses-newsela's-'students-vote-2016'-1850961253

Weller, C. (Sept. 14, 2016). This education startup you've never heard of is in 75% of American classrooms. Retrieved from <http://www.businessinsider.com/newsela-technology-classroom-literacy-2016-9>

MATSOL BOARD AND STAFF

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Vula Roumis, President
Juanita Brunelle, Vice President
Kathy Lobo, Past President
Melissa Latham Keh, Treasurer
Mary Clark, Clerk
Robin Dowling Grant
Jennifer Noorjanian
Allison Rainville
Laura Schall-Leckrone
Rhoda Webb

STAFF

Helen Solórzano, Executive Director
Ann Feldman, Director of Professional Development and Contracts
Teresa Kochis, Event & Conference Coordinator
Emily Graham, Registration Coordinator

MATSOL CURRENTS

Mary Clark, Editor
Stephanie Brown, Materials Editor
Michaela Colombo
Saskia Fabricant
Audrey Mbani
Meaghan McDonnell
Meghan Wixted

Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages
2 Canton Street, Suite B-223 Stoughton, MA 02072 617-820-5099 www.matsol.org

Copyright © 2016 by Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.