

WATESOLNEWS

SPRING ISSUE 2014



WATESOL

Executive Board

PRESIDENT

Jacqueline Gardy

VICE PRESIDENT

Polina Vinogradova

RECORDING SECRETARY

Paul Champaloux

OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY CHAIR

Leann Keefe Holland

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Masha Vassilieva

TREASURER

Steven Humphries

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CO-COORDINATORS

Ana Maria Nuevo &
Tina Kao

SIG LIAISON

Nancy Newton

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Jihan Asher

SIG CO-CHAIRS:

ESOL K-12

Irene Sakkas &
Jennifer Kuchno

ADULT EDUCATION

Chantal Ross

HIGHER EDUCATION

Kelly Wiechart &
Sharla Branscombe

IN THIS ISSUE

Letter from the President

pg. 3

Postcards from Portland, OR

pg. 4

Travel Grant Report

pg. 6

Spring SIG Activities

pg. 7

Community News

pg. 8

Using films to approach social justice with ESOL students in higher education

pg. 10

Profile: John Nelson

pg. 12

App Review: Duolingo

pg. 13

Working for Language Program Accrediting Agency for a Year – Lessons Learned

pg. 14

Assessing the Reading Progress of Emergent Readers: A Secondary School Pilot

pg. 15

Bridging Languages and Cultures in Russia

pg. 16

Cesar E. Chavez “Champion of Change”

pg. 18

Events

pg. 19

watesolmembership@gmail.com



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear WATESOL Members and Friends,

WATESOL has had a very productive spring this year at WATESOL. In addition to SIG Spring Events, we've also attended several local conferences and have staffed recruiting tables. In addition to our recruitment efforts, we've also completely overhauled the website. We now have a cleaner, easier-to-use website that will serve as a one-stop shop for learning about WATESOL, registering for an event, and communicating on forums. We will build out even more functionality in the months and years to come as well. Please visit www.watesolassociation.org if you haven't already!

It's also time to begin thinking of how you can serve WATESOL. Several board positions will be opening up in October:

- President
- Vice President
- Recording Secretary
- 2 Professional Development Co-Chairs
- 1 Higher Education SIG Co-Chair
- 2 ESOL K12 SIG Co-Chair
- 1 Adult Ed SIG Co-Chair

Up-to-date job descriptions will be uploaded onto the website over the next month. Please contact our Nominations Chairperson, Caralyn Bushey, at caralynbushey@hotmail.com if you are interested in serving on the board. The WATESOL nomination committee will be finalizing the slate in early August.

I'm also pleased to announce our Keynote Speaker, Dr. Greg Kessler from Ohio University, at our Annual Fall Convention, "Twenty-First Century Teaching: Promises and Realities." Greg is the Director of the

Language Resource Center in the College of Arts and Sciences and is Associate Professor of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) in the Department of Linguistics. He is currently the editor of the Action Research Column for the journal *Language Learning & Technology* and is past president of the Computer Assisted Language Instruction Consortium (CALICO). He has served as CALL Interest Section chair for the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and president of Ohio TESOL and co-authored the TESOL Technology Standards Framework as well as the full volume, *TESOL Technology Standards: Description, Implementation, Integration*.

The conference will be held at the Universities of Shady Grove in Rockville, Maryland, on October 18th. Registration will open in late August. We are also considering a pre-convention institute and dinner on October 17th. Details will be forthcoming during the summer.

I wish you a great summer and look forward to seeing you all soon.

In friendship,

Jacqueline Gardy
WATESOL President



Postcards from

PORTLAND

OREGON



WATESOL members Steven Humphries, Jacquie Gardy, Sharla Branscombe, Leann Keefe Holland and Polina Vinogradova at the TESOL Convention in Portland.

WATESOL REPRESENTATION IN TESOL PORTLAND MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Leann Keefe Holland
WATESOL Advocacy Chair

A key goal for me as an ESOL teacher is to continuously grow as a professional and to engage in opportunities where I can learn innovative ideas that I can bring to my classroom. Attendance at TESOL and WATESOL conferences is one of the more stimulating ways that I can learn from the best in the field and membership in WATESOL makes a positive difference in attending these signature events. To date, I have attended two TESOL conferences – 2012 in Philadelphia and the 2014 session in Portland. When I attended in 2012 and was not involved with WATESOL, I was frankly overwhelmed by the number of participants and the breadth and the depth of topics

that are covered. I ran from session to session and found no real time to connect with peers. But now with membership in WATESOL, my experience in Portland was vastly different. I heard great panels that covered topics such as reading strategies to develop critical thinking and improve CASAS scores, using QR Codes in my classroom and Donna Price's reflection checklist for my adult learners. This March, I also was part of a WATESOL team where I attended an affiliate workshop that covered best practices, found ways to network with the WATESOL contingent at our booth and breakfast get-together, ate meals with colleagues, and identified national leaders in the field who may share their knowledge at future WATESOL events.

While lingering over coffee after dodging the

raindrops in Portland, I happily observed that WATESOL affiliate is the best chapter out there. It made me proud that I am part of an organization in our nation's capital with the resources and vision to promote the importance of excellent English language teaching and learning for educators and students. WATESOL provides a gratifying outlet to serve the field - what an exciting time to be a member! Hope I will see you all at the Fall Conference on October 18th!

Jihan Asher

WATESOL Newsletter Editor

Last March was a month of firsts: My first trip to the West Coast and my first ever TESOL International Convention! Portland, Oregon was a great city to get my feet wet with the conference experience—literally and figuratively. I stayed at the Silver Cloud Inn in Northwest Portland, not knowing how aptly named it was. You never knew when it was going to suddenly start raining in ten, fifteen, or twenty minute increments. However, I found myself quickly getting used to the lay of the land thanks to the wisdom of my fellow WATESOL board members and a few friendly locals.

For someone so early in my career, TESOL was a

fantastic learning and networking opportunity. I was humbled by the devotion of many of the attendees and their willingness to collaborate with others. There were sessions covering to every conceivable topic in the field by renowned experts, including many from my very own affiliate. One of the highlights for me was catching WATESOL Vice President Polina Vinogradova's presentation entitled "Empowering Heritage, Community, and Native American Learners Through Digital Stories" (along with Terrence Wiley). And of course, I also got to meet other newsletter editors! It might sound silly, but it was really nice to know that I'm not alone. I was proud to share my work and gain confidence by discussing both best practices and some of the challenges of our position. Even so, no two newsletters are alike and each reflects the unique character of their affiliate--which was on display at the affiliate assembly.

The affiliate assembly, which gathered leadership from dozens of affiliates from around the world, was a humbling moment as I realized for the first time what it means to be a member of TESOL International.

I couldn't have asked for a better experience and hope that I am able to continue to build on what I learned at TESOL.

WATESOL Vice President Polina Vinogradova and President Jacquie Gardy with visitors at the WATESOL breakfast mixer in Portland, OR.



WATESOL Travel Grant Report



by **Pei-Jie (Jenny) Chen**

**PhD. candidate at the University of Maryland
College Park, MD**

I participated in AAAL 2014 at Portland, Oregon from March 23-25, 2014. WATESOL Travel grant covered a significant part of the expenses. I truly appreciate WATESOL for the funding and support.

During the conference, I presented my dissertation research, “Beyond Politeness: Indirectness and Negotiation for Meaning in Written Feedback from an Asynchronous Online Writing Tutorial” at a paper presentation session on March 25. In this presentation, I focus on the pragmatic features in written feedback from an asynchronous online writing tutorial between U.S.-based tutors and L2 writers in Taiwan. Grounded in Vygotskian socio-cultural theory, my study aims at investigating the learning opportunities written feedback could offer. Conceptualizing written feedback as acts that tutors took and guided by Speech Act theory in data analysis, my study identified 12 feedback acts under three categories: Direct Feedback Act (DFA), Indirect Feedback Act (IFA), and Conversational Feedback Act (CFA) that the U.S.-based tutors extensively used in the tutorial process. My findings show that the pragmatic features in the feedback acts served both pragmatic and pedagogical functions by mitigating directness in DFA, contextualizing DFA, and scaffolding for the metalinguistic explanations to the L2 writers. My study demonstrates how written feedback served

as a meditational tool in the revising and writing process. Findings also show that such mediated feedback afforded opportunities of mutual growth and engagement for both the participating tutors and L2 writers.

More than 30 audiences attended my presentation, and gave positive comments. Most of them were impressed by the discourse analysis of the feedback acts and the discussion centering on the social nature of written feedback. An ESL teacher commented, “I am glad to see that teachers’ written feedback goes beyond error correction and editing to address areas of learning that previous studies have neglected, such as discussion of content and negotiation for meaning.” I also had an interesting Q & A discussion, where an audience raised a question regarding the goals the U.S.-based tutors and the L2 writers had at the time of participation, as he found it interesting to see how the tutors and L2 writers moved toward a shared goal—from writing-product focus to more writing-process focus. His question led me to consider issues of writer identity and shared goals in the tutorial for future studies.

In addition to my dissertation research, I also co-presented with my colleagues from the University of Maryland College Park on two other papers

on March 24. One focused on teacher identity and professional development; the other addressed translanguaging in a colloquium. I learned much from the discussion with other participants about the diversity issues in the culturally and linguistically diverse educational contexts.

Overall, the stay at Portland was pleasant. In addition to the professional experience at the conference, I had a chance to catch up with friends and colleagues who work in different cities and countries to learn from their experience as

English language researchers and educators. Once again, I am truly grateful for WATESOL for funding and support of my professional development.

The WATESOL Travel Grant is intended to cover the costs of traveling to any conference relevant to the teaching of ESOL. For more information about WATESOL grants and awards, please visit our website, www.watesolassociation.org

Spring SIG Activities

K-12 SIG's Spring Social

A K-12 Spring Social was held on April 25, 2014 at Grevey's Restaurant in Falls Church from 6-9 p.m. We want to thank everyone who attended. New connections were made and strategies were shared. Here is a sample of the discussions that were held:

- Dual language assessments and Special Education referrals
- Accommodations for ELLs
- Teacher Evaluation and data informed instruction
- RTI – Response to Intervention success stories and struggles
- Virginia's VGLA reading assessments for Grades 3-8
- Balanced Literacy in elementary and secondary classrooms – and resources (Fry words, Reading A to Z, locally produced and digital resources)
- Collaboration across teams and specialists
- Academic conversations
- Education systems and assessment internationally (such as in Finland)



-Paradigm shifts through professional reading and research

It was a wonderful evening, and we look forward to seeing you at future WATESOL events. Thank you to WATESOL for its support of this SIG event.

Jennifer Kuchno and Irene Sakka, SIG co-chairs

Adult Education SIG Spring Professional Development Workshop

WATESOL Adult Education SIG members enjoyed an outstanding professional development workshop "Creative Ideas for Teaching with Technology" by Becky Shiring. The May 3rd event was hosted by the Adult Education SIG Chair Chantal Ross.

Community News



MCAEL is a community coalition of public, nonprofit, and business partners that support more than 70 adult ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and literacy service programs, 1,500 instructors

Community Spotlight: Supporters of Adult Education and Literacy Flock to the Hive

The buzz says it all. By any measure, the first annual MCAEL Grown Up Spelling Bee for Adult Literacy was a huge success. On April 9, 2014, hundreds of community and business leaders, learners, instructors and friends of MCAEL, gathered to celebrate the incredible work of the network of adult English literacy providers in Montgomery County.

“The connection between English literacy and economic development is obvious – the more educated a workforce, the more dynamic the

economic opportunities. We’re proud that so many of our County businesses are joining us during this inaugural year,” noted Josh Jeffries, Chair of the MCAEL Board.

Six teams competed in this year’s Spelling Bee from event sponsors: Adventist HealthCare, Inc., Montgomery College, Holy Cross Health, Doris & Sanford Slavin Foundation, Inc., and teams representing Leadership Montgomery and Friends of the Library.

Holy Cross was declared the winner after correctly spelling “guttle” — to eat voraciously after several back and forth rounds with the library team. So many local businesses recognize the importance of adult literacy to the economic health and vibrancy of the Montgomery County Community.

"Holy Cross Health is a proud supporter of MCAEL and its efforts to promote and improve adult literacy, and we very much enjoyed the chance to be a part of the first-ever grown-up spelling bee," said J. Manuel Ocasio, Chief Human Resources and Integrity Officer.

Kathy Stevens, Executive Director of MCAEL, explained the adult literacy issues in the County. "We're all proud of the educational system in Montgomery County. But it's important to note that the County has over 80,000 adults who lack basic English literacy skills, while 12,000 students have parents who have basic literacy needs, and over 130,000 are limited in their ability to communicate in English, and hundreds are on waiting lists to take English literacy classes," she explained.

"We define English literacy is the ability to read, write, and communicate at a level sufficient to reach one's full potential as a parent, worker, and community member; it's the foundation for individual and family success and self-sufficiency," she continued. Thousands in Montgomery County are missing the crucial element for achieving success: mastering English literacy.

For those thousands, the Montgomery Coalition for Adult English Literacy (MCAEL) has harnessed the, programs, instructors, classes and materials vital to increase literacy among all County residents. Literacy, for many, means a pathway out of poverty, and helps them achieve their goals as parents, workers, and community members.

Using films to approach social justice with ESOL students in higher education

by Mary Romney, PhD., University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT
and Shelley Wong, PhD., George Mason University, VA

Awareness of social justice is essential to an understanding of the world. This is increasingly important in the face of globalization, as disparate communities around the world come into contact with each other. How can ESOL educators create awareness and understanding of the struggle for social justice in different geographical and historical contexts? Films can be an engaging resource to address complex social issues and raise awareness of social justice. We enjoy viewing and discussing films ourselves and find that the medium of film can provide a common frame of reference for students from diverse backgrounds to express their points of view. In this article we discuss definitions of social justice, activities for the use of films and we provide a list of films we have used and recommend for use with ESOL students.

We recommend you start by having your students define what social justice means to them. They can discuss it with each other in pairs or small groups, explain their definition to the whole class, and then they can then compare it to an academic or professional definition from their field of study. Here is a definition from the field of social work that we find particularly useful in the field of TESOL:

Social Justice is a process, not an outcome, which (1) seeks fair (re)distribution of resources, opportunities, and responsibilities; (2) challenges the roots of oppression and injustice; (3) empowers all people to exercise self-determination and realize their full potential; (4) and builds social solidarity and community capacity for collaborative action. (University of California Berkeley)

We have also had our students draw a diagram of how they envision social justice and/or the issues it encompasses. Examples of some of these issues are gender equality, environmentalism, civil rights, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered (LGBT) rights, labor rights and religious freedom. You can have your students generate lists of many more.

We have chosen films with social justice themes based on the issues on the lists generated by our students, their interests, or events in the news. For example, immigration is an issue that is often in the news here in the US and that has interested

many ESL students in this country. We generally prefer independent and lesser known films because the students have been less likely to see these. Another area that has emerged on students' lists of issues is discrimination. Although this is a broad area that has to be narrowed down, or separated into different types of discrimination, we find that this is a very fruitful theme and that there are films dealing with many aspects of discrimination. Analysis and discussion of different types of discrimination enables students to view various multicultural models of social justice.



When using films that deal with different types of discrimination, one activity that we have found to be effective is to have students read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and think about what basic human rights are addressed in each article. We then had them summarize each article in one word, or one short phrase that expresses the one basic human right addressed in that article. If more than one human right was addressed, they listed each one in a short phrase. The result was a list of rights, for example:

The right to
Equality
Dignity
Freedom from racial discrimination
Freedom from gender discrimination

After students watched the film, or selected scenes from the film, they looked again at the list of rights they had created and chose the ones addressed in the film. They selected one of the rights and wrote about how the film addressed that issue.

One challenge to viewing films concerning discrimination and social justice is how to create a classroom climate in which students from different racial and ethnic groups, differing religious affiliations and different political perspectives and viewpoints can be respectful of each other. Fostering communities of learners is an ongoing process. It takes time and sometimes can be challenging. But we should not be afraid of addressing controversial topics.

We have found the following strategies to be particularly helpful:

- 1) Before viewing a film remind students that the materials may be sensitive or offensive and acknowledge that the films may provoke reaction and disagreement. If a student finds a particular part of the film offensive, encourage them to write down the words or images that could be oppressive to themselves or others.
- 2) Acknowledge that there is a diversity of opinion within any class. Encourage students to research issues from privileged and marginalized perspectives. Both positions can be utilized in the quest for social justice. For example, if there is bullying, students from majority religions can stand up to discrimination against persons of minority religious affiliations and straight people can be allies of LGBT. Discuss the difference between being a member of an oppressed or marginalized community and being an ally. What's the difference between speaking for and speaking with?
- 3) Assign a time keeper to maximize participation. Assign a student to call on students who have not participated to encourage all students to speak. 4) Provide safe channels for students to express their concerns by writing to you as the instructor.

Films related to immigration:

A Better Life (USA, 2011)
Lost & Found (Story of a DREAM Act Student) (2007)
Under the Same Moon (USA, 2007) La Misma Luna
East is East (England, 2000)
Journey of Hope (Turkey, 1990)
Las Cartas de Alou (Letters from Alou) (Spain, 1990)
Milk and Honey (Canada, 1989)

Films related to discrimination:

The Help (USA, 2011)
Skin (Republic of South Africa, UK, 2008)
Amandla! A Revolution in Four Part Harmony (Republic of South Africa, 2002)
O (USA, 2001)
Snow Falling on Cedars (USA, 1999)
A Family Thing (USA, 1996)
Secrets and Lies (England, 1995)
Bhaji on the Beach (England, 1994)
The Wedding Banquet (USA, 1993)
Mississippi Masala (USA, 1992)
Days of Waiting (USA, 1990)
Rain Man (USA, 1988)

by Jihan Asher
WATESOL Newsletter Editor

When I first started teaching English, I was nervous and excited. As I tried to brush up on my reading, I found myself getting even more confused about how to teach grammar to my students—and make it meaningful and useful. A family friend referred me to John Nelson, graduate program director of the TESOL M.A. program at the University of Maryland Baltimore County, who helped orient me to teaching English as a Second Language and got me better acquainted with the finer points of my first.

A former Peace Corps volunteer in Ethiopia, Dr. Nelson has been teaching ESOL since 1965 and taught grammar to teacher trainees for twenty years. He has worked with English language learners at the elementary and secondary public school level, and adults both at the tertiary level and in non-credit community education programs, in Africa, South America, Asia, and North America. His contributions to local TESOL community are numerous. Dr. Nelson remains active in MDTESOL, and has served on the board for both WATESOL and MDTESOL. Because of the depth and breadth of his teaching experience, he is able to provide insight on teaching English as a second language at any level.

He recently co-authored and self-published the two-book set entitled “Making English Grammar Meaningful and Useful” with Tymofey Wowk, a former student and adjunct faculty member of English language at Montgomery College. Nelson and Wowk’s displayed an impressive tenacity in getting the books into the hands of ESL teachers and students. After difficulty getting the attention of large publishing houses, the two self-published the book using Opus, Washington D.C.’s first “expresso” book machine, at Politics & Prose.

According to Dr. Nelson, the book is informed by his refreshing simple philosophy on grammar. Most ESOL teachers fall into the same trap and end up teaching grammar incorrectly.



“The usual approach is structure after structure. The more advanced a student is, the more grammatical structures they get. However, when they start producing, they make very basic mistakes. “

By teaching grammar systematically, rather than focusing on irregularities, Nelson argues the English language becomes more organized than not. Traditional terminology is like a “whole different language,” that students and teachers often have to learn together. These books present English grammar through fundamental systems of the language, incorporating simple, self-explaining terms in place of traditional grammatical terminology. “Call a spade a spade,” implores Dr. Nelson. “What do you call a verb that ends in –ING? You call it an ING verb.” By simplifying the terminology, we can be more efficient in the way that we teach grammar.

Michelle Bagwell, writing for TESOL International, said of the books, “The book was fabulous and I truly appreciated how you both were able to break down daunting grammatical terms into easy to understand meaningful ideas.” I appreciate the books for the same reason—they make grammar a hundred times more approachable and come from a sincere desire to rectify generations of wrongs. For more complimentary mini-lessons or to purchase the book, please visit their website.

App Review

by Jennifer Kuchno
K-12 SIG Co-Chair



What Works in K-12: “Duolingo - a Fun, Free Language Learning Tool”

Duolingo, created by Severin Hacker and Luis von Ahn, was the 2013 iPhone “App of the Year” for Apple. K-12 SIG Co-chair Jennifer Kuchno explores the pedagogical value of the insanely popular language learning application.

Who is it for? Relevant to us as ESOL teachers, the program offers implicit English instruction for speakers of Spanish, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, Russian, Hungarian, and Turkish, but according to the Duolingo website, many other languages are in various stages of development.

Duolingo is designed for students who have some literacy in their first language. Duolingo uses knowledge of an L1 to support learning an L2. For example, “English for Spanish Speakers,” has instruction primarily in Spanish

with some English. With L1 literacy, my professional opinion is that the program is most appropriate for grades 3 to adult.

How does it work? Duolingo is similar to other popular language learning software programs, such as Rosetta Stone. Photos and repetition are used to teach content such as vocabulary, phrases and grammar as part of a skill tree. Reading, writing, listening and speaking skills are incorporated. I also like the fact that there are no advertisements to worry about or distract learners.

Best of all, Duolingo is game-based, which engages learners with player “lives” and optional friend lists to incorporate competition.

Do people like it? Yes! From reviews across the web, most people agree that this is a fantastic app. In my Fairfax, Virginia Beginning ESOL classes at Luther Jackson Middle School, I started informally using Duolingo with my Spanish speaking ESOL newcomers to see if they liked it. The results: They love it! In fact, through their own initiative, most of my middle school students have downloaded the app on their mobile phones, and they often ask if they can “play” Duolingo on their devices when they finish their work. I think that says a lot!

Is it effective? Independent research, funded by Duolingo, was conducted to assess the effectiveness of Duolingo as a learning tool. Conducted in 2009 by Roumen Vesselinov of Queens College and John Grego of the University of South Carolina, the study found that 34 hours of using the app equaled one university semester (11 weeks). Read more at: <https://www.duolingo.com/effectiveness-study>

Of course, there is no magic bullet when it comes to learning anything new, and language is no exception. Realistically, nobody is going to become fluent in a language using Duolingo. However, if you are looking for a motivating new tool for your language teaching toolbox, I recommend Duolingo. It’s engaging, interactive, and challenging; some even call it addictive. Check it out for your English language learners – and try your hand at a new language today.

Working for Language Program Accrediting Agency for a Year – Lessons Learned

by Masha Vassilieva, PhD., CEA Accreditation Associate and WATESOL Membership Secretary

I remember when I first started hearing the acronym CEA. I was a brand-new ESL program director at a small private university frantically taking up any professional development opportunities that came my way – WATESOL conferences, NAFSA workshops, TESOL conventions. Most of the talks I was interested in focused on aligning curriculum and assessment, and that's where I first heard of CEA (as in 'surviving CEA accreditation and living to tell the tale').

The impression I formed of CEA (the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation) back then was that of a very cool club of superbly staffed university-based programs, the sort of places that could afford extensive validation studies for their exit tests or might spend two years developing a new mission statement. In 2013 I found myself joining the staff of this somewhat scary-sounding CEA, founded in 1999 as a joint effort of AAIEP, NAFSA, TESOL, and UCIEP. I came on board at the beginning of a uniquely challenging and exciting year for the only national accrediting agency that specializes in intensive post-secondary English language programs and institutions. In 2010, a new law was passed in the U.S. that required all intensive English programs that weren't part of an accredited university to become accredited by December 14, 2013 in order to be SEVIS-certified and enroll international students on F-1 visas. The massive effort of the hundreds of institutions needing accreditation to operate resulted in unprecedented growth for CEA, both in the number of sites pursuing accreditation as well as in numbers of volunteers and staff involved in assisting them through the process.

One lesson I learned this year was that a program does not have to possess the wealth of resources of a traditional on-campus IEP to meet CEA's standards of

excellence. As our associate director likes to say, quality comes in many shapes. It was amazing to see dozens of independent programs affected by the Accreditation Act embrace the challenge of complying with CEA's 44 standards covering faculty qualifications, student services, curriculum, assessment, and a wide variety of program administration and planning matters. As of December 2013, 222 programs and institutions worldwide are part of the CEA family and share its commitment to improving the quality of English language teaching and administration through accepted standards.

Meeting the federal deadline was quite a challenging ride for the accrediting agencies as well. Much of the effort of dealing with the aftermath of the Accreditation Act involved the work of volunteer program reviewers. The 138 site review visits of 2013 (up from our 'normal' annual average of 10) meant that these busy ESL professionals donated weeks and weeks of their unpaid time and effort to the improvement of the field of English language education this year. I came to realize that the majority of the work of other professional associations in our field such as TESOL, NAFSA, and English USA (formerly AAIEP) is done by volunteers as well. Having become a member of WATESOL's Executive Board myself, I learned that this type of volunteer work can be an incredible professional development opportunity, particularly in terms of meeting people from outside one's immediate specialized interest group, and this is the most important lesson I hope to retain from this busy year.

Assessing the Reading Progress of Emergent Readers: A Secondary School Pilot

by Lorraine Valdez Pierce, Ph.D., George Mason University, VA
and Ann A. Kennedy, Ph.D., Arlington Public Schools, VA

Two current realities of teaching in public schools are that (1) teachers need valid and reliable assessments of reading to use with English language learners (ELLs) and that (2) teachers are being evaluated, at least in part, on the academic achievement or progress of their students as evidenced by quantifiable data. If teachers use assessments of reading that are less than accurate or consistent, they will not be able to show the progress of their emergent readers or identify areas of strength and weakness. Assessing all the various aspects of reading presents a major challenge in and of itself, but when we face emergent ELL readers who are also adolescents or young adults in public schools, the challenge becomes enormously magnified. One reason for this is that assessment tools for measuring the reading growth of beginning readers have been found to be inappropriate for secondary school ELLs. This article describes an initiative by Arlington County Schools to help secondary school teachers identify incremental levels of growth for their emergent readers.

In collaboration with George Mason University, Arlington County Schools is piloting an alternative to existing reading inventories for determining the reading progress of emergent readers in secondary schools. Informal or analytical reading inventories (diagnostic assessments of reading for emergent and beginning readers) designed for native speakers of English have little usefulness or validity when used with adolescent and young adult ELLs who are also emergent readers. Such inventories often confuse reading with knowledge of content and culture and do not take into account intervening second language variables, such as prior cultural knowledge, exposure to the phonetic system of English, advanced or content-based vocabulary, complex grammar & syntax, complex text structures, unfamiliar genres, and miscues versus mispronunciations. Nor do current reading inventories take into consideration age-related issues for older learners, such as by using illustrations designed for young children.

The diagnostic reading inventory under development consists of four components similar to those of existing reading inventories: (1) letter knowledge (2) word lists (3) miscue analysis; and (4) text comprehension questions. However, this package differs from those inventories in that it has been specifically designed for use with older ELLs to more accurately pinpoint growth in each of these four components. It does this by addressing issues of age, gender, and culture bias that can confound score results, reducing variability in readability formulas upon which current reading inventories are based, replacing texts deemed inappropriate for secondary school students, ensuring variation in question types and taking reading passages from informational texts.

Preliminary results from the pilot of this reading assessment project indicate that (1) secondary ESL teachers need a significant amount of training in order to be able to use assessment tools with which they may be relatively unfamiliar, such as miscue analysis and running records; (2) student attendance is critical - those who attended 85% or more days showed measurable progress while others did not; and (3) many students have been using less than perfect pronunciation when reading aloud and relying on tolerance of ambiguity by listeners (teachers, in particular) to communicate through oral language, and when asked to read words on a list, demonstrate weaknesses in pronunciation that reduce reliability of scoring.

The school system plans to continue with the development of the diagnostic reading assessment inventory and with training of teachers of beginning ELLs over the next academic year and to determine the extent to which the assessment package is valid, reliable, and feasible in the secondary classroom.

Lorraine Valdez Pierce is an associate professor in the ESL teacher preparation program at George Mason University in Fairfax, VA. Ann A. Kennedy is a reading specialist/ESL teacher in Arlington Public Schools, VA.

Bridging Languages and Cultures in Russia

by Cindy Spoon
WATESOL Member

“Surely your daughter won’t go to Russia now!” This was the oft-repeated admonition given to my 87-year old mother. The national news was full of Russian troops massing at the eastern border of Ukraine and trouble brewing in Crimea. I was starting to wonder myself if I would still be traveling to Russia the first two weeks of April.

In 2013, I had applied and was accepted to the U.S. State Department sponsored program called Teachers for Global Classrooms (TGC). Administered by the non-profit International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), the application process consisted of demographic questions, an essay about my views on global education and the permission of my school administrator. The first part of the program was an 8-week online course. IREX said it would be rigorous and it was. The course was implemented through Blackboard technology and required daily readings and/or comments posted to the site. One of the goals of being a global educator is to “embrace” technology. The course consistently forced me to learn technology with requirements to set up and use Pinterest accounts, a personal blog, design and implement a lesson plan with eLearning components and, of course, the use of the Blackboard technology itself.

In early December 2013, we were given our country assignments. Our possible placements included Colombia, Philippines, Russia, Morocco, Ghana and India. I learned I would be traveling to Russia the first two weeks of April.

In early February, I was matched with an English teacher in the city of Yekaterinburg, the 3rd largest city in Russia. Its location just east of the Ural Mountains places it officially in Asia. My host teacher Anzhelika and I began frequent email exchanges. She had traveled to the U.S. with the Teaching Excellence and Achievement (TEA) program in 2009. TEA is another State Department program that brings teachers from all over the world to the United States to spend two months learning about our



education system and co-teaching with U.S. educators. Once back in their home countries, TEA participants have the option to reciprocate by hosting a TGC participant. I was so very fortunate to have been matched with Anzhelika. She is an amazingly energetic and creative teacher.

In late February, all 74 TGC participants (and an administrator for each!) were flown to Washington, D.C. to gather with IREX and State Department staff. It was an exciting time, finally seeing the faces of people we had interacted with extensively during the online course. We received an overview of our host countries, some pre-travel logistics and an opportunity to share global education lesson plans we had implemented. Evan Ryan, an Assistant Secretary with the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the State Department,

spoke to us about the importance of our mission, as did the President of IREX, Robert Pearson. We would be building bridges across cultures.

By now, the news about Russia was starting to heat up. There was some concern that our group of 12 TGC teachers would not make it to Russia. But the State Department gave us the go ahead and on March 29, 2014, I joined my TGC colleagues at JFK airport in New York to embark on our trans-Atlantic flight to Moscow.

The two weeks I spent in Russia were fabulously educational and very timely. While our governments were sparring over referendums and annexation, we were busy discussing educational content and instructional methods. Of course, differences in our systems were evident. The U.S. Embassy in Moscow had cautioned us to not share anything from our schools that mentioned the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered (LGBT) community. Current Russian law fines individuals accused of “the propoganda of nontraditional sexual relations amongst minors”. This means anything that might expose a young person, 16 or younger, to information about gays (TV shows with a gay character, gay pride parades, school support groups, etc.) is illegal. In contrast, the week before I traveled to Russia, I had attended a meeting of the Gay Straight Alliance at my workplace, Blair High School. The organization, Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), had been invited to speak at the meeting, along with a transgendered Blair student. The importance of their voices being heard and supported was clear. Such an activity in Russia might land you in jail.

This teacher exchange program is all the more valuable for these extreme differences in governments. Students and teachers can see that we have the same goals of educating and preparing our young people for the future. Only after establishing a foundation of mutual trust and appreciation can we hope to address tougher issues.

As an ESOL teacher I was also eager to learn about their immigrant populations. Did they have a Russian as a Second Language program? I asked everyone I met and interviewed several teachers and administrators about this but answers were hard to find. My conclusion is that immigrants either come from one of the former Soviet republics already knowing Russian, or the children of immigrants don't come. I met two minority students, an Azerbaijani boy and a Chinese boy. Both had come to Russia as young boys, were never given any special Russian language support and were flourishing in the

Russian education system.

The teachers, students and administrators I met were all eager to welcome us. I never saw or heard any anti-American statements or actions either in Moscow or Yekaterinburg. Neither did any of my cohort of 12 teachers who were sent to 5 different cities ranging from Khabarovsk in the Far East to the small town of Minchurinsk just south of Moscow. Here are a few things I appreciated about the Russian education system:

- * Most students attend the same school from first grade through high school. These schools are typically small and located within the neighborhoods they serve.

- * Teachers have the same students for many years as they progress through levels of science, math and foreign languages. This seems to establish better rapport among faculty and students.

- * There is a longer break time (anywhere from 10 – 20 minutes) between most classes, allowing students to socialize, eat a snack or, in the case of the youngest kids, play hopscotch on boards painted on the hallway floors!

- * Meals in the cafeteria are cooked fresh everyday. And for the most part, it was delicious. (I didn't care for a barley dish I was served at one school.) Students get chicken cutlets, soup, mashed potatoes, fresh beet and cucumber salads, and bread. To drink, there was a juice made from fruit compote or tea, always tea. I never saw an overweight child.

- * In most schools administrators always teach, too. This must give greater understanding across those roles! Spoon demonstrates to her students how she can stand in two continents at one time.

During my visit, my host teacher, Anzhelika, allowed us to co-teach several of her classes and we observed many other classes across content and grade level. We saw nine year olds in ballroom dance classes and robotic demonstrations from the high school engineering classes. The schools we visited were well equipped with technology and teachers were enthusiastic and dedicated. Teachers are not as well paid as we are here in the U.S., but seem to work just as hard if not harder! However, most of the classes I observed were very teacher-centered with few opportunities for students to use critical thinking skills.

Teachers for Global Classrooms has given me an amazing opportunity to see into the lives of teachers and students a world away. And not just me... While I was in Russia, I was

required to blog with my students back home. As a result, 74 ELL students living in Maryland were able to travel (virtually) with me to Russia. They will continue this connection through letters and perhaps the ePal technology. As for me, my comfort with and knowledge of technology has greatly improved. But more importantly, when I hear the word "Russia" I now think of Anzhelika and her room full of eager and curious students working to obtain their global education. Our governments may continue to disagree, but I have found much that I can agree with in Russia. Despite the concerns of many here, I am very thankful that I did indeed travel to Russia.

The Teachers for Global Classrooms program is open to any secondary educator in the U.S. The 2013-2014 cohort

of 74 teachers came from as far away as Hawaii, Wyoming and Florida. There were 7 of us who came from the greater Washington area (WATESOL territory!). For more information about the program, visit the IREX website.

If you have a moment, please visit my blog. My students were required to post at least one comment. They were also building a timeline (incorporating 8 Russian leaders) with information I was feeding them throughout my visit. Enjoy!

Cindy Spoon's blog can be found online at <http://spoon-cin.wordpress.com>

WATESOL Congratulates Xavier A. Munoz, 2014 Cesar E. Chavez "Champion of Change"



The Literacy Council of Northern Virginia (LCNV) AmeriCorps Classroom Instructor, Xavier Munoz, was honored by the White House as one of the 2014 Cesar E. Chavez' "Champions of Change." The event honors the work of 10 community members who are making a difference in advancing and improving the lives of their community members, including Latinos.

As an AmeriCorps member with the Literacy Council of Northern Virginia, Xavier A. Munoz has been teaching English to adult immigrants and refugees in family literacy and beginning-level ESOL classes since September 2012. In addition to teaching full-time, he leads a staff task force to compile and design an online collection of instructional resources suitable for use with learners with low levels of English language proficiency. Raised in Tampa, Florida, and the younger son of two naturalized immigrants, he has a BA in Human Biology from Stanford University and plans to pursue an MA in TESOL in the near future. He started in adult education as a volunteer literacy tutor with I CAN Community Education Coalition in Tampa and came to Northern Virginia to foster that budding interest. He credits the adults in his classes and his experience serving with AmeriCorps for giving direction to his future and takes to heart the mission of the Literacy Council of Northern Virginia to empower adults through English language instruction to "participate more fully and confidently in their communities".

International Educational Technology Conference

September 3-5, 2014 • Chicago, Illinois

Call for Papers

IETC 2014 seeks a diverse and comprehensive program covering all areas of educational technology. The program includes a wide range of activities designed to facilitate the exchange of expertise, experience, and resources with colleagues. These include keynote and invited talks, full and brief paper presentations, panels and round table discussion sessions. The official languages of the conference are English and Turkish. Proposals can be sent and be presented in either language.

Deadlines

Abstract Deadline : Until July 5, 2014

Full Article Deadline : Until July 20, 2014

Registration Fee Deadline : Until August 5, 2014

For additional information, please visit www.iet-c.net.

Call for Submissions

Have you been dying to sound off on the latest ESL app? Do you have a particular student that has inspired you over the year? A mentor whose work you would like to highlight? The TESOL Adult Education Interest Section Newsletter is still seeking submissions for the upcoming June 15th, 2014 deadline. The main items they are looking for at this time are:

- Reviews (book, tech items, apps, websites, etc)
- Interviews with experienced teachers – focus can be on whatever their particular strength is
- Interview with a student

To submit or for additional information, please contact co-editor Amanda Duff at aduffy@air.org

WATESOL Newsletter Submission Guidelines

If you are interested in submitting an article to the newsletter, please contact the Newsletter Editor: watesol-membership@gmail.com.

We accept articles for the following categories:

Feature Articles: Useful classroom practices, administrative issues, classroom-based research, perspectives and commentary on trends or innovations in the field.

Please include headings and graphics (photos and videos, where applicable)

Length: 700-1500 words

Teaching Tips: Shorter teaching tips or lesson ideas.

Please include headings and graphics (photos and videos, where applicable)

Length: up to 500 words

News from WATESOL Members: Short announcements of professional achievements of WATESOL members (for example, awards, publications in peer-reviewed journals, etc)

Length: up to 250 words.

Documents should be emailed as Microsoft Word attachments to the editor and may be revised before publication.

Submissions are accepted on a rolling basis. If you have an idea for a story that falls outside of these general categories, we welcome creative pitches.

Advertising

Those interested in advertising in the newsletter should contact watesolmembership@gmail.com for prices and acceptable formats.