The Definite Article

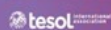## WATESOL Newsletter

Spring 2023

THE RON CHANG LEE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN CLASSROOM TECHNOLOGY

William Newman

BALLOU HIGH SCHOOL, USA

William Newman teaches English learners at Ballou High School in Washington, D.C., and has taught in China, Australia, and Mississippi. He is a graduate of Tulane University and the University of Southern Mississippi and currently spends his summers studying at the Graduate Institute at St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland.

TESOL 2023
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2023 Award Recipients

WATESOL

WATESOL NEWS

In this issue:

ON THE COVER

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From the editors:

Sometimes, in the day-to-day challenges of teaching, we may lose track of our "why." Here is some reading material that we hope reminds you of why you love to teach English learners and renews your classroom activities.

William Newman, the winner of this year's Ron Chang Lee Award for Excellence in Classroom Technology (and WATESOL's K-12 SIG chair), describes how to engage high-school math learners with technology.

The winners of the TESOL International Convention Travel Grant, *Sierranicole Butler* and *Anne Lomperis* tell us what they learned at the Portland, Oregon conference in March.

Melissa Hauke reviews Assessment*, Evaluation, and Accountability in Adult Education* by Lilian H. Hill. And *Signe Nelson*, recently retired from DCPS, explains learning differences and their relationship with intelligence.

Presenters of the first five **spring webinars** share highlights of share their insights (watch the webinars on WATESOL's YouTube Channel!), and a visiting teacher from Tadzhikistan describes her six-week life- and career-changing experience in California as a participant in the Fulbright Teaching Excellence and Achievement program.

Also, remember to save the date for the fall conference: October 28, 2023! The theme is "Blending Tradition and Innovation: Effective Practices for Language Learning."

We hope the Spring 2023 issue of *The Definite Article* will be a source of inspiration and discovery.

Marina Dewees and Katheen F. Kearney
Co-editors

Letter from the President

Dear WATESOL Colleagues,

As the newly appointed President of WATESOL, I am both humbled and thrilled to embark on this journey with you. During this year's TESOL convention, it became evident that several issues are at the forefront of our profession, including diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB), the creation of accessible learning materials, the support of learners with special educational needs, the incorporation of multicultural perspectives, the challenge of native-speakerism, the need to rethink plagiarism, the implementation of VR-related materials and AI tools, as well as the adoption of mediation activities and strategies that foster life skills and soft skills in the classroom. The convention, which drew over 3,000 participants from 110 countries, was a fantastic opportunity for WATESOL to showcase its work and engage with other TESOL affiliates, as well as for us to network with overseas participants at our booth in the Expo Hall.

2023 WATESOL Spring Webinar Series:

We commenced our Spring Webinar Series, and thanks to Lesley-Jane Dixon, our wonderful Advocacy Co-Chair, the series kicked off with an enlightening discourse led by Tuula Lindholm, which explored various effective strategies for intercultural communication in ESOL classrooms. WATESOL has a lineup of other engaging webinars and online workshops scheduled for the spring/summer, covering an array of TESOL topics. Best of all, registration is cost-free, and the comprehensive schedule can be accessed on the **WATESOL website**. This series is inclusive, with no restrictions on attendance, and webinar recordings will be available on WATESOL's YouTube channel. We encourage you to share this information widely and extend an invitation to your colleagues to participate.

Book Discussion Series:

Our talented WATESOL Adult Ed SIG Co-Chairs Ahri Lee and Vivian Njosa have launched a series of book discussion meetings which will meet for three sessions this spring. WATESOL members are invited to read and discuss Meeting the needs of SLIFE, second edition.

Higher Ed SIG Co-Chairs John Simpson and Max Rhinehart will also host a summer book club. They have selected *Translating Myself and Others* (2022) by Pulitzer Prize-winner Jhumpa Lahiri. Please check page 30 for more details or contact them directly at **higheredsig@watesol.org** for more information

Grants:

WATESOL maintains its commitment to providing an assortment of grants and awards, for organizing this, we thank our former President, Greer Manusco and our Communications Chair Tabitha Kidwell. We are proud to have been able to extend two TESOL travel grants for the TESOL 2023 Convention, and we are thrilled to offer further awards, scholarship/grant opportunities to our members.

I would like to express my appreciation to all of our WATESOL members for their unwavering support, and to our dedicated board members for orchestrating a vibrant Fall 2022 Conference. It was invigorating to reconnect in person and engage in productive networking, as we shared innovative teaching practices, research findings, and inspiring ideas with our peers from diverse educational backgrounds, including Adult Ed, Higher Ed, and K-12 educators. As we look forward to the future, we are pleased to announce that we will be hosting our Fall 2023 Conference on October 28 with the hope of reuniting our WATESOL community once again.

We would like to know your suggestions on what WATESOL should do in 2023. You can email me at president@watesol.org to introduce yourself and share your ideas, or reach out to your SIG, NNEST or Advocacy Chairs. We are also looking forward to seeing you at our upcoming events. Thank you for being a part of WATESOL! We wish you all the best in the coming year, and encourage you to continue making a difference in everything you do.

WATESOL 2023 FALL CONFERENCE

BLENDING TRADITION AND INNOVATION: EFFECTIVE PRACTICES FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

OCTOBER 28

SAVE THE DATE

TESOL Affiliate Network Professional Council (*ANPC*)

Dear WATESOL members,

TESOL International and the Research Professional Council recently completed a member-wide survey to understand members' priorities for research TOPICS, research CONTEXTS, and research CHALLENGES. TESOL is currently seeking input on recommended research priorities to share with TESOL members and the TESOL Board by **July 2023**. Please use the link below to submit your ideas:

[Research Priorities Affiliate Indication of Interest and Sign-Up (google.com)](google.com)

Take a look at the August 2022 TESOL Research Professional Council (RPC) Research Priorities Survey [202302_research-priorities-survey-report_final_41023.pdf (tesol.org)](tesol.org)

Be sure to follow the TESOL event calendar: [Calendar of Events | TESOL | International Association](#)

Teaching Hack

William Newman is the 2023 winner of TESOL's Ron Chang Lee Award for Excellence in Classroom Technology. He teaches English learners at Ballou High School in Washington, DC, and has taught in China, Australia, and Mississippi. He is a graduate of Tulane University and the University of Southern Mississippi and currently spends his summers studying at the Graduate Institute at St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland. William is also the chair for WATESOL's K-12 Special Interest Group.

As a high school English as a Second Language teacher, I work with students to help them acquire not only communicative competence in English but also competence in the academic language that they will need to succeed in their other courses. My courses are aligned to the WIDA English Language Development (ELD) standards which are divided into language used for coursework in language arts, social studies, science, and math. Of the four content areas, I have struggled most with developing engaging lessons focused on the math ELD standards.

I had developed lessons that incorporated math content but were primarily focused on science or social studies. However, I found that, while these lessons gave students opportunities to analyze and present data, they did not provide adequate opportunities for students to talk through the steps they followed in solving the problem or analyzing the data. I eventually found a fun and engaging approach to talking about math that involved teaching the students to analyze data using the Python programming language and digital environment called **Jupyter Notebooks**.

In the early days of the pandemic, I occupied some of my newfound free time by taking online courses in computer programming and data science through coursera.org. I had previously completed some coursework in the subject as an undergraduate student but found myself largely starting from scratch. The courses that I was taking, developed for Coursera by IBM, taught through videos as well as through online notebooks that encouraged or required students to not only write code in Python, but also to include notes explaining each line and bodies of text, or markdown cells, providing conclusions and additional information. As it turns out, this is not only a good approach to teaching programming and data analytics but also standard practice among professional data scientists.

During the 2021-2022 school year, I developed a weeklong unit utilizing these Jupyter notebooks to lead students through solving simple word problems. Students had to read the problem, set variables, and calculate the result using Python. For each step along the way, they used notes to explain what they were doing and why they were doing it that way. At the end of each problem, students used markdown cells to present and explain their answer. The weeklong introductory unit worked remarkable well and prepared a follow-up unit a few months later that refreshed the students' understanding and allowed them to complete a data science project that was relatively simple but similar in aim and structure to those completed by professional data scientists.

While I know this approach may not work for every teacher and for every teaching situation, I feel that it provides an example of how we can find authentic lesson materials for our students from a variety of sources. The unit plan for this lesson along with materials and work samples can be found at **pythonforels.weebly.com.** Feel free to borrow any ideas or materials from the site.

> *I eventually found a fun and engaging approach to talking about math that involved teaching the students to analyze data using the Python programming language and digital environment called Jupyter Notebooks.*

TESOL 2023

Reflections from TESOL International Convention Travel Grant Winners:
Sierranicole Butler
ESL Instructor at the YMCA of Greater Boston
Anne Lomperis
Chief Solutions Partner at Language Designs

Sierranicole Butler is a TESOL Professional. She currently teaches adults at the Y of Greater Boston and tutors middle school students. Her research interests include Teacher Training and Language Teacher Identity. In her free time, she enjoys traveling, volunteering at church, and spending time with family and friends.

You can reach her at snbutler22@gmail.com

In March, I had the privilege and pleasure of attending the 2023 International TESOL Convention as a 2023 WATESOL Travel Grant recipient. As a first timer to the Convention, I had an amazing experience both personally and professionally. Below, I will discuss some of the highlights of my time in Portland, Oregon.

Language education has been a passion of mine for several years now. I realized a while ago that I could make a positive impact on my community through English Language Teaching. But to keep things interesting, being exposed to new ideas, teaching methods, and research is crucial. So when I learned I would be attending the Convention, I knew this would be a great opportunity to learn from practitioners from around the world.

The First Timer Orientation was a great way to kick off the Convention. From newcomer to seasoned attendee, the ballroom filled with Convention goers from Guam, Ireland, Cameroon, and beyond. I was overjoyed to see so many different nations represented in one room. As a Virtual English Language Fellow Alum, it was great to connect with colleagues I had seen on screen several times during the pandemic. I also met folks from West Africa, Western Europe and the South Pacific. What a treat!
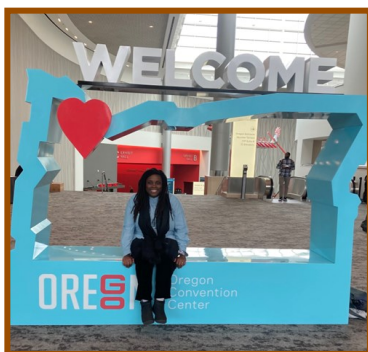
The teacher training sessions were particularly informative. Teachers reach large numbers of students each year; teacher trainers enable teachers to gain the skills and competencies necessary to reach those students. During the teacher training sessions, presenters shared about their teacher training experiences in the field, research that informs their practice, and steps they took to ensure a successful teacher training project. As a teacher who has collaborated with NNESTs, I understand the importance of supporting my NNEST colleagues as they try new approaches to teaching in their classrooms. When teaching adults, it is paramount to build on linguistic skills and knowledge adult learners already possess to build an educational course that begins with students' strengths. As an aspiring teacher trainer, I found the direct and applicable approaches to designing a teacher training course particularly helpful.

During one session, when we (the session attendees) got out of our seats and participated in the activities the presenter used in the field, I could easily see how these exercises got participants excited and energized to learn. I look forward to using these activities in my future teacher training workshops.

A major highlight for me was Dr. Ramsey's opening keynote on Biodiversity and Diversity in Bio. In addition to increasing the audience's knowledge of the vital role of honeybees, he discussed the critical importance of diversity to our society's survival in the natural world. He went on to parallel his research findings to the importance of diversity in our social world. As I listened to his presentation in a sea of hundreds of fellow teachers and administrators, I related to Dr. Ramsey's insightful discussion that was entertaining, timely, and relevant. In order for our country and world to thrive and grow, we as global citizens must empower diverse communities of ELT professionals. When teachers are empowered, we empower our students, our workplaces, and our world.

My time at the TESOL Convention was incredibly inspiring. From sessions on teaching adults to Teacher Training to creating community in the classroom, I found myself wishing I could go to three sessions at once! I am truly grateful to WATESOL for the opportunity to enhance my teaching repertoire and build my network with like-minded professionals. Perhaps my greatest takeaway is with ongoing professional development and a sustained thirst for trying new things, I, too, can keep on renewing my professional practice, empowering my students, and achieving my goals as an ELT professional. Thanks, WATESOL!

Anne E. Lomperis, MA TESOL, a solo entrepreneur of Language Training Designs since 1989, currently lives in Montgomery Village, MD, in greater metropolitan Washington, DC. She is the grateful recipient of one of the WATESOL travel grants to attend the 2023 TESOL Convention in Portland, OR, in March 2023.

Anne is a specialist in English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) and Language Planning and Language Policy (LPLP) for the labor force, particularly in developing countries (18, to date). In addition to project consulting, she pursues agenda to professionalize EOP through teacher training, certification, and EOP program accreditation. She can be reached through LinkedIn where her contact email is also provided.

Background on EOP

The field of English Language Teaching (ELT) has traditionally been focused on the academic context, whether for elementary, secondary, or tertiary levels. Along the way, adult education has been added to this mix, primarily to address consumer integration and employability.

As the field has become more developed, attention to specific needs has become more intentional and wide ranging. These specific needs may relate to select populations (e.g., refugees, those in conflict zones, those with disabilities, or those whose human rights are not fully recognized), the intersection with related fields (e.g., intercultural communication, social and environmental responsibility), infrastructure (e.g., teacher education, program administration), and methodologies of instructional delivery (e.g., via computer assistance; videos; and, most recently, online platforms).

Yet, even within the specialty of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which, by definition, addresses specific needs, the academic focus has remained dominant. In fact, most academics equate ESP with English for Academic Purposes (EAP). They use the terms interchangeably. However, as ESP has itself developed, it has expanded its defining feature of customization to be applied to the business world. The original, catch-all

term of Business English has now become much more refined by industry sector: Legal English, Medical English, Aviation English, and so on. Now, ESP needs to be seen as the umbrella term that refers to the two main branches of ESP: English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP).

True, EOP, the newest kid on the block, needs much more recognition and familiarity. It is not addressed explicitly in any formal, institutional teacher training courses. If a graduate program in TESOL anywhere in the world does address ESP, it is almost exclusively devoted to EAP. Yet, EOP is greatly needed in the global economy (e.g., as part of the solution to labor shortages), in high stakes industries (e.g., safety in aviation), and always in customization to improve very specific job-task performance in any industry sector.

> Now, English for Special Purposes (ESP) needs to be seen as the umbrella term that refers to the two main branches of ESP: English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP).

EOP at TESOL Portland

Thus, the high priority agenda of EOP includes awareness raising and dedicated EOP teacher training within the field of ELT. EOP must also increase its visibility and credibility with its clients in industry. It was very encouraging, then, to engage in the greater-than-usual fare in EOP sessions and activities during TESOL Portland. I am very grateful to have been a recipient of one of the WATESOL travel grants that made my attendance at this convention so much more affordable. I report below on several of these key EOP sessions and activities.

1. **Outreach to Industry**

    a. *Positioning TESOL in Global, Professional Workplaces*

    b. *Global Competence and the TESOL Leadership Within and Beyond*

2. **EOP Research Agenda**

    a. *Using Linguistic Data in ESP Assessment and Curriculum Design*

    EOP needs to collect corpus linguistics data by industry sector. This session focused on data in aviation, medical, and legal English in "both workplace and academic settings."

    b. *Self-Directed Learning in the Workplace*

    Studies were presented on learning how to use social hierarchy in the workplace to obtain answers to high-stakes questions. The session focused on using language socialization.

    c. *Innovations: Chat GPT for Language Learning*

    Not knowing much about this new technology, I intentionally attended this session to educate myself. I tried out an exercise to elicit an outline on an important question for EOP entrepreneurs: How to monetize consulting with industry for EOP professionals. I would need more time to analyze the result that popped up.

3. **EOP Teacher Training**

    a. *ESP IS Academic Session: The Need for Needs Assessment in ESP*

    Of the six panelists, I was the only one representing EOP. I used this opportunity to introduce the wider context for needs assessment than "just" for curriculum design and development. I laid out the

frameworks for Economic Needs Assessment (ENA) at the national economy level across industry sectors, then Organizational Needs Assessment (ONA) at the level of corporate management in any given industry sector. ENA and ONA thus inform the third level of Instructional Needs Assessment (INA) at the more familiar learner level for curriculum design and development.

I discussed principles and provided case studies at each level. I also identified research agenda, chiefly the need to gather data on corpus linguistics and return-on-investment (ROI) gains (See below, 5.a.ii.) by industry sector. I also advocated for EOP teacher training and certification, and EOP program accreditation.

b. *Overcoming Obstacles in Collaborating with SMEs (Subject Matter Experts) in ESP*

I had been asked in advance to contribute "real-live" case studies to this workshop --- and to attend the workshop so as to be able to discuss these case studies. The presenters also incorporated my three levels of NA, such that I was able to elaborate on collaboration with SMEs at these three levels, as well: ENA, ONA, and INA.

4. **ESP Interest Section Open Meeting -- New Initiatives Raised**

a. *EOP Exchange – I plan to host monthly, global Zoom meetings on burning issues in EOP. These could feed into the professionalization initiatives below (5.a and 5.b.).*

b. *EOP for Community Gardening*

5. **EOP Networking That May Lead to Two Foundational Initiatives in Professionalization**

a. *University-Based EOP Teacher Training Program Online*

i. Content: Best Practices (BPs) in EOP; Language Planning and Language Policy (LPLP) for the labor force

- Content across courses would cover Best Practices in workplace language training (Friedenberg, Kennedy, Lomperis, Martin, Westerfield; with contributions from van Naerssen, 2003; technology update, 2014). I spearheaded this initiative through the ESP Interest Section of TESOL, Inc., to develop international standards (Best Practices) in workplace language training. This was a nine-year effort that involved five co-authors and review teams in 45 countries.

- These Best Practices relate to business plans, marketing, the needs assessment – collaboration – customization processes, program design, curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation.

- Principles of LPLP would also be discussed.

- All topics would be illustrated with extensive and detailed case studies from personal fieldwork across a wide range of industry sectors.

ii. Dual university participation and certification

- This program would be based at a US university that would work toward offering EOP certification.

- This program model would also include teachers in other countries who want EOP training. They would align themselves with a local national university that would also work toward offering EOP certification. This international teacher could complete the program with dual certification

   iii. On-site client collaboration: modeling and local assignments

- Particularly critical in EOP teacher training is to model the process of needs assessment (NA) and collaboration with industry experts on-site, in-person, at a client facility. This process leads to the customization necessary to produce desired results in targeted, job-task performance improvement. These results, in turn, yield the typically compelling return-on-investment (ROI) gains that sound EOP programs are known for – as high as 531% (Martin and Lomperis, 2002).

- Because the program would be online, I would still model this process through videotaped sessions at client work sites. The teachers-in-training would also be guided to conduct and videotape their own NA and collaboration processes to share in the online sessions.

   b. *UCIEP (University and College Intensive English Programs) Program Administrator Series: Orientation to EOP with Local Assignments*

   i. This series consists of four 3-hour online sessions covering an abbreviated version of the above principles and case studies from the Best Practices and from LPLP. It will be tailored to the program administrator role and perspective. Participants will be guided to engage in local assignments that will be shared and discussed within the large group.

   ii. Also exploring:

- Co-participation in the same series by MATESOL teacher training programs, to offer an introductory option

- Coordination with regulatory entities like CEA (The Commission on English Language Program Accreditation) to see if EOP programs can be accredited under CEA standards

  (I attended a session on *English Language Programs: Associations and Accreditation Perspectives* to network about this purpose.)

> You could fill a need in EOP – and in your own career! There is a big world out there that could open up in EOP – or in combination with EAP.

I close by encouraging any readers who have become more interested in EOP through the topics discussed in this article to contact me for further information or engagement. You could fill a need in EOP – and in your own career! There is a big world out there that could open up in EOP – or in combination with EAP.

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Lost in Assessment?

How a teacher can support their ELs and SpEds and tell one from the other

Recently retired from District of Columbia Public Schools, Signe Nelson has taught ESL for over 40 years to learners of all ages in a variety of settings. When she was adjunct faculty at American University's, English Language Institute, a colleague, Robin Schwartz, alerted her to ways learning disabilities complicate the second language learning process. She finds that her most challenging, yet most satisfying teaching experiences have been with neurodiverse learners.

Most children learn to speak without being directly taught. Infants begin to sort out the meaningful speech sounds (phonemes) of their mother tongue and discover the power of words to name, and to communicate information and intent. First language acquisition follows a natural trajectory, beginning with listening, followed by speaking. This is true across cultures and languages. It is part of our genetic makeup as a species. Reading and writing - systematic visual representations of speech - are human inventions, going back only a few thousand years. Unlike speech, reading and writing generally must be directly taught. Along with basic number concepts and arithmetic skills, they are traditionally the primary focus of early schooling.

In alphabetic writing systems, symbols (graphemes) directly represent the phonemes of the spoken language. English is referred to as an opaque, or orthographically deep alphabetic language, in that its 44 or so phonemes are represented by 26 letters in various more or less regular patterns. Spanish, in contrast, has a transparent alphabetic system with 23 phonemes and nearly 100% sound-letter correspondence. Direct reading instruction in English takes about three years, after which, in third grade, learning to read shifts to reading to learn. Language arts teachers in early childhood and lower elementary grades are familiar with the five pillars of excellent reading instruction: Phonemic awareness, phonology, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.

Phonemic awareness is the ability to differentiate, identify and manipulate the phonemes of the spoken language. Phonology, is the application of phonemic awareness to the tasks of decoding and encoding written language. It encompasses the concept of writing, understanding of the alphabetic principle and the specific relationships between phonemes and their graphic representations. It also requires the ability to recognize spoken time order as written spatial order and the use of empty space to indicate word boundaries.

With increased fluency, phonology becomes automatic, allowing the reader to move beyond sound-letter correspondence and single word recognition to read with the speed, accuracy and expressiveness of speech. Fluency is critical for comprehension. Vocabulary does the heavy lifting in conveying lexical meaning. This enables comprehension, the ultimate goal of reading, wherein the reader interacts with the meaning of a text through mental imaging. Comprehension requires the ability to self-monitor for understanding, to predict, to infer, to question and to revise hypotheses.

Many factors affect the ease with which ELLs master reading and writing skills in English. Age, of course, is one factor. Pre-schoolers with normal oral language development from non-English speaking homes can be expected to learn to read and write along with their peers over the three years of direct instruction with minimum ESL support. The situation becomes more challenging as ELLs enter the school system at higher grade levels. Here, a strong native language literacy base is a tremendous leg-up, as the concepts and skills of reading and writing largely transfer from one language to another. As these learners acquire oral English, reading and writing follow along. Students who, for whatever reason, lack grade-level literacy skills in their native language will struggle much more to acquire these skills through instruction that presuppose oral English fluency. As ESL teachers we develop a sense of what is normal progress in written and oral language, given our students' age, language and cultural backgrounds, previous education, personality, motivation and so on. But some of our students struggle way beyond what we would normally expect, despite our - and their - best efforts, especially with reading and writing. Sometimes we feel they just need a little more time, but sometimes we wonder if "something else might be going on."

> ***What, at this point, do we do about our suspicion that some factor beyond normal variation in the second language acquisition process is in play?***

What, at this point, do we do about our suspicion that some factor beyond normal variation in the second language acquisition process is in play? Fortunately, as ELL teachers, we are uniquely positioned to help sort out language learning, language difference or culture shock from possible other sources of problems. Secondly, because we frequently work with students in one-to-one or small-group settings, we may have more opportunity to observe and document learning behaviors or outcomes consistent with visual or auditory impairment and/or neurodevelopmental disorders.

Although we are neither qualified nor authorized to diagnose learning disabilities, we can act on our suspicions and help refer students for formal evaluation. If our suspicions are correct, this can establish the legal right to appropriate classroom accommodations and modifications and provide access to specialized instruction. Be aware that there may be resistance to referring ELLs for evaluation because symptoms of disability can mimic normal stages of second-language acquisition. The default assumption is often that the problem is one of English proficiency or acculturation, rather than a developmental disability. There is also often a concern that identification of a handicap may stigmatize the affected learner. It is far more likely, however, that struggling learners will welcome acknowledgement of the enormity of the challenges they face.

In order to make a credible case for formal referral, we need at least a basic understanding of language-based learning disorders - as well as sensory acuity deficits - and how they might manifest in a student's efforts to learn as well as in their work product. Learning disorders, or disabilities, are so named because, by definition, they interfere with an individual's ability to learn in a typical academic setting, especially in language and mathematics. They are neurological disorders involving brain areas that process sensory information and the connections and coordination of activities between them. They are not associated with intelligence or with functioning of the sensory organs, such as visual acuity or peripheral hearing ability. In the preliterate human past, they would not necessarily have been handicaps.

Learning disorders are diagnosed in terms of a significant discrepancy between the individual's actual performance and the expected performance based on age, general intellectual ability and educational opportunity. The diagnosis requires elimination of other possible causes of the discrepancy, such as hearing or visual impairment, and, of course in the case of ELLs, language difference or the second-language acquisition and acculturation process. The American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) groups them under the heading, "Specific Learning Disorder" (SLD). "Disorder" is the clinical term. "Disability" ties the condition to the school environment and the legal obligation under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to provide appropriate educational support for all learners. Exact figures for the prevalence of any given learning disorder are elusive although there is general agreement that they occur with the same frequency across nationalities and languages. According to the American Psychiatric Association, up to 15% of school age children struggle with one or more learning disabilities. SLDs frequently appear in combination with each other and with other neurodevelopment conditions such as autism or attention deficit disorder. Language-based learning disorders directly impacting the acquisition of literacy in both first- and second-language environments include dyslexia, visual processing disorder, auditory processing disorder, and dysgraphia.

Dyslexia is the most common learning disability, affecting 20% of the population to some degree. It results from inefficient utilization and coordination of areas of the brain dealing with aural and visual pattern recognition. This interferes with the ability to recognize and apply the alphabetic principle. The impact is greater with more orthographically complex languages such as English than with more transparent languages such as Spanish.

Auditory Processing Disorder (APD) causes difficulty discriminating, interpreting and sequencing speech sounds. It interferes with the ability to recognize combinations of phonemes in words and words in longer utterances. Lag in processing time interferes with the comprehension of oral language since the listener is always a beat or so behind. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association specifically identifies this disorder as a significant impediment to learning a new language. APD can masquerade as attention deficit disorder.

Visual Processing Disorder (VPD) affects the ability to perceive, interpret and recall visual information. Disorders in this cluster often have a spatial judgement component affecting perception of distance, shape, dimension, and orientation. This leads to confusion between similar-looking letters, numbers, and words, inversion and reversal of letters and symbols, problems with visual memory and sequential visual memory - from spelling patterns to reading comprehension - and visual-motor integration.

Dysgraphia is characterized by poor, often illegible handwriting, It can result from poor eye-hand coordination, motor memory, fine muscle control or spacial sense. It can also manifest as encoding difficulty, which may include added or omitted letters.

Vision and peripheral hearing impairments are not learning disabilities, but like them are independent of intellectual capacity, vary in severity, directly impact first- and second-language development, and are under identified or misidentified. According to the CDC, about 15% of school age children have some degree of hearing loss, which may masquerade as a learning disability or a behavior or attention problem. Hard of hearing children have particular difficulty in environments with high background noise and/or reverberation. Referral for diagnosis is usually through a pediatrician to an audiologist and often results in a 504 plan which may include intervention, classroom modification and assistive technologies.

Vision disorders are also common among school-age children, One group is refraction errors originating in structural irregularities of the eye itself. Myopia blurs distance vision, hyperopia blurs close-up vision and astigmatism can affect both. Refraction errors are readily identified and effectively treated through a comprehensive eye exam. A 20/20 chart screening by the pediatrician or school nurse often misses impairment severe enough to impact learning. The second group, having to do with how the brain controls and directs the eyes in order to experience binocular vision, can be missed through a standard eye exam. These disorders include convergence insufficiency, the inability to bring close up objects into focus, accommodation insufficiency, the inability to change focus quickly between near and distant objects, and oculomotor dysfunction, in which the muscles controlling eye movement do not work efficiently. These disorders are diagnosed and treated in a specialized pediatric or developmental optometric practice. This is often easier said than done, as it can be hard to find a general optometrist, let alone a specialist, who takes Medicare, and many private insurance policies have poor coverage.

Once we decide to initiate a referral process, we need to understand and comply with policies and procedures. Normally there is a preliminary form to submit to the SPED coordinator or lead of the student support team or multidisciplinary team. Be prepared to provide documentation to support the concern and help guide the team in the types of interventions that might be appropriate. Take notes on interviews, and classroom observations, keep work samples, record interventions and outcomes.

Look for evidence in classroom behaviors. Observe how the child holds the paper and pencil when writing. Is the pencil grip appropriate? Is pressure too light or too heavy? Does the student tire easily? Pay attention to how letters are formed. The letter, *W,* drawn from right to left is a red flag, as is hesitation and uncertainty with the orientation of *s* and *3*. Notice the child's posture when reading or writing. Holding the page too close, squinting, squirming, tilting the head - or the page - to an extreme angle and covering or closing one eye suggest vision problems. Look for a difference in how the child reads from the board at a distance as opposed to how the child reads at close range. Notice if it seems to take time to adjust the focus at different distances. Skipping over words or lines, loosing their place, having trouble following along when others read, pointing with finger, subvocalizing, skipping, adding or substituting words, making reasonable but incorrect guesses based on first letter, getting stuck on words, mispronouncing words, and reading without expression can be markers of acuity or processing difficulties. Look for confusion between similarly shaped letters and words, such as lower case l and i, or *the* and *she.* Note fidgeting, restlessness, and complaints of tiredness, dizziness or headaches when reading. Notice if the learner is easily distracted and needs frequent redirection, or seems clumsy, bumps into things, knocks things over, never hits the waste basket with a paper wad, and has trouble catching a ball. Look for behaviors that have the effect of avoiding work that the learner may find frustrating, humiliating, or perhaps physically uncomfortable.

Student work is also rich in clues. Is the writing too large or too small? Are letters distorted? Look for letter reversals (b-d) and inversions (u/n), and word substitutions. (was/saw.) Look for letters omitted when the child is copying words, and look for words omitted in longer sentences. Look for spacing between letters and words. Look for writing that begins with control but deteriorates as the writer tires. Look for writing that refuses to sit on the line, crowds one side of the paper or that wanders uphill or downhill. Look for frequent spelling errors, often with a given word spelled differently within the same piece of writing.

Get a writing sample from immigrant children in their language of instruction. And if possible have them read aloud graded word lists and a short passage in the home language.

Learning disorders are not outgrown. However, early intervention, modified instruction, assistive technologies and other accommodations, as well as compensation strategies can help learners mitigate or circumvent limitations. There is convincing brain-scan evidence that intensive training over an extended period can optimize efficient use of brain areas improve skills affected by dyslexia.

There are multiple effective programs for the treatment of dyslexia and other language-based disorders. Most are modeled on the Orton-Gillingham structured phonics approach, developed in the 1920s for use in clinical settings. These methods are described as structured, direct, explicit, multi-sensory, multimodal, sequential, cumulative, diagnostic, and prescriptive. Structured, direct, and explicit refer to student-centered, teacher-directed instruction as opposed to discovery-based learning or reliance on the learner's ability to infer rules from models or examples. Complex tasks are broken down into their simplest components, directions are clear. and feed back is immediate and explicit. Sequential and cumulative mean that scope and sequence are intentionally selected to move instruction from key foundational skills to more complex skills so that new learning builds on a base of previous learning. Multi-sensory or multimodal instruction acknowledges both the sensory processing basis of language-learning disabilities and the benefit of using different modalities in teaching and learning. Diagnostic and prescriptive refer to the flexibility to adapt instruction to individual student needs based on ongoing formative assessment. This will necessarily affect pace of instruction which is driven by the pace of student progress.

Good comprehensive programs address phonemic awareness, phonology, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Whether students you have flagged eventually qualify for special services, they are still your responsibility. If it is in your power, start with classroom acoustics by eliminating or reducing competing noise. Make sure all students can see speakers' faces to enhance communication. Incorporate structured phonics techniques in support of the five pillars. Borrow strategies from autism teachers and related service providers, and if you have the opportunity to form a structured phonics reading group, consider the Stevenson Reading Program. It is adaptable for ELLs at all proficiency levels, is relatively inexpensive, and requires no special training.

www.thisreadingmama.com

Support learners with games and manipulative. Games provide the amount of practice and repetition struggling readers need. Choose games that provide opportunities to learn and practice skills rather than games that are contests of speed or accuracy. Play "Red Light Green Light" with beginning phonemes. Play "Concentration" with matching sight words to build visual discrimination and memory. Play "Go Fish" with features you can make into suits, such as irregular verb tenses or derivational suffix families. Turn letters, words and sentences into manipulatives by writing them on sentence strips. Have students segment single and multi-syllable words by folding them or by cutting them apart with scissors. Correct errors by taping them back together. Do the same with sentences, dividing them into phrases or thought groups. Use sentence strips to make scrambled words, scrambled sentences and scrambled passages. These are good activities for partners as are sorting games of, for instance, rhyming words or adverbial phrases.

Use color coding to focus attention on different features such as vowels, consonants, digraphs, rhyming words, punctuation, inflectional or derivational suffixes. Make reusable worksheets by encasing them in protective sleeves and have students mark them up with different colored fine-point dry-erase markers.

Have students touch their arms to indicate the position of target phonemes in words: "If the sound is in the beginning, touch your shoulder; in the middle, touch your elbow; at the end, touch your wrist. If the sound is not in the word, slap the table". Have students segment and blend phonemes along their arms. Practice "air writing," where learners stand at a distance, and turning their arm into a "pencil," trace a letter or a word in the air, pronouncing as they write.

Use mnemonics, songs, and rhythmic chants, and capitalize on students' preferred learning styles. For instance, if a student's culture emphasizes route learning, give them things to memorize.

Work on practicing visual strategies for spelling. Because of the strong swing toward phonics education in the United States, and because ELLs may come from language backgrounds with transparent orthographies, visual skills have probably not been emphasized. The fact is that good spellers in English are invariably visual spellers. Practice observing written words and noticing such features as number of syllables, prefixes and suffixes, silent letters, blends, similarities and contrasts with other words and any other memorable features. Make spelling rules explicit.

Repeated failure, especially after consistent effort, tends to disincentivize further effort. Students with learning disabilities have to work much harder than their peers and need resilience and motivation over many months and even years. Even when they make process, they are chasing a moving target. By the end of kindergarten, they are often aware that they can't keep up, and begin to internalize a negative self-concept. This naturally creates distress. and maybe hostility. and leads to concealment or avoidance behaviors.

Effort rewarded by success, on the other hand, creates an appetite for more success in a positive feedback loop. Interventions for learning disorders do not yield fast results. You can foster self-efficacy by acknowledging the learner's exceptional effort and encouraging repeated effort. Create a safe environment that doesn't penalize repeated failure. Express sincere confidence in the learner's ability to succeed. Identify and reward even the smallest successes, Discourage comparisons with other students. Instead, encourage learners to compete with themselves, to beat their own record for the number of words read or spelled. Graph or otherwise memorialize and track their progress so that they can see their own growth.

Discuss learning differences and their relationship with intelligence and how they make some kinds of learning especially difficult, which is why we call them disabilities. Discuss their presence in otherwise gifted individuals. Encourage and help them to recognize and develop their strengths, to embrace their weaknesses, and to advocate for themselves.

Finally, the inability to decode and encode, and read and write fluently should never function as a gatekeeper. Provide alternate routes to accessing and expressing content knowledge. Advocate for assistive technology and any other accommodations or modifications that provide equity for neurodiverse learners.

WATESOL MEMBERSHIP

Is your membership current? Do you have a colleague who might not currently be a member of WATESOL or who was once active in WATESOL but no longer is? Go to watesol.org/membership-benefits to ensure that your membership is active, or refer a friend to watesol.org/join to join. Contact membership@watesol.org with questions.

Sources and Resources:

Information on the learning disabilities sensory impairment

◊   [American Speech-Language-Hearing Association | ASHA](#)

◊   [The American Academy of Audiology](#)

◊   [American Optometric Association (AOA) | Doctors of Optometry](#)

◊   [International Dyslexia Association - …until everyone can read! (dyslexiaida.org)](#)

◊   [Learning Disabilities Association of America – Support. Educate. Advocate. (ldaamerica.org)](#)

◊   [Homepage | NICHD - Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (nih.gov)](#)

◊   [Psychiatry.org - Home](#)

◊   [Understood - For learning and thinking differences](#)

Resources for Referral and Intervention

Designing and implementing a successful reading program with digital solutions. (n.d.) Edmentum. **[Designing and Implementing a Successful Reading Program with Digital Solutions | Edmentum](#)**

Garner, B. K. (2007). *Getting to "got it!" : Helping struggling students learn how to learn.* Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

McCarney, S. B., Wunderlich, K. C., & House, S. N. (2014). *Pre-referral intervention manual* (S. N. House, Ed.; Fourth edition.). Hawthorne Educational Services, Inc.

Rinaldi, C., Ortiz, S. O., & Gamm, S. (n.d.). *RTI-based SLD identification toolkit - Consideration for ELLs.* RTI Action Network. **[LD Identification Toolkit Considerations for ELL (rtinetwork.org)](#)**

Good Reading on the Topics

Saltz, G. (2017). *The power of different : The link between disorder and genius*). Flatiron Books.

Shaywitz, S. E. & Shaywitz, J. (2020). *Overcoming dyslexia : a new and complete science-based program for reading problems at any level (2nd ed.).* Vintage Books.

Wolf, M., & Stoodley, C. J. (2008). *Proust and the squid : The story and science of the reading brain* . Harper Perennial.

WATESOL welcomes submissions from members for publication in the Definite Article.

If you have an idea, please check our website for categories and requirements or reach out to the editors Marina Dewees and Kathleen F. Kearney at newsletter@watesol.org

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Recent Webinars

Teachers as Cultural Advisors
March 4, 2023

* **Presenter**: Tuula Lindholm
* **Session Type**: Workshop
* **Focus**: Adult education, Higher education, Bilingual education, Teacher training
* **Targeted Skills**: Intercultural Communication

According to the UN [*International Organization for Migration*](#) (IOM) in 2019, the number of international migrants worldwide – people residing in a country other than their country of birth – reached almost 272 million (from 258 million in 2017). The statistics give us a hint of just how much more international and intercultural the world has become. As we know, there are more international students studying in North America than ever before. Never has there been as widespread mixing and blending of cultures as we have today.

In the March 4 webinar on *Teachers as Intercultural Advisors,* I wanted to focus on the role of ESOL teachers as cultural advisors of students. The questions and contributions by WATESOL members provided a great opportunity to discuss more in depth what this idea means in practice in the ESOL classroom.

> Becoming an intercultural advisor also requires that we as teachers recognize our own cultural background and understand how the culture that we have grown up in permeates communication.

How we understand culture/s has changed. We no longer see "other cultures'" as food, dress, or festivities, but as a more complex phenomenon of various *cultural identities* that continue to evolve and change with time. We are now living as part of a much larger mix and blending of cultures than ever before in history. Culture/s is not static but a living, changing process which is also present in every ESOL classroom but often as the elephant in the room.

To learn to integrate intercultural knowledge and the skills is truly a process. In writing the book, both of us authors hoped to open a discussion in the ESOL field of how to address the intercultural issues in our teaching. Becoming an intercultural advisor also requires that we as teachers recognize our own cultural background and understand how the culture that we have grown up in permeates communication. ESOL teachers will always teach language(s) and communication competencies, including pragmatics and sociocultural content, but it is vitally important to understand how language also *conveys* much broader culture/s, cultural preferences, and values. When we understand these aspects in our own communication and behavior, we'll get better at seeing the importance of intercultural knowledge for our students.

I encouraged the webinar audience to consider developing better intercultural awareness. The knowledge of how cultural customs are embedded in our daily communication is very helpful. Given the array of contexts we teach in, I encouraged everyone to consult *Appendix A of my book on Understanding Cultural Preferences.* Preferences is an important concept here because when any of us show a cultural preference, it is likely to be from the

first culture in which we were brought up. Not static but evolving. I have found teaching intercultural communication skills very rewarding.
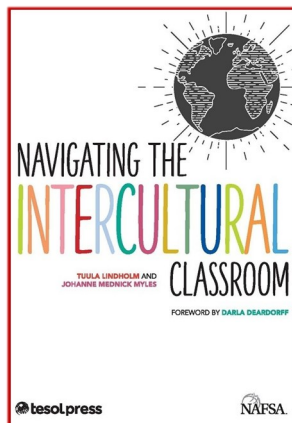
I call the opportunities we have in the classroom to teach cultural meaning "cultural moments." In the webinar I urged the participants NOT to miss these moments in their own teaching. Why not use the chance we have? Share with our students – I mean us sharing own cultures as well – the knowledge that is involved and the language and its meaning. There are too many examples of culturally important incidents to include in this summary, but most of them are familiar to you once you start opening the treasure box of intercultural advice.

To learn to integrate intercultural knowledge and the skills is truly a process. In writing the book, both of us authors hoped to open a discussion in the ESOL field of how to address the intercultural issues in our teaching. Becoming an intercultural advisor also requires that we as teachers recognize our own cultural background and understand how the culture that we have grown up in permeates communication. ESOL teachers will always teach language(s) and communication competencies, including pragmatics and sociocultural content, but it is vitally important to understand how language also *conveys* much broader culture/s, cultural preferences, and values. When we understand these aspects in our own communication and behavior, we'll get better at seeing the importance of intercultural knowledge for our students.

There is no ***us*** and ***them*** setup in our classrooms. ESOL teachers will always have a role to guide and share our acquired knowledge. The authority we have in the classroom comes from being a trusted advisor to our students. They will turn to us as with many interesting questions. Intercultural communication and learning can become part of whatever subject or language topic you are teaching.

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Based in Toronto, Canada, Tuula Lindholm is an experienced intercultural educator, author, instructor of business communication skills in postsecondary education. You can watch her webinar on Youtube: Teachers as Cultural Advisers - YouTube
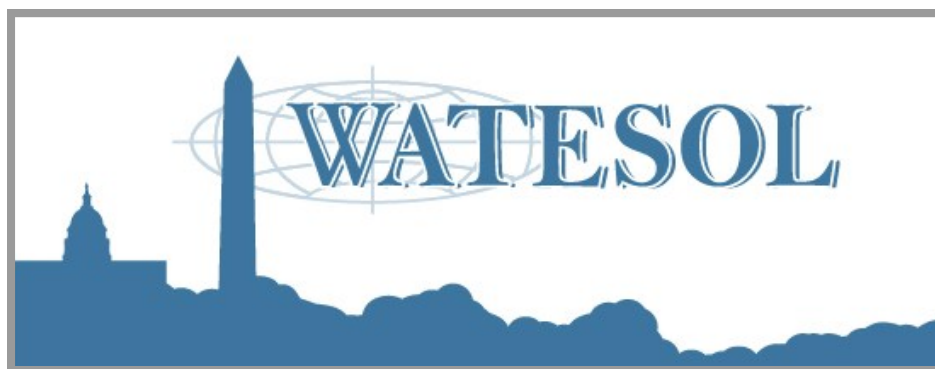
Engaging English Language Learners with Global Education
March 31, 2023

∗ **Presenter**: Abby Watkins

∗ **Session Type**: Workshop

∗ **Focus**: K-12, Teacher training, Advocacy

∗ **Targeted Skills**: Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, Grammar, Vocabulary, Intercultural

Best practices in teaching English language learners can be part of engaging, experiential lessons in the content areas for middle school students. Built around global awareness themes, these activities can empower students to hone their communication skills, and to engage on issues that interest them, such as environmental studies. In this interdisciplinary session, the presenter led participants in activities that foster global awareness and environmental stewardship, while building content knowledge and vocabulary in life/earth sciences and the social studies. Topics include population dynamics, human-environmental interactions, and creating sustainable communities. Activities include:

- A simulation game where participants learn about carrying capacity in nature by acting as panthers hunting for food in a model habitat and exploring the impacts of changes to the habitat. This will be presented with interactive digital tools and explanations of facilitating it in the classroom

- Participants develop an index of factors they identify as most important to a sustainable community. They will work in breakout rooms

- A live demonstration with audience participation that works on comparison vocabulary (more/less/fewer; higher/lower; bigger/smaller) with several examples including global demographics

The idea is to combine CBI and language learning, using content that is interdisciplinary, timely and motivational for students in all classroom settings. Using a theme, such as environmental issues, can act as a springboard for language improvement. When using content as a vehicle for English instruction, language teachers provide students the opportunity to not only develop language skills, but also to become more informed citizens, both locally and globally. The incorporation of environmental topics into the language classroom promotes content learning, language learning (including the development of discrete skills and the integration of skills in project work), and personal responsibility inside and outside the classroom. (Hauschild, Poltavtchenko and Stoller, 2012).

Reference

Hauschild, S., Poltavtchenko, E., Stoller, F.L. (2012). Going green: Merging environmental education and language instruction. *English Teaching Forum 2*. **50_2_3_hauschild-et-al.pdf (state.gov)**

Abby Watkins is the senior education program associate at Population Education. *You can watch her webinar on Youtube:* Engaging English Language Learners with Global Education - YouTube

# .*Generative AI: An Inevitable Part of ESL Writing Classes?*
April 8, 2023

* **Presenters**: Krisztina Domjan, Max Reinhart, Susan George
* **Session Type**: Workshop
* **Focus**: Adult education, Higher education, Bilingual education, Teacher training
* **Targeted Skills**: Writing, Grammar, Vocabulary, Technology

Automated written corrective feedback (AWCF) tools like Grammarly, Wordtune, and Quillbot provide direct correction of grammar errors and metalinguistic explanation, which are effective in addressing errors of various types. Teachers have positive perceptions towards the use of instructional technology, and students generally have higher satisfaction with AWCF feedback than feedback from teachers or academic learning advisors. Formative assessment, whether human or automated, derives its value from the level of student engagement it receives. Research indicates that supervised use of AWCF can train students to use it as a learning tool instead of a shortcut. However, there is a paucity of research on newer and more powerful AWCF tools, and more research is needed. Integration of AWCF and generative AI apps into classes has produced encouraging results. ChatGPT's inevitability is being accepted by some teachers, but strategies are being devised to set boundaries and mitigate abuse. Its use is inevitable and potentially beneficial, contingent upon proper implementation.

It was Chat GPT in 2022 November that raised awareness about generative AI; and while some students have been using AI tools like Grammarly, Wordtune, and Quillbot, more sophisticated tools like Chat GPT, Copy ai or Caktus ai, have gone largely unnoticed. ELTA faculty at American University has observed that while these AI tools were designed with good intentions, students often do not take the time to learn how to use them properly, causing more work for teachers. To avoid repeating the same mistakes made with so-

English language learners are likely to use assistive tech tools more than ever.
HOWEVER
They are not necessarily prepared to view these tools as assets in the learning process that can be used systematically:
Efficacy and meaningful engagement are vital; therefore we must establish those ground rules with the students.

cial media, basic rules for AI tools should be established before bad practices become ingrained. A couple of ELTA faculty members at AU surveyed students in the Spring semester and found "students have the most experience with older, basic AI options, and tend to rely on themselves when figuring out these programs. Students need writing help in areas where these apps excel, but may feel like they are cheating and are not learning about these apps from their teachers. However, students think critically about the suggestions these apps provide, showing a willingness to engage meaningfully." (Max Rhinehart, TESOL 2023)
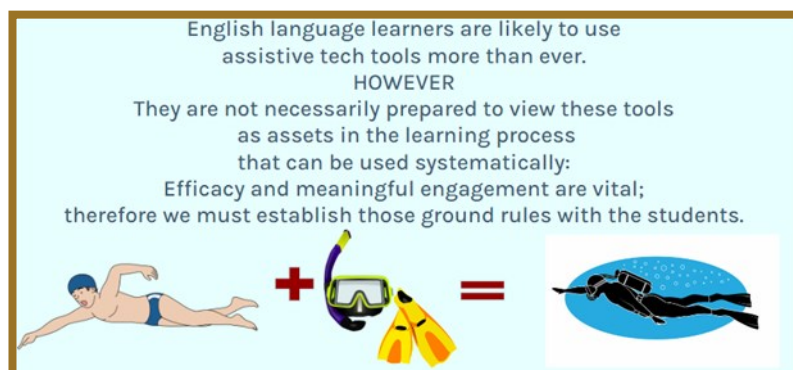
"I'm passionate about using technology to create an inclusive and equitable learning environment for all my students. To achieve this, I have integrated various educational and practical apps, platforms, and tech tools in my courses. As a member of the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), I strive to
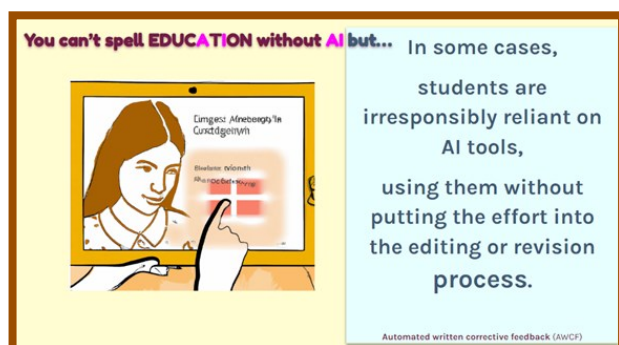
enhance students' learning experiences. ISTE has long advocated the use of AI in education, predicting its inealign my teaching practices with their standards and develop my students' digital competence to become proficient learners with digital literacy skills. I believe in promoting and facilitating the use of ed tech tools to vitality in the near future. Whenever I discover a promising tool, I experiment with it thoroughly, reviewing the creator's suggestions, FAQs, and Terms of Use, including their policy on plagiarism. I encourage my students to do the same, as some tools may require parental consent for those under 18. I also emphasize the importance of acknowledging these tools in my syllabus, emphasizing their collaborative and inclusive nature." (Krisztina Domjan, TESOL 2023)

In my Graduate Academic Writing class, the students are working on their research topic within the broad topic of Digital Citizenship Skills and Competencies. The goal was to find enough information to determine their research topic/ question. I provided these instructions:

- Open ChatGPT and consider it as your conversation partner. Take screenshots of your conversation.

- Start by discussing the definition of what digital citizenship means.

- Discuss the main question with AI. According to experts in the field, why do digital participants need to become competent digital citizens and learn digital citizenship skills?

- Identify some key competencies related to digital citizenship.

- Discuss ONE digital citizenship competency of your choice with the AI.

- Document your conversation/chat.

- Prepare at least 10 relevant and thoughtful questions related to that one competency to ask AI. (For example, if you want to discuss online safety and security, you may ask questions such as: "What are some common online threats on YouTube/Tik-Tok/Instagram…etc… that people should be aware of?" or "How can we protect our personal information online?") You can ask AI to form additional questions to discuss. AI will provide insights and guidance on the various competencies and answer any additional question.
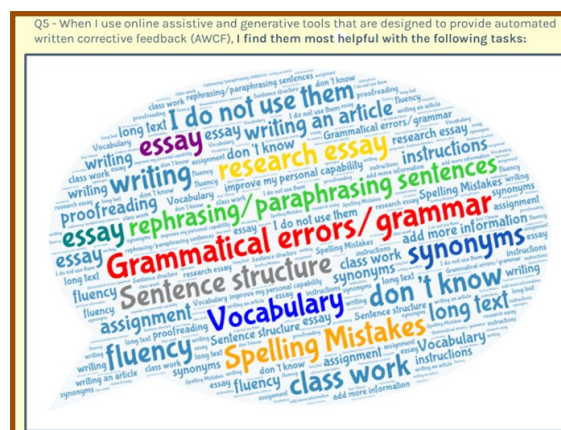
The conclusion? Students received useful basic information from the AI and they could comfortably explore the topic of their choice; however, they now understand that AI is just a conversation starter, if they need concrete, accurate information and data, they need to do the research themselves. I was hoping that they would come to the conclusion that ChatGPT is not a one-stop-shop (just yet). ns you may have.

Then I asked the students about their experience with the chatbot:

For me, my expression is short, but the AI can respond with more information. Because it is AI, it can respond easily, but the thing that makes me surprised is that AI always updates its information and knowledge to give me the right information and the responses make sense. The challenge is that the knowledge for me has a limit to expression, but the AI can output all the information that it knows. It makes me feel like AI can give me the answer easily and quickly.

Each answer I got from Chat GPT was extremely long, maybe I should try to ask it to give me some brief answers. Although the answers were long, it gave a lot of information in every single question. I can get as much information as I want, and choose the information which I am interested in. To sum up, Chat GPT usually gives a lot of information, some of them are really helpful, and some of them might seem to be unnecessary. Maybe I should ask the question more specifically, then I could receive the answer which is useful and brief.

Chat GPT helps me increase my point of view and get some good ideas. However, I think some answers are pretty good but some answers do not make sense. So the challenge is we need to distinguish what information is correct.

The conversation is so beneficial and knowledgeable. There I get good suggestions and sentence structure to correct and complete the assignment. Secondly, the surprising thing is that we can found professional answers over there what we ask to do or what help we want.

Conversations with the AI were informative and engaging, and I found it easy to ask questions and receive responses to my questions. The AI was able to provide clear and concise answers to my questions, allowing the conversation to flow smoothly.
The most challenging aspect is thinking about relevant and well-thought-out questions related to the topic of online safety. AI, however, was able to provide insightful responses that helped me understand the topic better. Overall, my conversations with AI were informative and educational.

I think it's easy to ask AI defining, broad-ranging questions with clear answers. However, asking questions about specific articles or details it answered inaccurately or too generally. To my surprise, it can give many examples that we are familiar with, and the examples are all accurate.

The conversation with AI is not natural. It only provides definitions or the abstract concepts. If I am a beginning learner, it is hard to distinguish the information right and wrong. Although AI gives the answer immediately, it is not always right. Based on the different situations and conditions, the AI cannot give the precise answer to me. It always give me the general ideas or points. However, I believe it will getting better in the future.

You can watch the webinar on YouTube: **Generative AI: An Inevitable Part of ESL Writing Classes -**

The Functional Language Approach for Mathematics: Focusing on Visuals
April 22, 2023

* **Presenter**: Dr. Karen Terrell
* **Session Type**: Workshop (90 min)
* **Focus**: K-12, Bilingual Education, Teacher Training
* **Targeted Skills**: Listening, speaking, reading and writing

WIDA (2020) has suggested the functional language approach across all content areas, including mathematics, to enhance the educational experiences of multilingual learners. We also know that visuals can improve our learners' experience. This workshop examined what constitutes "visuals" and how they can best operate within functional-language approaches.

The latest content and practice standards for mathematics have promoted the increase of academic language and discourse in this content area (National Governors Association, 2010). Both teacher-preparation programs and school districts have offered language-oriented professional development and courses for pre-service and in-service content teachers. However, it is arguable as to the level of impact these trainings and curricular shifts have been able to achieve, particularly in mathematics. Perhaps this is due to the long-term struggle between conceptual and procedural knowledge, in which mathematics teachers engage within their content instruction, but it can also be applicable to their ability to address language demands.

The latest iteration of the WIDA guidelines (2020) offer the approach of functional language, i.e., genre pedagogy, to deepen teachers' conceptual understanding of language in their content areas, and thus, enable them to provide more effective instruction to multilingual learners. This workshop will explore the text organizations and occurrences of the Explanation and Information Report genres in particular, determine how visuals appear and can be used both receptively and expressively, and then provide participants authentic experiences with visuals within these genres. Webinar participants also discussed, as a community, ways to employ these tools in our mathematics practice going forward.

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WIDA. (2020). *WIDA English language development standards framework, 2020 edition: Kindergarten–grade 12*. Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System. WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework, 2020 Edition Kindergarten - Grade 12 (wisc.edu)

Dr. Karen Terrell (she/her) has been an educator for over 20 years, promoting high-quality education for all. She has taught high-school and middle-school mathematics, and has been a teacher educator since 2010. She received her Ph.D. from Boston College, and her specialties include mathematics education, content and language integration, and assessment. *You can watch her webinar on YouTube:* **Dr Karen Terrell's webinar April 22 - YouTube**

# #LoveOurLanguages: Elevating the Languages of Those We Serve
May 5, 2023

* **Presenter**: Carly Spina
* **Session Type**: Practice-Oriented Workshop
* **Focus**: K-12, Advocacy
* **Targeted Skills**: Intercultural Communication, Culturally Sustaining Practices

In this session, participants explored tools and ideas for supporting an entire school system in developing appreciation, respect, and love for all languages in the community. This session featured a resource bank full of templates for teachers to use or share with colleagues the next day!

What is language elevation? This workshop helped educators understand the current reality of linguistic oppression that many of the students, families, and teachers we serve face in our schools and communities. This session supported educators and leaders by offering moments of reflection to help our systems move forward. In this session, we explored our current structures and supports in our schools related to language elevation, analyze our strengths and shortcomings as systems, and suggested ways to make a plan for reflection and action.

This workshop guided participants through reflection of what it means to be linguistically inclusive, and how to intentionally nurture spaces that elevate the languages of those we serve in our communities. It drew on the work of leaders like Zaretta Hammond (author of *Culturally Responsive Teaching & The Brain)*, Stephen Krashen (the affective filter), Dr. Jose Medina et. al (*The Guiding Principles of Dual Language Education*), and Dr. Andrea Honigsfeld et. al (*From Equity Insights to Action*). This session provided several resources and practical tools for educators and leaders; these tools are a guide for planning and action efforts, along with templates that be used in schools and districts.

Find the resources here:
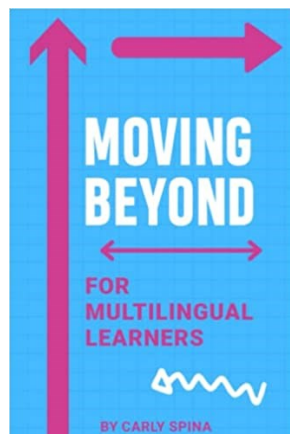
[Moving Beyond for Multilingual Learners: Innovative Supports for Linguistically Diverse Students](#)

Carly Spina has over 16 years of experience in multilingual education. She is the author of the book Moving *Beyond for Multilingual Learners*.. She is currently serving as a multilingual education specialist for the Illinois Resource Center. *You can watch her webinar on YouTube:* [#LoveOurLanguages: Elevating the Languages of Those We Serve - YouTube](#)

By Melissa Hauke
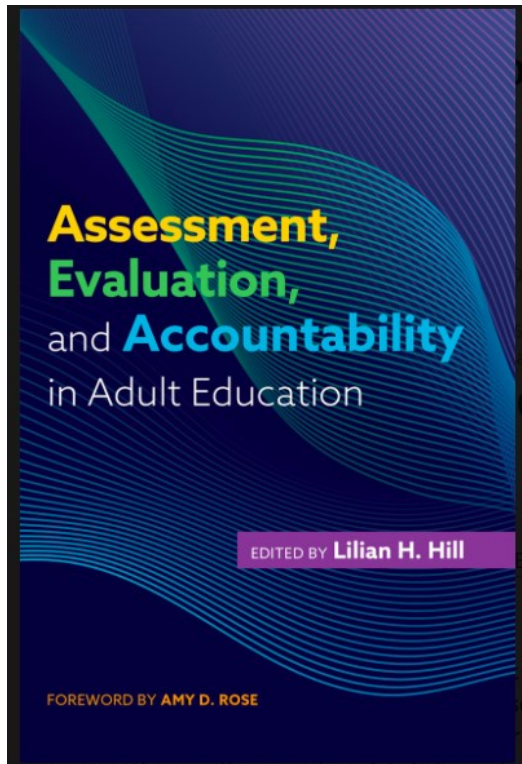
Assessment, Evaluation, and Accountability in Adult Education is a compilation of research articles written by experts in different areas of adult education. The editor, Lilian H. Hill, divides the book into four parts: the introduction, assessment and evaluation in specific areas of adult education, assessment and evaluation for adults in higher education and the conclusion. The organization of the book allows the reader to read only those chapters that pertain to their specific area of focus.

Part One includes a brief overview of the many different types of assessments, the skills required to design an effective assessment and how to implement it in adult education programs. The authors review the nuts and bolts of assessment and explain those necessary elements, such as formative vs. summative, qualitative vs. quantitative and the different types of validity. Part Two consists of assessment and evaluation in five areas of adult education. Adult Basic Education (ABE) is evaluated in relationship to accountability, diagnosis, credentialing and population study. Assessment and evaluation in military education is comprehensive and enlightening for the civilian readers. The next three areas look at professional development in general and then more specifically with human resources. In Part Three, the authors focus specifically on assessment in higher education. The topics in this section include distance learning, health professions and graduate studies.

Critical Analysis

Hill argues that return on investment is the driving force in adult education programming and funding to the detriment of its learners. She has chosen essays that substantiate her belief while providing insight on what educators and stakeholders should consider in their decision making. She cites (Ch. 1 & 2) several articles that found that testing is politically attractive because it seems to be objective and provides concrete evidence that tax dollars are being well used. She counters that the origins of adult education are founded in the philosophies of citizenship and democracy which are priceless.

Belzer and Greenburg (Ch. 4), whose focus is ABE, affirm her by explaining how these quantitative measures push education away from a learner-centered approach. They also warn that policymakers who know nothing about education prefer data for funding purposes but fail to take into consideration the way in which adults learn math, language and literacy.

Green (Ch. 9) challenges that not everyone has the same positive view of education which can have a negative impact on learning and transformation. By viewing adults as a homogeneous group, educators and stakeholders continue to reinforce the marginalization of the underrepresented and propagate social inequity.

Usefulness for Professional Practice

Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability in Adult Education is extremely useful for anyone in the field of adult education. The first few chapters are excellent for the novice as well as the seasoned practitioner. These chapters explain and/or remind the readers of the purpose of adult education, the historical and current situation, a menu of different assessment types and the necessary skills for development and implementation. As stated in the introduction, each chapter can stand alone and the readers can gain the information they need to provide and improve their assessments and evaluations skills. Yet, each chapter provides insight into the challenges of that specific field which can be beneficial for all readers.

Reference

Hill, L.H. (Ed.). (2020). *Assessment, evaluation, and accountability in adult education*. Stylus.

Melissa Hauke is WATESOL's vice president and a high school ESOL Resource Teacher for Fairfax County Public Schools. In addition to teaching high school, she has also taught elementary, university and adult students. She is a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer (Macedonia 2007-2009), an English Language Fellow (Russia) and an English Language Specialist (Thailand). She has an MS in Education in Reading and an M.Ed in Curriculum and Instruction.

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Access recordings of previous webinars and conference sessions at the new WATESOL YouTube Channel.

Summer Book Club

The chairs of the Higher Education Special Interest Group, John Simpson and Max Rhinehart, are pleased to announce the WATESOL Higher Education SIG Summer Book Club 2023. We have selected *Translating Myself and Others* by Jhumpa Lahiri. This collection of essays by the Pulitzer Prize-winning author and professor of creative writing and literary translation at Princeton promises to be a fascinating, amusing, and illuminating exploration of writing, translating, and understanding oneself.

According to the publisher, "Featuring essays originally written in Italian and published in English for the first time, as well as essays written in English, *Translating Myself and Others* brings together Lahiri's most lyrical and eloquently observed meditations on the translator's art as a sublime act of both linguistic and personal metamorphosis."

These essays will be interesting enough already to anyone interested in language and linguistics. As educators, we expect this collection to give us some insight into what goes on in learners' heads as they sometimes translate intrinsically or intuitively to succeed in the English language classroom.

Please consider joining us for a series of informal and wide-ranging discussions of this book. Meetings will take place every two weeks, beginning in late May and concluding in late July or early August. After we have finalized registration, we will settle on specific dates.
If you are interested in participating, please email us directly at higheredsig@watesol.org.
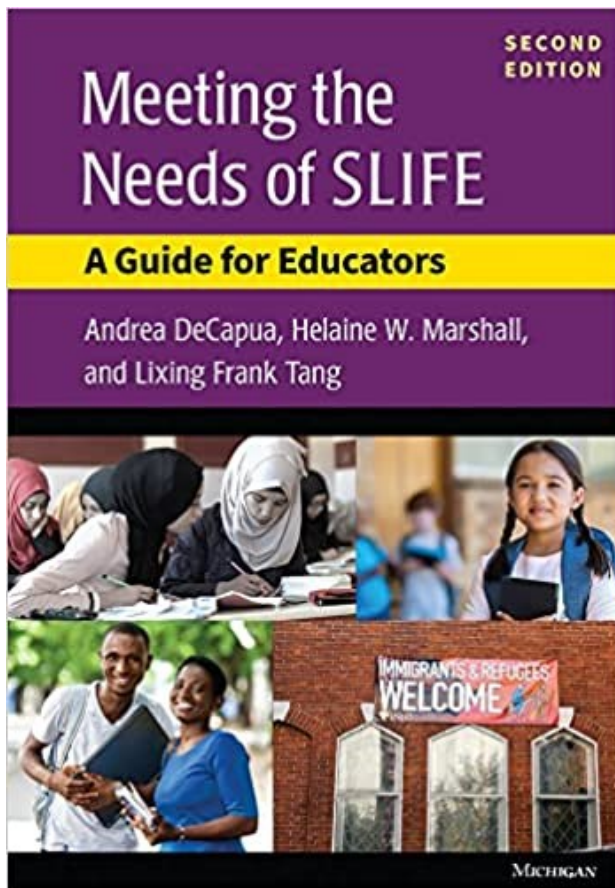
Hope to see many of you there.
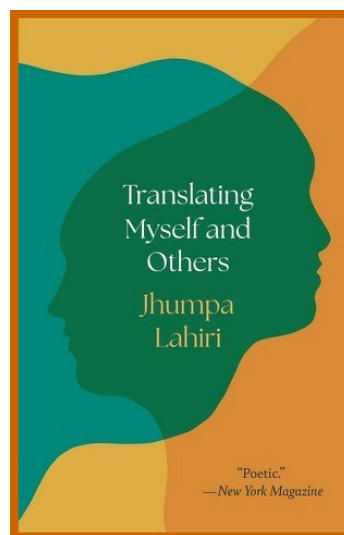
WATESOL Spring Book Club

DeCapua, A. M. (2020). *Meeting the Needs of SLIFE, Second Ed.: A Guide for Educators* (second ed.). University of Michigan Press ELT.

Last winter, Adult Ed Sig Co-chairs, Ahri Lee and I, had a discussion on various professional development projects and activities that would be of interest to Watesol members. One of our ideas was to start a book club in 2023. Both of us had taught Adult Literacy classes for the AELG program at Montgomery College. One of our biggest challenges had been in finding effective methods and resources to support and enhance learning for SLIFE (Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education) in our classrooms.

During the 2022 WATESOL Conference, Ahri Lee met other colleagues who were also interested in learning more about SLIFE. Our book choice seemed an easy decision at that point, but finding the right book was a bit of a challenge. Most books written on SLIFE are for younger students and grade school-teachers. We finally decided on a book by DeCapua, Marshal and Tang: *Meeting the Needs of SLIFE: A Guide for Educators.*

Twelve members, all teachers of adult learners, joined our book club, and WATESOL kindly provided the funds for our books. Presently, all our meetings are scheduled on Zoom. Our first meeting was held on March 10 with 12 members present. Our objective for this meeting was to formally introduce ourselves to our colleagues and share our insights on chapter one, "Who Are SLIFE?" Our second meeting was held on April 21. Our book club discussion was on Chapters 2 and 3; one of our discussion topics focused on strategies and resources that can support the psychological issues that many SLIFE faces in a new country

Our book club meeting room had been a space where teachers share their best practices, experiences and resources. *Meeting the Needs of SLIFE: A Guide for Educators*, is a great read, full of inspiring ideas that can only promote successful learning and growth for SLIFE. The book was written for younger migrant students; however,, our book club participants have noticed that many challenges faced by these young students are the same challenged faced by our adult students. Our book club members share, not only effective strategies to support students' needs, but also, the simple joys of working with them.

Vivian Njosa is the co-chair for WATESOL's Adult Ed Special Interest Group. She is also an instructor for the AELG program in Montgomery College .

Teaching Abroad

Marhabo Kholmurodova from Tadzhikistan's English Without Borders describes her experiences as a teacher in the United States in 2018.

A Life-changing Professional Journey!

What program did you do (are you doing) and where?

In 2018 I was privileged enough to get a scholarship from a program of the U.S Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), implemented by IREX to participate in the Fulbright Teaching Excellence and Achievement (FTEA) Program. It was a six-week program that enabled me to experience the U.S. educational system as well as its cultural aspects. The program was held in one of the cities of California called Claremont. Claremont Graduate University (CGU) serves as a host university for the U.S. Department of State's **Teaching Excellence and Achievement** (TEA) **program**. The TEA program helped me to develop expertise in my teaching subject areas, enhanced my teaching skills, and increased my knowledge of the United States. In addition to attending workshops and courses organized by CGU's Teacher Education Program, we the TEA fellows had discussions and worked in classrooms in nearby public schools. I gave presentations about my home country and conducted lessons both at Sycamore Elementary School in Claremont and Claremont Pomona High School.

How did (have) your expectations of where you lived, the sizes of your classes and potential cross cultural challenges match(ed) up with reality?

The first thing that I noticed is the tiny windows at the top of the walls. This really surprised me about the classrooms, and later I was told the reasons for that. Also, I thought that students at schools have a special uniform, but when we had a session at CGU before we were sent to schools, they told us that students do not have to wear uniforms to school. However, I think the most important thing is the knowledge students obtain in these classrooms. I had to observe several classes before teaching myself. At the time of my observation, I found the lessons very interactive, effective, and productive. The students were bright and very nice. Most of the students at Pomona High School were of Spanish origin and what I like the most is the moment we taught each other. We had an agreement that at the end of each class we spare some moments to learn each other's languages. We exchanged useful phrases in Spanish and the Tajik language.

What (do) did students expect of you?

The students were as excited as me because we were both new to each other. Nevertheless, they were introduced to the reasons and purpose of my visit to their school. Consequently, they were very supportive and helpful. Usually, the classes that I observed encouraged both online and offline interaction. For example, students sometimes had discussions, and debates in class, and sometimes they shared opinions on the read pages from the book via laptops on the screen without discussion verbally. Taking this into my consideration, I encouraged them to make poster presentations. For instance, I first introduced them to a strategy called Book in Hand or Text–to–Text/Self, and then they were supposed to work in groups to apply the strategy to the assigned pages they have read and present their posters in front of the class. They enjoyed the involvement very much, and I think they expected something new from me, too So, when I witnessed their joy, group works, ideas, their engagement during the class, this doubled my happiness and satisfaction because it proved that I could somehow fulfill their expectations as well.

What (has) challenged you the most?

One of the challenges I had while teaching was to think of something that could involve everyone in the class and motivate them to be engaged and interested in my lessons. It required a lot of thinking, and I spent nights awake to come up with something really captivating; however, it was worth it. I learned a lot myself while searching for attention grabbers, warm-ups, and lead-in activities. Thanks to it, I have developed a personal teachers' toolkit now that I still use ideas from in my classroom.

What (are) were you most proud of?

I am proud of myself because I could make it! I set a goal for me to do a program in an English-speaking country, and I achieved my goal and had an amazing experience in the United States. Moreover, I obtained loads of knowledge and developed myself as a professional teacher there. Also, I am proud of presenting

my country, my lovely and peaceful homeland, to the people in the United States. I am proud of building the bridges of networking and knowledge exchange between my country and the United States.

Which technologies did your colleagues find the most useful for motivating reluctant students?

There were a few tools I presented to the teachers in my institution. Several of them are making presentations both offline and online – getting familiar with Canva.com, using Zoom - familiarizing themselves with the Annotation Tools, using Padlet and Flippity, and creating Quizzes in Kahoot, Google classroom, and Google docs. Almost all of them were very beneficial while teaching online and not only online but offline, too, according to what the teachers said.

However, the most useful and interactive that they have been using since the beginning is Kahoot! Teachers say that when using it in class, students get excited and engaged throughout the lesson. Also, it is convenient in terms of the ready-made games, as well and as some teachers mentioned they use some of those for warm-ups too. The most thrilling moment is the time the winners are displayed, and the gifts are handed. This motivates students to learn new vocabulary, become more careful readers, and have fun, too.

Five years later, what do you consider the most valuable things you learned from your teaching in the United States?

Every moment spent and explored in the United States is valued highly. However, the moment I was teaching is distinctive of all. While teaching I discovered how vast/endless learning is, and the more you know the more you think you do not know. I have learned to continually develop my knowledge in almost all spheres of ELT. In addition, I consider challenges as part of the learning process now; however, I measured them negatively before. Since then, I have gained a lot in the field of ELT and taken part in numerous professional development training both online and offline. Overall, teaching in the United States is a very memorable experience for me and served as an electroshock to wake me up to the world of innovations in teaching and learning ELT.

You're invited to the U.S. Department of State's eighth annual Global Teaching Dialogue, taking place online from July 18 – 19, 2023!
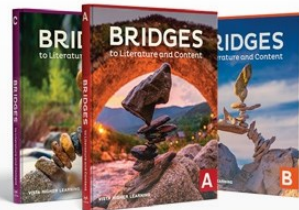
SUPPORTING ALL K–12 ENGLISH LEARNERS

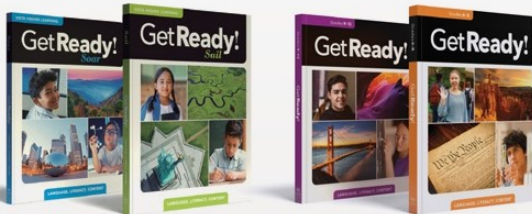## LANGUAGE · LITERACY · CULTURE

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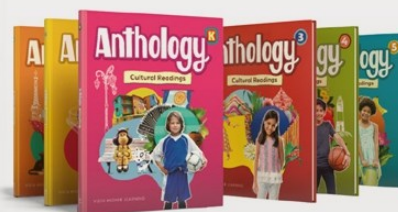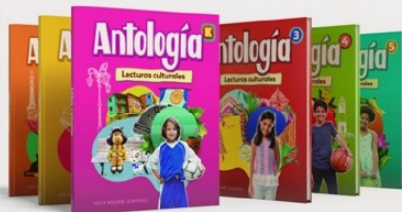Secondary

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