

WATESOL NEWS

Washington DC Area TESOL Member Newsletter

Fall 2018

Dear fellow WATESOLers,

I hope you have all had a wonderful summer, and are readjusting smoothly to the academic year. We are gearing up for our annual Fall conference, which will be on October 6th at Trinity Washington University's Payden Academic Center, where some of our sessions were held last year. We are very excited to welcome Dr. Luciana de Oliveira, the current president of TESOL International, to give the keynote address at the conference. Her talk is titled Building Community and Collaboration in the Classroom: Examples from Teachers

We are highlighting the theme of community in particular this year, in response to the fractious time in which we find ourselves. As we prepare to vote in the 2018 elections amidst vitriolic statements in our social and professional contexts, we thought it valuable to take a day to come together as a professional community and make a concrete investment in ourselves as professionals so that we may in turn create the sort of community that is conducive to learning, both for ourselves and for our students.

In addition to the plenary, we will have five concurrent sessions with varied and interesting presentations, workshops, posters, and discussions, in addition to a hot lunch and extended networking time. We are also thrilled to include vibrant contributions from exhibitors and vendors, some of which you have seen at previous conferences, and some of which are new to WATESOL. As always, we will conclude with a raffle, and an optional dinner for those interested.

Though we may differ in many ways, including our SIGs, our experiences, and even our politics, we all share a love of learning, teaching, education, and, if I am not mistaken, a desire to support those who are trying to improve their professional and personal opportunities by learning and using English. Please join us at the conference on October 6th to learn from and with your colleagues, renew your commitment to our local professional community, and to share your valuable experience with others. You can find plenty more information, including the registration page at www.watesol.org. We look forward to seeing you there!

Rebecca S. Wilner



Rebecca S. Wilner
WATESOL President
2017-2018

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WATESOL FALL 2018 CONFERENCE

Saturday, October 6th

Trinity Washington University

125 Michigan Ave, NE,
Washington, D.C.

**Building Community & Collaboration
in the Classroom**

Keynote speaker: Luciana C. de Oliveira,
President, TESOL Int'l Association

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Balanced Literacy for Newcomers: When Your District Didn't Give You a Curriculum

Darcy Scott, PGCPs, darcy.scott@pgcps.org



Darcy Scott has been teaching elementary ESOL in Prince George's County Public Schools for 11 years. She has taught 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 5th grade ELLs, and she also enjoys teaching adult ESOL for Prince George's Community College.

Teaching without a curriculum is a blessing and a curse. The blessing is the freedom to differentiate; the curse is the burden to differentiate, from scratch. As an ESOL teacher, I am tasked with analyzing the mainstream curriculum to determine what language skills my English Language Learners need in order to be successful academically. Yet when newcomers arrive, their most urgent need is not the grammatical structure of cause and effect, nor vocabulary related to fractions or the American West. The first English they need is "pencil," "chair," "sit," and "walk."

Newcomer Topics and Curriculum Approach

Newcomers arrive any day of the year, so I am always ready with a few materials on hand: real-life classroom objects, vocabulary flashcards, a level 1 reader about classroom objects, and some dry-erase boards. Based on the Scholastic reader that I borrow yearly from my reading specialist's room, my first flashcards are: crayons, scissors, books, chairs, desks, pencils, children, and school. After my newcomers have a grasp on those eight words, I teach the sight words "I" and "see," and they are ready to read the book. Next, I have them write their own book using the sentence frame: "I see ____." Although it is a simple lesson, it usually takes three days. After all, the students have to learn all ten words, using only pictures and realia, before they can read the book or write their own.

When we have finished that lesson, I reuse the same lesson format, this time with another book about classroom objects. Then we read and write another one after that. With every book, our word bank of classroom object vocabulary grows larger, until we have read 3 or 4 books. Next we start a new unit on action verbs, and a new word bank of action vocabulary. After 4 or 5 books about action verbs, we move on to a new topic.

This is my "curriculum." Unit 1 is always classroom objects, unit 2 is always actions, and unit 3 is any

concrete vocabulary topic that relates to the mainstream curriculum. In the primary grades, that is often animals, but it could be numbers, weather, or transportation. Within each unit, I have the outline of a lesson plan that takes about three days, depending on how much time my schedule allows me to work with my newcomers, and how literate they are in their native languages. Every year I reuse most of the same leveled readers, but the simplicity of my framework gives me the flexibility to judge how many books my students need about each topic, based on their progress. This is how I turned the burden to differentiate into the freedom to differentiate. As long as I have decided on a basic roadmap of topics and lesson templates, I can make decisions along the way about how long to focus on various topics, what skills to spend the most time on, and how to differentiate. Furthermore, as my newcomers become familiar with my lesson format, they are freed to focus on learning the content, rather than trying to understand my assignments.

The Three-Day (or-so) Lesson Plan

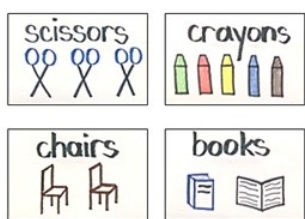
The Balanced Literacy small group reading lesson format I was taught takes two days, and it includes pre-reading, reading, and post-reading activities, such as word work and writing. It only took me a short time to realize that newcomers need more time pre-reading than other students, because they need to learn every word in the book. So every day we do all three elements: vocabulary, reading, and writing. However, the emphasis shifts from one day to the next, as my students progress in their acquisition of the target vocabulary.

Objective: Students will read a book about ____ to write their own book.

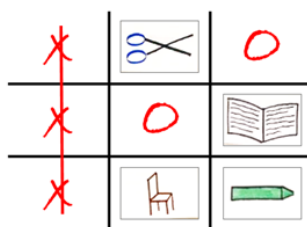
- Day 1
 - **Vocabulary: pre-teach vocabulary**
 - Reading: preview book
 - Writing: write on dry-erase boards or do word work
- Day 2
 - Vocabulary: review vocabulary & preview book
 - **Reading: read book**
 - Writing: do word work & begin writing
- Day 3
 - Vocabulary: briefly review vocabulary
 - Reading: reread book
 - **Writing: finish writing book**

Pre-Teaching Vocabulary

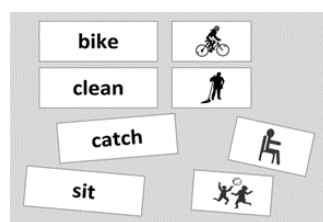
Before each 3-day lesson, I create (or reuse) two sets of flashcards: labeled and unlabeled picture cards, paired with a word bank. I introduce the vocabulary with the labeled picture cards, having students repeat each word. I have a handful of little activities I use, like listen-and-point, look-and-say, look-and-write, find-it-in-the-room, listen-and-draw, or Tic-Tac-Toe, their favorite. Tic-Tac-Toe is my favorite too, because they can speak or write the words, and they can use them in sentences as they progress in their level of English. When they begin to master the words, I start using my unlabeled cards, having the students locate the words on our word bank.



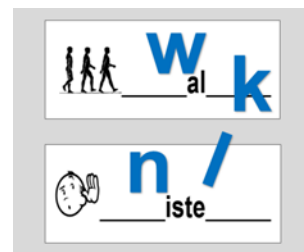
Labeled Cards



Tic-Tac-Toe



Any Stage: Matching



Stage 1: First & Last Sound



Unlabeled Cards & Word Bank



Stage 2: Phonetically Regular or Nearly Regular Words

Reading

We do a picture walk on day 1, and again on day 2 after reviewing the vocabulary. Now I give the book to the students to read. A level 1 book is short and simple ("I see pencils. I see crayons."), so after they read it alone, I have them reread it with a partner. Then I ask comprehension questions, which is hard to do when students know exactly ten words of English! However, I find that yes/no questions such as "Does he have crayons?" can be accompanied by a thumbs up or down, and questions about page numbers such as "On page 7, what does he have?" and "What page has chairs?" can be accompanied with a show of fingers, so that even the newest newcomers can begin finding answers in the text.

Word Work

Phonics and spelling are two areas where I find that my newcomers are particularly heterogeneous. They vary by how many weeks they have been in the U.S. and by prior educational experience. Therefore, I label quart-sized bags with each newcomer's name, and use snack bags to hold the magnetic letters for the words each student is ready for. Classroom object and action verb vocabulary are not often phonetically appropriate for a newcomer level, so I have learned to be creative.

Writing

Patterned books are another way I can differentiate. My newest newcomers write their book based exactly on the sentence frame of the leveled reader, while my more advanced newcomers use a longer sentence frame. The first page always has the full sentence frame, and each subsequent page has more blanks, until the final pages are nothing but blank sheets. I also allow students to create their own title, as a subtle introduction to main idea.

For the first quarter or so, students use one word bank, but as they become ready for level 2 readers, where two words change per page, the sentence frames have two blanks, so they need two word banks. Once they are ready for three word banks, congratulations, they are probably not newcomers anymore!

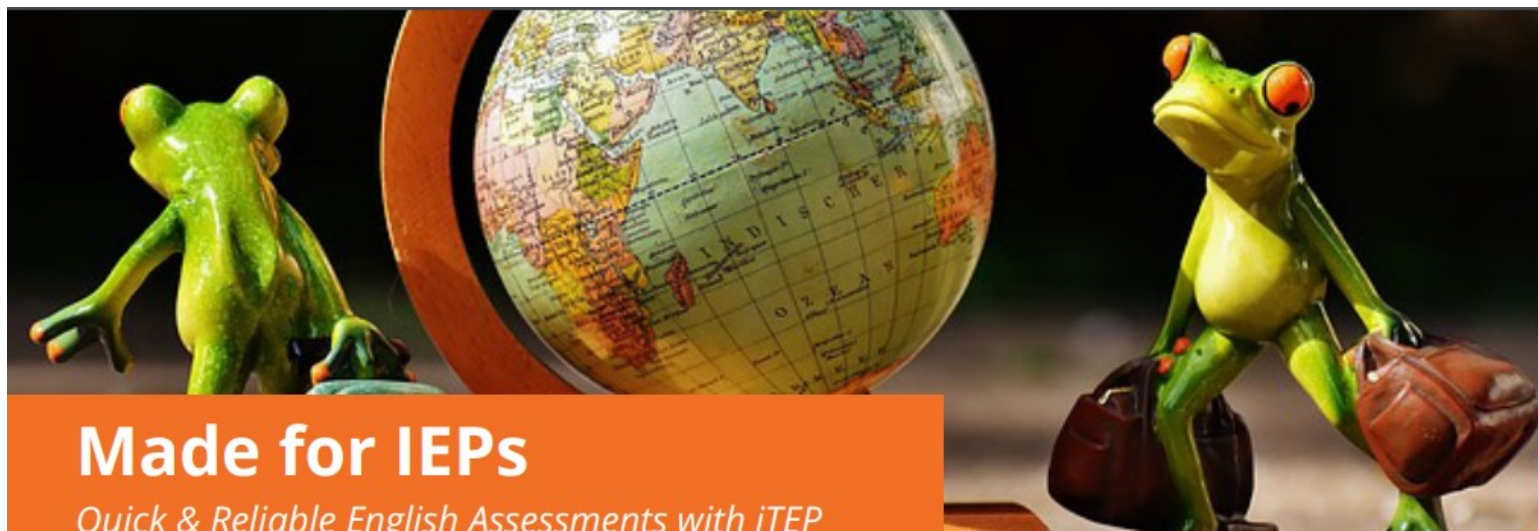
Making it Happen

Start by locating the leveled readers in your building, then zero in on the kindergarten levels. You will probably find a few books about classroom objects and several about action verbs. I find that I spend approximately one quarter using level 1 books and the next quarter using level 2 (or levels A and B respectively, depending on your leveling system). By the time my students are beyond a level 4 or 6 (D or E), I generally move them to one of my other ESOL groups. If you have access to ReadingA-Z.com or another set of online leveled readers, this is another great option. Once you have selected your leveled readers, you have your roadmap, or your “curriculum framework.”

Now that you have found the books you will use, start simple. Word work can be as complex as giving each student a uniquely tailored set of words with magnetic letters, but it can also be as simple as giving differentiated dictations on dry erase boards. Writing can be as complex as printing individualized patterned book templates for each student with sentence frames tailored to their English proficiencies and levels of literacy, but it can also be as simple as a sentence frame that is used and reused in a journal. Whatever activities you choose, save your templates, and build on them year by year. This is how a lack of curriculum can begin as a curse and become a blessing, one group of newcomers at a time.

Version 1	Version 2	Version 3
 I _____	 One boy can _____	 One boy can _____ at school.
 _____	 Two girls can _____	 Two girls can _____ at _____.
 _____	 Two _____ can _____	 One _____ can _____ at _____.
_____	_____	_____

Patterned Books



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Beyond Flashcards: Quizlet as a Template for Collaborative Activities©

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Collaborative activities provide an interactive platform for students of varying levels to participate with their peers. Watanabe and Swain underscore their efficacy, “Overall, we have seen that peers of different proficiency levels could benefit from working with one another, which supports the previous peer-peer learning research. (Watanabe and Swain, 2007)” However, teachers have a limited amount of time to create new activities for every objective, and just trying to keep small pieces of paper organized and stored can be a nightmare. This article identifies ways to use Quizlet study sets for practice across different skills and all ESL levels.

Quizlet is a low-prep tool for practicing vocabulary with flashcards, but how can it be used in other ways? Consider using it as a template for creating activities to practice speaking, reading, listening, writing, and target language. Going beyond the premise of flashcards, anything typed into a Quizlet study set can be printed in 5 different formats and on both sides of the paper. The website takes the guesswork out of setting up margins, drawing borders, and marking cut lines. It automatically adjusts the font of words to fit the cards. The large cards fit a question or statement, and the small cards are great for a word, phrase, or picture. These cards can be used (and reused) with different levels of learners, depending on the objectives.

For speaking practice, create Quizlet cards for line dialogues, conversation questions, interviews, role-plays, Would You Rather, or Find Someone Who activities. Since the cards can be printed on both sides, differentiate by giving students an answer gap-fill on the back of the card. Although line dialogues are often used for lower-level students with questions such

as, “Where are you from?” they are also useful for higher-level students with thought-provoking questions. Students ask each other their question, trade questions, and one side of the line moves down to the next person. During feedback, ask students about what they learned from their partners. Conversation question cards can be used with partners, triads, or table groups to start a discussion before studying an objective, during the practice, or to reflect on what has been learned that day. During an interview (Figure 1), students can pick from the question cards to create a specific set of questions and write about their partner’s answers.

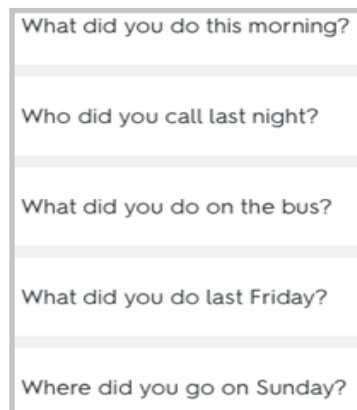


Figure 1

Role-play cards assign partners and give information to set up the situation. Cards that ask the question, “Would you rather...?” give students practice conveying their opinions. Asking students to Find Someone Who helps students to practice asking/ answering questions and reporting information. All of these cards can be edited to target specific usage.

To practice reading skills with Quizlet, create cards for Find Your Partner, prediction (pictures or text), or class chat. Find your Partner cards have split sentences or reading elements (Figure 2).

Students look for their partner by reading their card to other students and sit with that partner for the next activity. Predictions with text or picture cards encourage students to guess what happens as a group, order the pictures in a story, choose the one card that will not occur in the story, or create a story from their cards before reading the assignment. In a class chat, students circulate in the classroom, reading sentence cards to others. Then, they reflect on the main events, details, characters, or plot of the story before reading the text. For a shorter reading, the cards may have the entire story, while a chapter book or longer reading may leave out key points or give the students a cliffhanger.

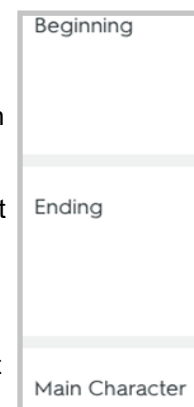


Figure 2: Reading Elements

If listening practice is the objective, give students Quizlet cards to practice song reconstruction, main ideas/details, compare/contrast, or prediction. Before students listen to a song (or part of a song), give them the lyrics on cards for prediction. As they listen, ask them to move the cards into the correct order. Students can use main idea/detail cards to split a conversation into columns (Figure 3).

REFERENDUM
EMIGRATION
PARTICIPATE
PREVAIL
MIDST

Figure 3: Reading Elements

As they decide which points are the most critical, students strengthen their summary skills. In addition, compare and contrast gap-fill sentence cards create the foundation for a discussion about a content area while keeping the important details close at hand. Predicting a conversation, speech, or debate gives students keywords and ideas on cards as an introduction to the assignment, and illuminates challenging vocabulary that can be pre-taught.

Writing can be intimidating, so engage students with writing activities using Quizlet cards like Create an Ending, content area practice, Sentence Bingo, or prompt cards. When students create an ending, they match up questions with limited answers through group negotiation. Five questions and five answers fit on one page of large cards. Then, students write what their personal answers would be (Figure 4).

Where do you want to visit?	Chicago
Where do you want to move tomorrow?	Paris
Where do you want to live for one year?	London
Where do you see yourself living in 5 years?	Washington, D.C.

Figure 4: Create an ending

Before a writing assignment on a particular subject, use definition cards as part of the assignment. Students can pick the words they want to use, or they can choose from a stack of cards. Sentence Bingo helps students to put new vocabulary into their writing. Cards in the set will include nouns, verbs, and vocabulary words (students add their own function words). They write down five sentences using the cards to complete a Bingo. Alternatively, print writing prompts as statements or questions on large cards. Ten prompts will fit on a page, and additional guidance for differentiation can added to the back of the card.

Target language activities with Quizlet cards can bring engagement to a challenging lesson. Try making a pronunciation sort, game board cards, phrasal verbs practice, roll and write, or grammar time activities. If students are practicing two different sounds, print the sounds and words on small cards, twenty boxes to a page, and ask students to sort the words into the appropriate sound columns. Download free game boards online and use Quizlet cards to make cards for the activity. One example of target language practice is lining up phrasal verb terms and definitions. During another class, students can pick from the phrasal verb definition cards and illustrate them or act them out for their table to guess the terms. Students can use the phrasal verb term cards to fill in gap-fill sentences as a table, or they can write sentences using the cards. For a roll and write activity (Figure 5), give each group a column of small cards with ten words or pictures.

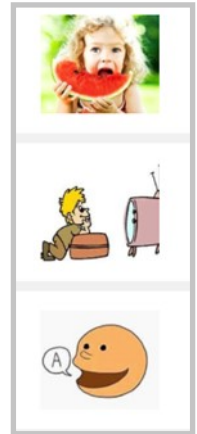


Figure 5: Roll and Write

They roll the dice and write a sentence using the picture or word with the structure they are practicing (make six and twelve “student choice”). In a grammar time activity, write questions on large cards for students to answer with a particular structure. Bingo is an engaging way to practice vocabulary, and small cards can be used to give students a clue. Ask students for sentences using the words as the game progresses. In a similar way, Word Bingo uses different parts of speech in columns. When a student is able to make a sentence across their card, they win the game by reading the sentence to the class. Finally, make crossword puzzles and use small cards as table clues.

Activities using Quizlet cards can be used in any stage of a lesson. Lightbown reflects that, “students can provide each other with feedback on error, in the form

of clarification requests and negotiation for meaning. (Lightbown, 2000)” Remember to share sets with students or add them to the class folder so that practice continues beyond the classroom. When creating a new Quizlet card set, start with your objective and consider the group size and outcome desired. Consider activities that you already use to standardize. Design for reuse and storage by filing cards with labels for level, unit, objective, and type (Lower Intermediate- Work Unit- Speaking- Goals). If the activity involves matching, use all capital letters for the “terms” to make it easier for the students to see which ones are definitions. Print one set of cards for each table or group, paper clip the cards, and store in a labeled envelope in a bin (Figure 6). One page of large cards has ten spaces, saves paper, standardizes cutting, and is easy to reuse.

By using Quizlet as a template for collaborative activities, students are encouraged to interact. They put down their pens and look at each other to speak, negotiate, and listen. Saeed, Khaksari, Eng, and Ghani (2016) believe, “... the best way to effectively produce language is to encourage students to participate in verbal interaction inside the classroom. (Saeed, et al., 2016)” Having an intuitive tool that makes collaboration easier to plan means that the activities will occur more frequently in classrooms.



Figure 6: Storage

For more information check out Darlene's Quizlet blog post on this topic. <https://quizlet.com/blog/beyond-flashcards-using-quizlet-as-a-template-for-collaborative-activities>

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Contact membership@watesol.org for questions.



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Getting Past “It’s Good!”: Meaningful Self-and Peer Evaluation of Speaking Skills

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Betsy Lindeman Wong teaches for Nova’s Intensive English and TESOL certificate programs. She also writes digital curricular materials for Burlington English.

Imagine that after a speaking task, your students evaluate themselves and their peers. Do you get comments like these?

“The pronunciation is good.”
“I like her presentation.”
“I need to speak better.”

These comments are pleasant to read – but not very helpful. Now consider these comments:

“Her presentation was well organized. She start with introduction, two reasons with examples to support her ideas, and conclusion.”
“I think I have to work on my use of pauses, I hesitate too much.”
“When I talk, I use simple words not academic words.”

How can you move students toward meaningful peer and self-evaluation, as reflected in the second set of comments? The key is to design assessment tools that generate useful, targeted feedback on clearly defined speaking skills. Here are six steps to consider.

Step 1: Choose Simple Digital Tools for Self-and Peer Evaluation

You need three tools to get started:

1. A way to record or videotape students, such as Google Voice or the “voice memo” or video feature of a phone or tablet.
2. A place to store and share audios and videos, such as Google Drive, a class management site like Blackboard, or a group Facebook page.
3. A way for students to give feedback and respond to comments, such a discussion board. (You can attach files to a discussion board or post a link to large video files on Google Drive.)

Example:

- Students call my Google Voice number and leave a message responding to a short prompt. (The message is a sound file that may be downloaded.)
- I download the messages from Google Voice and save them on Google Drive.
- I create a discussion board on Blackboard and create a thread for each student.
- I attach each student’s sound file to their discussion board thread.
- Students choose a classmate, open the thread, listen to the attached sound file, and use the “reply” feature to post a comment about their classmate’s recording.
- Students read and reply to their classmate’s comments - and to any from me.

PEER FEEDBACK RUBRIC: Short Speech, “A Thrilling or Dangerous Experience”

My name:

My partner's name:

1) *Could you hear thought groups, followed by a pause? (check one)*

___ Yes ___ Sometimes ___ No

2) *Did the speaker pause ... (check one)*

___ Enough? ___ Not quite enough? ___ A little too much?

3) *What was something the speaker said that surprised you?*

4) *In your opinion, what was effective about this presentation? Why?*

Step 2: From Week 1, have students evaluate peers and respond to feedback

Early on, get students into the habit of providing and responding to feedback. Give them a friendly introductory assignment to talk about themselves for a minute or so. Classmates listen and post feedback – after you've given them examples of useful feedback and polite responses to it. Here's one such assignment:

- Recording: “Call my Google Voice number. Leave a message introducing yourself and responding to the questions on the class survey.”
- Feedback: “Go to the discussion board on Blackboard. Choose a discussion thread with a classmate's recording. Listen and write a few sentences (at least 3) responding to your classmate. Say what you liked about his or her speech; any suggestions or ideas you have for ways to practice English or improve; and anything you have in common. Examples: *I also love Bruno Mars! Or If you like biking, you should bike along the bike trail in Old Town. It's beautiful!*”
- Response to feedback: “Read your classmate's feedback. Respond by thanking your classmate and making a comment. Examples: *Thanks so much for your feedback! I'm glad we're in class together. Let me know if you ever want to practice English outside of class!*”

Step 3: Choose meaningful, clear criteria

Sample peer feedback assignment: Do You Prefer Online or In-Person Classes?

Choose a posting with a classmate's speech. Listen to the attached speech.

Hit “Reply” and comment on the recording:

- 1) Do you hear thought groups, followed by a pause?
- 2) Are content words stressed and function words reduced?
- 3) Give some examples of content words that you hear the most.
- 4) Comment on the ideas, language, and organization. What was effective, in your opinion?

When you have finished your comment, post it to the discussion board!

If you want specific feedback, give specific criteria to evaluate! Have students listen to a recording or watch a video and listen for their own or a classmate's use of the competencies they've practiced in class. For example, if students have learned to use “thought groups” when they speak, they can listen to see if their classmates say their ideas in a group and then pause. They can use a rubric like the one at left for peer evaluation.

Step 4: “Layer on” different speaking skills as students acquire them

The more you practice in class, the more criteria you can “layer on” to self and peer evaluation. For instance, in an early assignment, students listen and evaluate the use of pausing. Later they listen for pausing as well as stressed content words and reduced function words – and the organization of and support for ideas in a classmate's 1-2 minute response to a question prompt.

Because the rubric asks about specific features, including examples of them, it generates very targeted peer feedback, as seen in these comments:

"You always pause at the end of the sentence. I hear content words emphasized more than function words. But I hear sometimes you stress function words like is, and, to. You did a good job."

"His presentation was very well organized. He supported his reasons with proper details and examples. He stressed content words, that's why it was easy to understand. Some content words were students, subjects, attendance."

Step 5: Listen in class for different things.

For in-class practice or presentations, have students listen to peers and evaluate different components of speech. For example, students give a prepared answer to a question in groups of three. One classmate speaks while another fills out a rubric assessing content and the other group member completes a rubric evaluating delivery. They give these completed rubrics (see page 12) to their classmate and discuss them:

Step 6: Plan for action and reflect on growth

It's important to follow up on the areas for improvement that students cite in a self-evaluation with a formal or informal action plan. Students can generate concrete ways to improve skills that are difficult for them. This holds them accountable for their learning, particularly if they must list a specific number of steps they will take, such as these:

"Maybe for the next presentation, we could use gestures and also smile to the audience."

"It's really hard for me to find two support ideas for [the speaking question]. I'm always stuck and I can only find one. I should think more about the question."

"I think I should work on my linking words."

Finally, it's essential to provide opportunities for students to reflect on their growth. At the middle and end of the semester, I have students listen to recordings or watch videos of themselves, commenting globally on how their speaking skills have changed since the beginning of the semester.

Conclusion

"My way of talking and not talking fast is controlled now, not like months before. I feel confident and no longer nervous."

"I know what I am talking about, and I have the ideas and support ideas and conclusion."

It's incredibly rewarding to read comments like these. Our goal as teachers is to give students the tools they need to help themselves. Regular peer and self-evaluation are crucial to that end and represent a useful and motivational way for students to see their own growth.

Upcoming Events

Fall 2018

- ♦ [WATESOL Fall Conference](#)
Saturday, October 6th
- ♦ [MDTESOL Fall Conference](#)
Saturday, November 10th

Spring 2019

- ♦ [AAAL Conference](#)
March 9th—12th
Atlanta, Georgia
- ♦ [TESOL International](#)
March 12th—15th
Atlanta, Georgia
- ♦ [COABE Conference](#)
March 31st—April 3rd
New Orleans, Louisiana



Getting Past “It’s Good!”: Meaningful Self-and Peer Evaluation of Speaking Skills

TOEFL Speaking Task Peer Rubric, Partner A: <i>Should attendance be required or optional?</i>			
Speaker’s Name:		My Name:	
I. CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION		Rating	Examples/Notes
Organization	The speech had an introduction, logical supporting sentences, and a conclusion.	Yes No Not sure	
Transitions/ Signal Words	The speaker used transitions and signal words and phrases.	Yes No Not sure	
Vocabulary	The speaker used a mix of everyday and academic vocabulary.	Yes No Not sure	
Presentation strengths and suggestions:			

TOEFL Speaking Task Peer Rubric, Partner B: <i>Should attendance be required or optional?</i>			
Speaker’s Name:		My Name:	
II. DELIVERY OF SPEECH		Rating	Examples/Notes
Clarity	The speaker had effective loudness and speed.	Yes No Not sure	
Pronunciation	The speaker stressed content words, reduced function words, and paused between ideas.	Yes No Not sure	
Body language	The speaker looked at the audience, used gestures to reinforce ideas, and referred to notes but did NOT read aloud.	Yes No Not sure	
Presentation strengths and suggestions:			



TECH TOOLS CORNER

by Lindsey Crifasi

5 Online resources to help educators stay informed and advocate for their students.

Immigrants feel threatened and less secure than ever. News of family separations at the border, increased immigration raids and disparaging rhetoric around immigrants has created a hostile mood in this country. We, as teachers, can advocate for our students and provide safe and encouraging environments for them. Here are 5 online resources to arm you with the information and tools you need to support your students.

- 1) Teaching Tolerance (tolerance.org) offers articles and lesson plans to break through some of the disinformation and stereotypes around minority groups and people of color. Their [Ten Myths About Immigration](#) debunks common misconceptions that are often spread about immigrants and immigration. Come for the recently updated facts, stay for the dynamic lesson plans to use in the secondary classroom.
- 2) Unfamiliar with the basic protections for immigrant students such as *Plyler vs Doe* or FERPA? Check out the ACLU's [FAQ for Educators on Immigrant Students in Public Schools](#) for short and clear explanations of the legal protections our immigrant students have as residents of the United States.
- 3) Once you are ready for more information on rights for immigrant students, check out the Education section of the [National Immigrant Law Center](#). Here you will find resources and information on increasing immigrant and DREAMer's access to education.
- 4) We can educate our students on their rights as United States' residents, but the reality is that they must be prepared for the worst. We can help our students make a plan for their families by talking about their rights and how to assert them, putting a childcare and family preparedness plan in place and practicing what to do if ICE knocks on the door. The [Immigrant Legal Resource Center](#) offers a comprehensive information packet for educators to empower themselves and students in this time of increased stress and fear.
- 5) Think local... read up on what supports we have in our local school systems through Title III for ELLs to get the best education for our immigrant students. The Maryland Department of Education ESL site lays out resources specific to programs in that state that support ELLs, and their resource section is quite robust (check out Colorín Colorado listed there). Virginia's Department of Education ESL site lists tips for instruction, professional organization, standards and more that support ELL students. Though less robust, District of Columbia Public School's ESL support site will help educators of ELLs navigate some of the terminology, programs, and assessments offered for English learners.

As educators we are default advocates for our students, and can stand up against misinformation outside of the school walls if we arm ourselves with the facts. We can help them prepare themselves and their families by being open about their rights and realities. Knowledge is power.

Beyond Trivia: Learning Where Our Students Come From

Kaylin Wainwright, English Language Fellowship, kaylin.wainwright@gmail.com



Kaylin Wainwright has been an ELT professional in a variety of international and local contexts for 9 years. She holds an MA TESOL in Curriculum Development from The New School. Her current adventure is an English Language Fellowship assignment teaching and developing curriculum for a refugee service in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Many of us who work in ESL/EFL in the Washington metro area have diverse classes of learners from around the world. Indeed we may have been attracted to this profession because we love learning about other countries, languages, and cultures. Yet sometimes we mistake our proximity to so many international students and the resulting cursory knowledge about their countries for real understanding. Or at least I have. This is what I realized when I traveled with a group of teachers to El Salvador for an education delegation with *Voices on the Border*.

The majority of the learners in my ESL adult education classroom over the last six years have been from Central America with El Salvador often being the most represented country. I knew I wasn't an expert on El Salvador and my Spanish skills are high beginning at best, but I'd heard of Oscar Romero, eaten pupusas, and had some awareness that there had been a civil war in the 80s, which included some U.S.-sponsored atrocities. I knew my students came to the U.S. for economic opportunities, to be reunited with family, and to flee gang violence. Pretty good, right? More than my non-ESL teacher friends and family know about El Salvador. Wrong bar to measure against. I left this visit humbled by the opportunity to take this small peek into the lived reality of Salvadoran people.

The nonprofit organization, *Voices on the Border*, has worked with communities in El Salvador since the war when many people were displaced in refugee camps. They support the communities in the goals of food security, environmental preservation, and political representation. *Voices* facilitates delegations to El Salvador that allow foreigners to learn about Salvadoran history and make connections with the communities. Recently they decided to focus on education and are supporting community schools in getting resources and advocating to the Ministry of Education.



Vilma, my host mother, making pupusas



A Carlos Rosario-led workshop on curriculum design, a topic request by Amando Lopez school

This past July a small group of teachers from Carlos Rosario and Cesar Chavez Public Charter Schools attended one of *Voices*' education delegations. Our goals were to offer support and training to local teachers, as well as to learn about the education system that is the background of our English language learning students here in Washington, DC. We primarily worked with a school in the Amando Lopez community giving and receiving workshops.

The Amando Lopez community was one of the many communities formed and organized in the refugee camps in Honduras during the civil war. They repatriated to El Salvador in 1990 and settled on land in the then-fertile Bajo Lempa region, which is now combating environmental challenges and encroachment from developers that want to build resorts.

When we sat down to initially meet the dozen teachers we would spend the next few days with, they excitedly introduced Olga and Digna to us, two older teachers that had emerged as popular educators in the refugee camps. Alex, a social studies and English teacher pursuing his teaching credentials at a university, explained that Olga and Digna had been his teachers when he was a child in the camps. Other faculty chimed in that they too had studied under these women. Now they were all colleagues together working to teach the next generation of children in their community.

Cristino, a science teacher, led us in some activities to model how they teach in Amando Lopez. He wrote a theme on the board, "Resolving Community Needs," and invited each of us to write a question about the theme on a post-it note and put it on the board. He noted that he had chosen this theme for our group because it was broad and open to interpretation, but for his students he would choose something that aligned to their curriculum and was more straightforward. Cristino read the post-its out loud and categorized similar questions together. In small groups we took a set of the participant-produced questions and created a "study guide" responding to them. We did this using our own knowledge and created a poster in a twenty-minute window, but Cristino explained that with students this process would last for several class periods and involve research in the school's (admittedly limited) library. After the investigation we presented our study guide to the whole group.



Two local teachers, Digna and Marlene, participating in a communicative warm up activity

The Amando Lopez teachers said they use this autodidactic method because it engages students in the learning process. We were inspired by these teachers' student-centered pedagogy, their ingenuity with limited resources, their invocation and implementation of Paolo Freire's ideals, and their hospitality to us in their school and homes. We could also commiserate with them over challenges familiar to any educator like overstuffed curriculum, topdown requirements that don't fit local needs, insufficient planning time, and outdated textbooks.

In addition to working closely with the Amando Lopez teachers we visited other schools and listened to the teachers describe their triumphs and challenges. We visited museums documenting the war and the site of the brutal massacre in El Mozote. We met with people working in environmental advocacy, youth leadership, trauma counseling, human rights and women's rights activism.



The memorial at El Mozote where more than 800 civilians were killed by the Salvadoran army in 1981

We started fleshing out our understanding of El Salvador with more details- a timeline of the war, the names of the political parties, the departments most affected by gang violence, the high school graduation requirements, the people's current fight to prevent the privatization of the nation's water supply, and the attitudes of those left behind by their family members immigrating to the U.S. We observed reasons to be quite hopeful about the future of El Salvador and we saw the heartbreaking reasons that compel people to leave.

Whatever your knowledge base is of the countries your students come from, I challenge you to build on it. Visiting their home countries may not be feasible for everyone, but reading fiction and nonfiction, listening to music, watching movies, reading news coverage, and following social media accounts will help us see how our individual students and their stories fit into a historical, economic, and cultural context. This context includes systems we participate in, directly and indirectly, as Americans: trade and economic activity, tourism, U.S. foreign policy, immigration policy, education, etc. In taking our time to learn about our students and their homes, we learn about ourselves and our home.



The teachers of Amando Lopez, Carlos Rosario, and Cesar Chavez all together

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