

WAESOL Project Funding Grant Report

ESL BOOK EXCHANGE: LEARNING ENGLISH WITHIN AND BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

WEINA SUN

I am grateful to have been selected as one of the recipients of the 2023 WAESOL Project Funding Grants to enhance my project titled *ESL Book Exchange: Learning English Within and Beyond the Classroom* in Winter 2024. Here, I am pleased to present the outcomes of the ESL Book Exchange project.

The objective of the *ESL Book Exchange: Learning English Within and Beyond the Classroom* is to promote language acquisition, cultural understanding, and community building through the exchange of books. Through the quarter-long book exchange project, students were engaged in selecting a book of their interest, developing an engaging poster session to introduce their book, and participating in the final book exchange event. During the exchange, students had a platform to communicate, interact, and share their experiences and perspectives. This project not only enhanced students' reading and oral skills by enabling them to identify book genres, write book summaries, and deliver poster presentations but also fostered their involvement in the campus community by introducing them to campus resources such as tutoring and printing services to support their poster creation and helped students save money and promoted sustainable living.

The idea for the book exchange project originated in Spring 2023 when I realized that textbooks had become increasingly expensive and inaccessible. Students would purchase a textbook for more than \$70, use it for one quarter, then move on to the next level or transition out of the program without further use of the book. This pattern represented a significant waste for our students. Additionally, as we transition to a post-pandemic world, with classes gradually moving from online to in-person, there is a growing need for students to build community, establish friendships, and connect with campus life and resources. Lastly, I observed that despite the various opportunities provided in class for practicing language skills—such as group presentations, debates, role-plays, and book clubs—students often exhibited disinterest, reluctance, and hesitation. Therefore, I decided to integrate

Project-Based Learning (PBL) into my upper-intermediate integrated skills ESL class (ESL Level 5). This approach engages students in meaningful, real-world projects (Krajcik & Shin, 2014), promoting mastery of course content while also increasing exposure to authentic language use and providing opportunities for language practice (Stein, 1995). With PBL, students can extend language learning beyond the classroom and into the community.

Altogether, there are seven major tasks within this quarter-long project designed to prepare students for the book exchange day (refer to Image 1 below for more details). Each week, students were assigned a task, and these weekly assignments culminated in the final book exchange event.



Figure 1: A Breakdown of the ESL Book Exchange

Winter 2024 marked the third iteration of the successful ESL Book Exchange project. With the 2023 WAESOL Project Funding Grant, I was able to collaborate with Renee Tinsley, Assistant Professor in the English Language Institute at Bellevue College, to bring this language-learning and community-building project to the next level (scan the QR code for a mini-documentary I created to represent the project). On the day of the book exchange event, more than 40 students from both programs participated. This quarter-long



Figure 2: QR Code for Mini-Documentary

project not only enhanced students' language skills but also extended language learning beyond the classroom and into the community. Aligned with six course outcomes based on the College and Career Readiness Standards, it provided a comprehensive learning experience.

Bringing together ESL students and international students in a collaborative book exchange project created a rich and diverse learning environment where students from varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds came together to share their experiences, stories, and perspectives.

Thank you very much, WAESOL, for generously supporting my project! I eagerly anticipate actively participating in the WAESOL community and reciprocating your support by creating more projects to benefit our students.

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WAESOL Project Funding Grant Report

REDESIGNING ELA CURRICULA AND LEARNING OUTCOMES THROUGH LESSON STUDY

NGUYEN DAO

I am deeply honored and grateful to be the recipient of the 2023 WAESOL Project Funding Grant. This generous support has enabled me to pursue my goals with greater focus and commitment. The grant provides essential financial assistance and a powerful affirmation of the potential of my “Redesigning ELA Curricula and Learning Outcomes Through Lesson Study” project. This work highlights the ongoing review and assessment of English Language Acquisition (ELA) courses at Skagit Valley College. Specifically, by adopting the Lesson Study model (Perry & Lewis, 2009), we redesign our ELA curriculum – with an explicit focus on actionable learning outcomes, connection with upper-level courses, and transferability to degree-seeking programs – to better serve our diverse adult ELL populations, which comprise over 500 students across Skagit, Island, and San Juan counties. These objectives also align with our college’s mission of sustaining and reinforcing our newly-achieved status as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (Hispanic Association of Colleges And Universities, 2023).

Our work has resulted in the completion of a new set of learning outcomes for ELA Levels 4 and 5, which was approved by the Instructional Committee and has been officially implemented since the Summer Quarter of 2024. As mentioned above, parallel to the revision work was the adoption of Lesson Study (LS) – a professional development model in which a learning community of instructors collaborates to identify

students’ learning challenges, plan and teach key lessons, and reflect on these lessons (Lewis et al., 2019). With LS as a guiding framework, we designed a special lesson plan that pays explicit attention to life skills and transferability. We implemented this lesson in Level 5 classrooms last Winter Quarter. The student feedback collected is overall positive in a way most of them were able to internalize the lesson’s learning objectives, reflect on their educational pathways, and outline their career goals. More than 50% of the students surveyed express their interest in pursuing a high school diploma or degree- and certificate-seeking programs beyond ELA. This aligns with our initial purposes of enhancing ELA students’ progression and transferability to upper-level courses and degree-seeking programs. In addition, LS as a professional development tool seems to have proven its worth in bringing about positive changes in equity-driven curricular design and pedagogical orientations among our professional learning community of instructors.

As this LS project is in its early stages and essentially acts as action research – which at its core identifies issues, applies a solution, collects and analyzes data, and makes the necessary adjustments (Burns et al., 2022). These LS cycles as well as the curricular redesign repeat until the desired outcomes are established. We are thus excited about what comes next and look forward to sharing our findings with the WAESOL community in November.

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WAESOL Professional Development Grant Report

INTISSAR YAHIA

I was honored to receive the \$ 500 WAESOL Professional Development Grant at the 2023 WAESOL conference. I used this grant to attend the Spokane Regional ESL Conference that was held in Spokane, Washington, on February 24, 2024. This conference is a regional ESL conference where ESL instructors, graduate students, and educators meet to showcase their research and present their practical teaching strategies. The 2024 conference marked the 35th anniversary for the conference. In this conference, the focus of presentations and workshops was on inspiring teachers and engaging students.

I gained valuable knowledge and hands-on experience from attending the presentation of the keynote speaker, Dr. Cherrice Montgomery from Brigham Young University, titled “Sparking Student Engagement & Empowerment through Project-Based Language Learning.” I also attended a variety of sessions, including a session about how to use ChatGPT to design instructional activities and another session about incorporating literature circles in the ELL classroom. In addition, I attended an informative presentation about immigration law for educators. The aim of this presentation was to educate and familiarize ESL educators with laws that can have an impact on international students. The experience of attending this conference was very inspiring for me, as it helped me as an ESL instructor to develop my teaching skills, exchange teaching ideas and insights with colleagues, and

learn how to leverage AI and incorporate it in the classroom. More specifically, I understood how to formulate effective prompts to ask AI tools (ChatGPT & Copilot) to create engaging lesson plans and design quizzes and rubrics. Further, I have created a professional network with my colleagues at Spokane Community College as well as with ESL instructors across Washington state.

Additionally, this grant has covered a one-year membership in the International TESOL Association and the Modern language Association (MLA). Being a member of these two associations allows me to have unlimited access to different ESL resources, events, workshops, webinars, and online courses. These resources have expanded my experience with ongoing professional development and connecting with language educators worldwide. Being an ESL instructor, these resources are very helpful to create and design activities for my adult ESL beginner students.

Since attending the conference and being an active member in both the TESOL and MLA associations, I have acquired additional teaching skills and activities that I have incorporated in my classroom. I am highly grateful and appreciative to WAESOL for offering me this grant.

Link to the 2024 Spokane Regional Conference

<https://2024spokaneregionaleslconfe.sched.com/>