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WE

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WAESOL Educator is the biannual, professional, peer-reviewed, online journal of the Washington Association for the Education of Speakers of Other Languages (WAESOL) organization. *WAESOL Educator* publishes articles concerning the teaching of language in elementary and secondary education, higher education, adult education, and bilingual education, as well as teacher preparation for pre-service and in-service teachers.

The two main goals of *WAESOL Educator* are

- to share information related to language teaching practices, materials, research, and professional development opportunities;
- to support and mentor potential authors who teach, conduct research, administer programs, and/or study in classrooms with multilingual learners.

All manuscripts receive a double-blind review.

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



DEAR WAESOL COMMUNITY,

At the time of this writing, summer will be in full swing with some reflecting on the previous school year, some in the middle of summer instruction, or some gearing up for the next term. At WAESOL, we are ramping up the planning for our annual conference this fall which falls on the first weekend of November this year. This also begins the celebration of 50 years as a TESOL affiliate and coming together as educators of speakers of other languages in Washington. We are grateful to all who have contributed to WAESOL over the past 50 years.

While the conference is the main event and focus of the board's undertaking, we are also offering WAESOL Online professional development opportunities as well as following the latest policy activity as it relates to the education of multilingual learners on the federal level, all the while working on publishing this latest issue of the WAESOL Educator. We are grateful for the foundation laid by our previous WAESOL Educator editor, Bridget Green, which the board's Educator committee has utilized to prepare this latest issue.

In my first letter as president in the last Educator issue, I expressed the goals that the 2024 board hopes to achieve. In addition to our goals for the 2024 conference, we also hope to continue and expand our advocacy efforts on the federal and state levels. We will continue to follow the guidance of TESOL and share those updates with you. Appropriations for FY2025 have just passed, however, we remain in communication with our congressional representatives and senators as it is imperative in keeping education and specifically multilingual/ESOL education in the conversation when discussions of funding arise. More updates about current policy and advocacy efforts will be shared at the conference.

As we look forward to the conference on November 1-2, we are pleased to share that Voice of Witness education specialist and program coordinator, Jessica Fagen, will be our 2024 keynote. Voice of Witness is a non-profit that uses oral history as a medium to share and amplify the voices of many of the communities we work with as educators. This will be an opportunity to engage with the ways that we as educators may use storytelling and oral histories in the classroom across the contexts within which we teach. We can also view this as an opportunity to engage further with our communities.

As you continue your summer or begin to plan for fall, we hope your plan includes meeting us in Renton, WA for the WAESOL conference. It will be a time of reflection and celebration and community. It will also be a time to look forward to how YOU can be a part of shaping WAESOL for the future. See you in Renton!

¡SI SE PUEDE!

ROSEMARY COLÓN

2024 WAESOL BOARD PRESIDENT

Land Acknowledgment

Washington Association for the Education of Speakers of Other Languages (WAESOL) recognizes and honors our many diverse Indigenous and Native Peoples in the Pacific Northwest, in the United States, and globally—past, present, and future. We acknowledge that the arrival of the English language impacted the traditional languages and cultures of the Native, Indigenous, and First Nations Peoples and we celebrate the work to reclaim or maintain their languages and cultures. We stand in solidarity with the Native, Indigenous, and First Nations Peoples and respect their sovereignty, cultural heritage, and lives. May we all take a moment to honor the Indigenous tribes and Indigenous lands that we reside on and pay our deepest respects.



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



DEAR READERS,

Welcome to the Summer 2024 issue of WAESOL Educator. This is my first issue as editor of the WAESOL Educator, and let me say, editing this edition was truly a labor of love. I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to all the wonderful peer reviewers who volunteered their time and expertise for this edition. Their thoughtful feedback and insights were instrumental in shaping the quality of the content you are about to read. And a very special thanks to David Martin, who not only gave me a crash course in all things related to InDesign but also offered unwavering support to ensure that this journal reached you in its best form.

Like previous editions, this edition is full of insightful articles that cover important topics related to the ELT profession. You will find many helpful practitioner-focused articles that you will find to be meaningful for your work. The articles include essential information covering topics such as novel study, lesson study, school-library partnerships, and centering linguistic identities. Additionally, you can explore the inspiring work of the 2023 WAESOL grant recipients, showcasing innovative projects that are making a difference in the field.

As we continue to share knowledge and grow as a community, I encourage you to consider submitting an article for the next issue. Whether it's a teaching strategy that has proven effective, a presentation you have delivered, or insights gained from professional development, your contributions are invaluable. The deadline for submission for the winter issue is November 15, and I look forward to seeing the great work that our community will bring forward.

Kindest regards,

GRACE INAE BLUM, PHD (*She/Her*)

EDITOR

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Washington Association for the
Education of Speakers of Other Languages

Novel Study Using Google Meet and Audiobooks

KARA HOLLER-PEREZ AND GILLIAN OBER

Summary: This article highlights the challenges faced in conducting novel studies in a diverse fifth-grade ELA classroom and proposes an effective solution utilizing Google Meet with Breakout rooms and audiobooks. By incorporating high-interest novels and bilingual approaches, educators facilitate language development, comprehension, and engagement. The method fosters individualized learning, boosts student confidence, and maximizes class time efficiency. As a solution to pandemic disruptions, this strategy has emerged as a valuable tool to promote language acquisition and a love for reading among students.

Keywords: novel study, English language arts, language acquisition, bilingual education, student engagement, differentiation, Google Meet, audiobooks

Introduction

An important part of teaching English Language Arts is exposing students to a wide range and variety of texts. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, our goal as educators is to inspire a love of reading in our students. In order to accomplish this, we utilize different novel studies in our classroom. As curriculum focused on novel studies promotes critical reasoning and language skills (Hameed, 2021), we try to incorporate high interest novels into our language arts classroom.

However, novel studies posed a challenge in our fifth grade High Intensity English Language Arts classroom of twenty students. As the classroom is composed of learners ranging from Newcomers to level 4 WIDA Multilingual Learners, the diverse linguistic needs of each student made traditional novel study a complex task. Novel study in class involves selecting a common book for all students to read and analyze, ensuring that it addresses the appropriate grade-level standards and content. The classroom is truly diverse in that each student brings with them a unique set of experiences and background knowledge. In the classroom, there are students at different stages of their academic and linguistic development, as well as students who have interrupted formal education. We had the challenge of devising a plan to study one book, as one unified class, in order to make it work for all students and their varied needs.

In years past, we would purchase the novel chosen by our students in both English and in Spanish and take turns reading aloud to the entire class as they followed along in their own books. Firstly, trying to purchase the correct number of books in each language proved to be overwhelming, not cost effective and inaccurate when new students joined our

class. Secondly, while trying to alternate reading in English and Spanish, students would lose focus and interest when the other language was being read, which was not conducive to their learning. It also took twice as long to get through novels, so for time management sake, this method was simply not working. It was necessary to reflect on our own teaching practices and think of a better strategy to keep students engaged.

During COVID, when our school was shut down completely, we went to virtual learning and had to figure out a way to continue doing novel studies. As necessity is the mother of invention, we found it was easiest to share our screens with PDF versions of the book during our Google Meets and utilize breakout rooms for the varying levels in the classroom. One teacher would read the novel aloud in English and the other in Spanish to a predetermined point, and then as a whole group the class would discuss what was learned and build academic vocabulary together. This proved to be highly effective, as students were engaged in listening to only one language. It also helped greatly with time efficiency, as all students were listening to the story at the same time in different languages. It also gave our students access to high interest books such as *Esperanza Rising*, *They Call Me Guero*, and *Wonder* during a period when they were more isolated at home and had far less access to in-print books.

A “silver lining” of the pandemic, we realized this way of doing novel study was highly effective for our group of unique learners, so we have continued using this strategy since the pandemic. Integrating novel study with Google Meet has allowed us to get through more novels during the school year and encourage language growth through our novel study as a class.

How we make it work

This method of bilingual novel study requires the use of student computers, teacher computers, headphones, Google Meet, as well as audiobooks in your languages of choice. Amazon and the Kindle platform have a wealth of audiobooks that are available at decently fair prices in multiple languages.

Students begin by logging into Google Meet (either the one embedded on your Google Classroom page or a link posted by the teacher). They have their copy of the novel ready to follow along with the audiobook. The teachers establish breakout rooms in the Google Meet according to the different languages available for the audiobooks. For example, in our classroom we read the book and listen to the audio in English and in Spanish. Thus, one breakout room is for the English audiobook, and one breakout room is for Spanish. We adjust the speed of the audiobook playback to suit the needs of our students, and make plans where to stop to get back together as a class and complete activities or have group discussions.

Positive outcomes we have seen

As teachers utilizing this technique, we have seen many positive outcomes and we have continued to use Google Meet for novel study post pandemic. Students are focused throughout the entirety of the audiobook, as they are only having to focus on one language and one voice. This then correlates to an increase in their comprehension of the novel. When the class leaves their respective breakout rooms on Google Meet and come back together for discussion with both teachers, more students are volunteering answers and insights, as they feel more comfortable and confident.

Since we are reading and listening to the same novel simultaneously in different breakout rooms, we are utilizing class time more efficiently. With the typical novel study method, it would have taken us double the time to complete even just a few chapters. We are able to read and listen to the same amount of high quality, grade-level, and age appropriate text in the same amount of time, therefore we have more class time to dissect the novel together and encourage higher order thinking. We are able to practice the four modes of communication (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and encourage more language production as a basis for discussion and learning.

The breakout rooms provide a low stakes environment and lower students' affective filter so that they feel free to take more language risks. Many of our learners are often self-conscious and aware of their content knowledge and language differences when compared to peers, and this awareness can lead to low self-esteem and social emotional difficulties (Morgan, Farkas & Wu, 2012). As students can discreetly decide which breakout room they wish to join, we have seen more students make the transition to listening in English or testing out their listening skills in English with less hesitation

or embarrassment. This also affords students the opportunity to return to their L1 if they are struggling to follow along with the English language version and reattempt at a later date. Our goal of novel studies is to expose all students to grade-level, age-appropriate text regardless of the language it is written in. By doing so, we are also able to highlight and teach the grade-level standards through grade level text, as well as use our skills as teachers to differentiate activities and encourage more production and interaction with English. As the teachers, we have been able to develop students' grade level skills on standards that address theme, character development, influence of point of view, figurative language and context clues. This method of bilingual novel study provides all students in a mixed English proficiency classroom access to rigorous content. The novel content then serves as a tremendous unifier in the classroom to promote language production and language acquisition through rich activities and scaffolding of critical thinking tasks having read a story together.

Conclusion

As educators, we encountered several challenges over the years when conducting novel studies in our diverse classroom such as time constraints, maintaining student focus and attention, as well as properly addressing grade level standards. We have found that the method of using Google Meet with breakout rooms combined with audiobooks has helped us to continue and appropriately expose all of our students to grade-level content, rich vocabulary, and high-interest novels. We have also seen that spark in our students where they truly enjoy reading. There is a sort of class bond created by experiencing the same novel together, and even more so when students feel empowered to use English in their reactions and analysis of the novels we read. The pandemic was so challenging for society and educators, but it did force us to think outside of the box in our profession, and this strategy has proven to be an amazing tool in the language learning classroom.

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Centering Identities & Supporting Newcomer Ukrainian Multilingual Learners

FENGLAN NANCY YI-CLINE

Summary: Since Russia invaded Ukraine, over 16,000 Ukrainians have sought refuge in Washington (Wilkinson, 2023). In this article, I first present a brief narrative of one 11th grade newcomer multilingual learner's schooling experience. I then showcase a few teaching and learning moments. Afterwards, I analyze the experience through identities and translanguaging, transcollaboration, and social emotional lenses. I conclude with a few recommendations to help all teachers to center students' multifaceted identities and support multilingual learners.

Keywords: identities, translanguaging, transcaring, transcollaboration, social emotional learning, Ukrainian, newcomer, literacy engagement

School Context

Ukrainian multilingual learners (MLs) make up the second largest language group in my classroom in the Kent School District, after Spanish. Out of 1920 students in the high school, 775 reported a language other than English as their home language, 40 listed Ukrainian, and 14 listed Russian. 294 (15.3%) are receiving ML services. Table 1 below shows the top five home languages other than English and the number of active MLs in each language. A total of 21 showed Ukrainian as their home language, making up 7.1% of the 294 MLs. There were 6 MLs with Russian as home language, 2 of whom were from Ukraine. Since many other Eastern Ukrainians are bilingual in Ukrainian and Russian, the actual number of MLs from Ukraine could be higher. 2023 WIDA scores of the 21 official Ukrainian speaking students showed 6 MLs scored between 1 and 1.9, 8 between 2 and 2.9, and 7 between 3 and 4.5. For this article, I focus on one multilingual learner, Alina (pseudonym), who scored 1 across all four domains on the WIDA screener. She was placed in our mixed-grade English class, receiving two periods of English instruction, with one offering English Language Arts credits and one offering elective English Language Development credits. Alina also took Algebra, US History, and Physics in the Universe. For electives, she took Physical Education and Studio Photography.

Table 1 Top 5 Home Languages and Number in Active MLs

Home Language	Student Number
Spanish	115
Punjabi	21
Ukrainian	21
Vietnamese	20
Somali	18

Alina's Learner Profile & Schooling

To learn more about each of my newcomers, I fully embraced translanguaging, created translanguaging spaces, and conducted multilingual surveys. Alina's profile is based on the information she shared, with full consent, in Ukrainian from the written surveys, direct conversations with her through Google translate and in English, and in class assignments and projects. Quotes are in the unedited Google translated edition to preserve student voice authenticity.

Before Alina came to Washington State, she had "2 years of kindergarten, 4 years of middle school, and 7 years of high school back in Ukraine" (This should be 4 years of elementary and 7 years of secondary school). For English, she took two 45-minute-long lessons per week for 11 years. She stated they did not have enough qualified English teachers. As for extracurricular activities and leadership, she revealed that "I took part in the library, it was necessary to read books and then go to the Olympiads and retell them. I took part in sports competitions in various handicrafts in school performances in front of the school."

Alina came here on her own to join her aunt's family, leaving behind her parents and siblings. Her parents said that if Alina wanted to come to America, she could, and they let her come "because it is very difficult in Ukraine now, especially for young people who want to develop."

When asked how different schooling is between here and Ukraine, Alina shared through the survey,

"These are two different schools but I will never be able to feel as good here as in my village where I grew up but I will give a couple of examples: We never wrote with pencils never only pens...but sometimes we went to the computer science class during class and could work on computers there, but it was once or twice a week, also all our teachers worked in

notebooks, they don't have computers, we went to the store to eat during the break and bought something for us there. You have been studying with the same students for 11 years. Teachers go to our class, but we don't have their own class. And in our school, the school is much smaller, and I knew all the teachers. They wrote down our grades in a diary."

When asked what she liked or disliked about our high school, she wrote, *"There are many nationalities and it's a bit hard to get used to it and sometimes I don't understand a bit with the teachers because it's hard for me to work in a team, but in your class it's great, I have very few Ukrainians in my classes."*

Alina's work samples are included below to showcase authentic student voice collected through Canvas assignments during the 2023-2024 school year and their complex and dynamic identities.

Student Work Samples

Sample 1: 08/31/23, All About Me & My Family

My family in Ukraine, I have more relatives here than in Ukraine one sister can manage. Like to play volleyball. Like to eat Ukrainian food.

Sample 2: 11/20/23, 2 minutes with Alina Script.

Here are some of the prompts: question 4 - What is your favorite subject? Why? question 7 - what do your friends and you do together for fun? and question 8 - what was your proudest moment?

1. *I'm from Ukraine. I live in America in Cavinton*
2. *Horse riding, sport, volleyball, football, I like to bake dough*
3. *my favorite food is pasta dumplings and dumplings*
4. *My favorite subject is physics English gym mathematics. They have very good studies and these are subjects that I understand*
5. *I don't even know what is yet but maybe it will be something in the future*
6. *all my friends go to the choir go to church we go out together*
7. *steak and potatoes*
8. *she came here alone without her parents*
9. *it*
10. *I'm not watching anything at the moment*

Sample 3: 01/20/24, My City/My Town

My village is located in Zakarpattia, our village is divided into two names, the main name is Velyki Komyati Mali Komyati

in my village there is one big river and many small ones in which you can bathe, swim, fish, etc.

there is still an abandoned soap factory or mill, it used

to work a long time ago, but now, I think it will be started again soon

we have one factory where food for animals, cats and dogs is produced, many people from our village work there

maybe once I moved to the city to Lviv, because I like this city more, but my village, our mountains, is very beautiful. We invite everyone to visit

Teacher Observations

In this section, I delineate my observations of Alina's schooling experiences both inside and outside classroom, including school/district/community collaborations, specific teaching and learning moments, and friends and family support.

At the beginning of the school year, Alina had a difficult time adapting to the new environment. She broke down in tears walking into my class one day in October. She was able to share with me through Google Translate that she really missed her parents and family, and she was the only one here in the U.S. staying with her relatives. Knowing she must be faced with many challenges, I reached out to our school social worker who played a key role in connecting Alina with a variety of resources, including getting Alina needed information on Running Start and seeking extra district support. Our district's refugee navigation specialist was able to check in with Alina periodically. One tutor from the International Rescue Committee also provided occasional support through one-to-one tutoring sessions. During our after-school support classes, a colleague expressed her concern over Alina's misplacement in math classes. This conversation led to a review of Alina's math placement and resulted in a math schedule change. All of these demonstrated the invaluable collaborations taking place in the wider community throughout the school year.

As Alina's English teacher, I now focus on memorable interactions. As shown in the above-mentioned class assignments, I created both formal and informal opportunities for her to share her experiences from Ukraine and about her Ukrainian family. She frequently showed me photos of her family and told me about celebrations and gatherings captured in those photos. I came to know about their family farm and the sow that just delivered tons of baby piglets. I came to see the beautiful church choir performances she has been part of here in Washington, evidence of the strong Ukrainian community support. One day, she walked into my classroom with a big smile on her face and read me a Google translated message on her phone, *"I love your classroom. It's like a home. Very nice!"* On a different day, she came in while on a video chat with her family, excitedly telling me that her mother was on the phone, although it was nighttime, and I could not see them on camera. Then came the special moment when I was able to briefly meet and talk to her parents through the video chat, while Alina and another Ukrainian speaking student both tried to be the interpreter for me! During quarter 4, Alina was sitting there quietly, seeming to be lost in deep

thought. I asked her whether everything was okay. She was about to speak, then paused for a moment, took a deep breath, and decided to share something very personal with me, “*I think I am in love!*” As the school year was coming to an end, the class was discussing what we would do in 10 years, using future tense. Alina said, “*If the war ends, (I encouraged her to use when), when the war ends, I will be back in Ukraine.*” On the last school day when my students presented their country project, Alina co-presented with her peers, teaching the entire class about Ukraine.

Compared with the beginning, Alina became much more confident in speaking English. She volunteered to give her answers in class, tried to help her classmates who speak other languages, was much more outspoken, and seemed much happier with school. The following are a few memorable moments.

In one class assignment, our students worked in groups to develop a project that gives advice to new classmates joining us. Alina worked with two other Ukrainian speakers and created a bilingual PowerPoint that contained key information. As an integral member, Alina first presented sections in Ukrainian. After two rounds of practice, she started presenting some slides in English. It was clear being able to use her home language helped encourage her participation and build her confidence.

In one discussion on fiction and nonfiction, while we talked about time travel and which time period they would be willing to live in, Alina came to the board and wrote 1991. She shared with the class confidently in English that this was the year when Ukraine gained independence from Russia. The Russian-Ukraine war weighed heavily on the minds of Ukrainian MLs. Nearly every single Ukrainian student in my class included “*the war started in Ukraine in 2022*” on their life timeline assignment.

Outside the classroom, I observed that Alina had a close group of bilingual friends who supported her. They showed me photos of their weekend gatherings, church events, and birthday celebrations. Her aunt also played an extremely supportive role and came to the parent teacher conference during the first semester. I was able to review resources Alina could access from home and provided tips and strategies to support Alina’s learning.

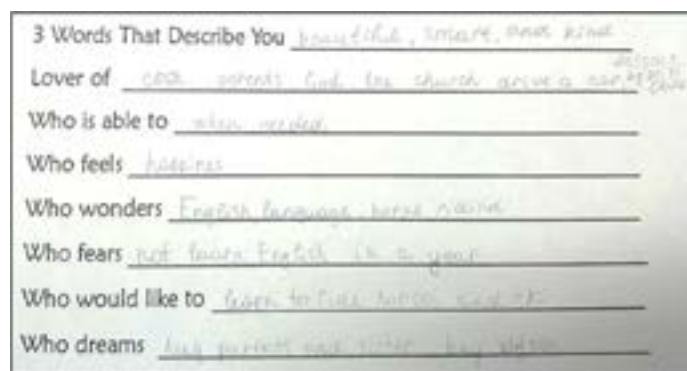
Teaching Recommendations

As a reflexive practitioner-researcher, I take on the identities and translanguaging, transcollaboration, and social emotional (SEL) lenses to analyze Alina’s case and end with practical teacher recommendations.

Multilingual learners like Alina come with multi-faceted identities that should be centered in our curriculum and instruction. Cummins et al. (2015) called for exploring instructional policies and strategies that enable students to use their emerging academic language and multilingual repertoires for powerful identity affirming purposes. The

instructional spaces I constructed encouraged MLs to use their multilingual/multimodal skills as cognitive tools. These identity-affirming translanguaging literacy practices provided them with valuable opportunities to express their evolving identities while engaging them in multimodal literacies development. Their lived experiences, background knowledge, interests and aspirations, became an integral part of my curriculum and pedagogy. Alina’s biography poem written below on 11/1/2023 gave her the opportunity to experiment freely with her ideas and her self-knowledge. By inviting students’ language, culture, and history into my classroom space, I connected my instruction to their lives, increased their level of literacy engagement, and created a close bond that fostered whole person multilingual identities development. Through identities focused translanguaging assignments, MLs from all backgrounds can show their true selves, celebrate their families and histories, and grow their dreams. The classroom space becomes the nexus of their past, present, and future. Without centering students’ multicultural multilingual identities and embracing translanguaging, elevating funds of knowledge and assets of multilingual learners, newcomer multilinguals like Alina would not have had the freedom and space to shine.

Alina’s Biography Poem



My second analytical lens is transcollaboration. Transcaring strategies delineated by García et al. (2012) includes transcollaboration of the educators with parents, family, community, and outside agencies, extending services within and beyond school walls and straddling language and cultural practices. Alina’s educational journey captures transcollaboration in action! She was not alone and received wrap-around services. When we can connect with in-school, in-district, and outside agencies, we are better equipped to provide wrap-around services that promote academic, social, and emotional development of our MLs. My 12th grade MLs needed extra guidance and support from counselors, and college preparation advisors through the College Success Foundation; we were able to collaborate with students to ensure the completion of the Washington state graduation requirement, the High School and Beyond Plan, so that our MLs could participate in the graduation ceremony. Without transcollaboration, it would be more challenging to meet our MLs’ unique needs.

My third analytical lens is social-emotional learning (SEL). Pentón Herrera (2024) SEL strategies in his 9th grade newcomers classroom and highlighted poetry and classroom decorations as some of the effective SEL practices. In that study, a 9th grader named Jesús wrote a poem about how much he missed his family in Honduras. Similarly, Alina is able to embrace her family in Ukraine and mitigate her anxiety by sharing her lived experiences and aspirations through her timeline story, and other assignments that focus on identities, such as *two minutes with Alina* in the student work samples at the end of this article. For her proudest moment question, she wrote “*she came here alone without her perents.*” As for the classroom decorations, the Ukrainian flag she brought in, the student-made flags as part of our door decoration, and the Ukranian words she wrote on our whiteboard and taught to our class all provided the valuable ambience that helped create her sense of belonging and contributed to her positive feelings and emotions.

Alina is only one of many MLs that educators support daily. I encourage all of us to affirm the multilingual and multicultural identities of our students, create collaborative third in-between spaces that transcend linguistic and cultural differences between schools and homes, and enact transcaring to foster the dynamic development of MLs’ “fluid subjectivities that extend beyond ‘first’ or ‘second’ languages and cultural identities” (Garcia et al., 2012, p. 299).

In her historically responsive literacy framework, Muhammad (2020) elaborated approaches for learning and understanding the histories, identities, and literacies of students. The below excerpts (p. 51) are great questions we should ask ourselves:

Questions for Learning Students’ Histories

- *What are the histories of my students’ schooling/school experiences?*
- *What are the histories of my students’ families/cultures?*
- *What are the histories of our students’ wider histories in their communities, in society, and in the world? Who are their people? How did they practice literacy and language historically?*

Questions for Learning Students’ Identities

- *What are ways in which my students see and define their own lives?*
- *How are my students defined by others (both positive and negative representations)? If negative, how can we provide learning spaces to name, critique, and push back against such views? If positive, how can we provide learning spaces to help them trust and believe in the ways other see them?*
- *Whom do my students desire to be in their future? how do my students see their most desired future versions of themselves? How can my classroom instruction enable and*

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Redesigning ELA Curricula and Learning Outcomes Through Lesson Study

NGUYEN DAO, DANIEL PEÑA, AND BRIENNE BOESIGER

Summary: This study highlights the ongoing review and assessment of English Language Acquisition courses at Skagit Valley College. Specifically, we employ the Lesson Study (Perry & Lewis, 2009) model to redesign our English Language Acquisition curriculum, with an explicit focus on actionable learning outcomes, connection with upper-level courses, and transferability to degree-seeking programs. Preliminary findings and analyses of the first cycle of implementation are presented in this article.

Keywords: lesson study, adult English language learners, basic education for adults, curriculum design, culturally responsive practices, Hispanic-Serving Institutions.

Introduction

1. HSI Mission and Revision of Current ELA Learning Outcomes

In recent years, the state of Washington has welcomed thousands of immigrants, notably from Mexico, Central and South America, and Ukraine. The immigrants' diverse backgrounds bring both challenges and opportunities for educational and professional training programs across higher education institutions in the state (Dao et al., 2023). To better secure federal fundings and meet the students' needs, since the 2010s, community and technical colleges in Washington have embarked on the journey of becoming minority-serving institutions. As of 2022-2023, eight community and technical colleges in Washington, including Skagit Valley College (SVC – our institution), have achieved the status of Hispanic-Serving Institution (Hispanic Association of Colleges And Universities, 2023). To sustain the HSI status and to embrace the spirit of servingness among HSIs (Garcia et al., 2019), the college has set the overall goal of enhancing culturally and linguistically diverse students' enrolment, retention, progression, transition rate, and academic success.

Therefore, all academic units at SVC have been tasked with revising curricula and program learning outcomes. Our English Language Acquisition (ELA) Department deems this operational plan as an opportunity to redesign key sections in the current curriculum, with an explicit focus on actionable learning outcomes, connection with upper-level Basic Education for Adults (BEaA) courses, and transferability to degree-seeking programs. In our current ELA program, there are currently six 10-credit leveled courses and eight supplementary courses (e.g., grammar, speaking and listening, and

digital literacy). With this design and three quarters in an academic year, multilingual learners are expected to finish ELA courses in two years and possibly transfer to English 101 – a gateway English course for certificate- and degree-seeking programs. However, we find that the expectations do not reflect the reality of many students as (1) they have ended up repeating the same courses several times and (2) there is no typical adult multilingual learner.

As Crandall and Sheppard (2004) notes, “adult English language learners (ELLs) differ in their languages and cultural backgrounds, their prior educational experiences and literacy, their employment history, their English language proficiency, and their reasons for participating in adult ESL and education” (p. 4). These students tend to bring a wide array of cultural background and linguistic experiences to the classroom. Thus, their funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) are varied in terms of exposure to the English language, first-language literacy and educational level, socioeconomic-political situations, asylee status, exposure to discrimination, mobility, et cetera. Furthermore, second language acquisition research has found that it may take an individual with strong first language and literacy skills 2 to 4 years to acquire communicative fluency and 5 to 7 years to achieve academic fluency (Cummins, 2008). However, for those with low or few literacy skills in their first language(s), it may take them up to 10 years to acquire age-appropriate academic skills in the second language (Simpson, 2018).

To align with SVC's mission of sustaining the HSI status and address the drawbacks regarding the language acquisition timeline, we realize the need to overhaul the current ELA curriculum to better serve our diverse adult ELL populations, which comprise over 500 students across Skagit, Island, and

San Juan counties. Since Spring 2023, we have adopted a backward design approach to begin revising Level 5 and working backward to Level 1. Specifically, governed by the College and Career Readiness Standards, we have broken down the learning outcomes in each current level into three sub-levels and ensure that the outcomes scaffold from one to another based on Bloom's Taxonomy (see Figure 1). At the time of writing, we have finished revising Levels 4 and 5, and these revisions will be officially implemented starting in Summer 2024.



Figure 1. Breakdown of current learning outcomes

2. Overview of the Lesson Study Model

To promote and assess the effectiveness of our outcome work, we have decided to adopt the Lesson Study model (Perry & Lewis, 2009) that foregrounds evidence-based teaching and learning approaches. Originally conceptualized and developed in Japan (Isoda, 2010), Lesson Study (LS) is 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 & Perry, 2014, see Figure 2). These serve as core components in promoting professional learning communities of instructors, reviewing course syllabi, and redesigning curricular content. A wide range of research suggests that LS implementation has resulted in positive shifts in (1) the affordances of instructor-instigated curricular changes and (2) subject matter knowledge and pedagogical practices that are responsive to students' needs, which altogether contribute to student engagement and learning (Coenders & Verhoef, 2019; da Ponte, 2017). While the LS model has been widely implemented across K-12 classrooms, it has been emerging as a promising tool for reforming pedagogical and curricular practices in tertiary contexts (Bickerstaff et al., 2019, 2021; Langman et al., 2022).



Figure 2. Lewis and Perry's (2014) Lesson Study cycle

Furthermore, the LS model provides a platform for creating sustainable professional development, which, due to its structured approach, allows for sustained engagement and continual growth in teacher expertise. More recent evidence suggests that by including students' voices in redesigning lessons and curricula, LS is likely to result in students' positive learning experiences (Wood & Cajkler, 2018). In addition, implementing student-focused professional development (such as LS) in inclusive ways could increase the success and retention rate of culturally and linguistically diverse students enrolled in HSIs and other minority-serving institutions (Garcia et al., 2019). Thus, the LS model would not only benefit our adult ELL populations but also align with SVC's operational plans and Washington State's vision for BEdA programs, which are geared toward the central idea of embracing students' voices through incorporating culturally responsive research and pedagogies (Washington State Board for Community & Technical Colleges, 2020). Through adopting LS, we also aim to nurture BEdA faculty learning communities, especially among ELA instructors, thereby promoting life-long learning and program sustainability through engagement in academic excellence and research.

Adapted LS Model as the Guiding Framework and Methodology

Regarding our specific context, we have adapted the LS model that pays critical attention to actionable learning outcomes, connection with upper-level courses in the BEdA Unit, and ways of sustaining those potential changes (see Figure 3). The adapted LS model entails the following stages and details:

Revise existing learning outcomes: The professional learning community (PLC) of instructors discusses students' needs and revises the existing learning outcomes.

Plan key lessons that serve as transition points between courses: The PLC research best practices regarding how to implement the revised learning outcomes. The PLC integrates both language objectives and content objectives (Dao et al., 2023) to create one or two key lessons and assessments that take into consideration the revised learning outcomes and connection with upper-level ELA courses.

Teach and observe the key lessons: Each member of the PLC teaches the planned key lessons in their respective classrooms. Other team members observe the implementation and take observation notes. This process includes visual and audio recordings for data collection and reflection purposes. Each observation should last one hour per lesson.

Collect feedback from participating instructors and students: The collection of feedback includes two core components. The first component is the LS planning and reflection meetings, during which the PLC reflects on the revised outcomes and the taught lessons. The team member who was in charge of their lessons will explain their brainstorming process. The meeting takes place every two weeks and lasts for two hours. The second component is whole-class surveys. The survey focuses on (1) students' reflection on the taught lessons, (2) their learning experiences in the ELA course and at SVC in general, and (3) their transferability to certificate- and degree-seeking programs.

Evaluate the collected data and implementation of lessons: The PLC evaluates the collected feedback, discusses the results, and plans the next steps accordingly.

Redesign the ELA curriculum based on the data: The PLC collaborates with other BE&A departments to restructure the learning outcomes if necessary. This may result in the expansion of current courses and/or the addition of new ones, with a focus on creating pathways for retention and transition to upper-level courses.



Figure 3. The adapted Lesson Study cycle

The six steps outlined above necessarily serve as the guiding framework for implementing changes as well as the methodology for collecting and evaluating student data. Data presented in this article was collected during the LS cycle's initiation in the Winter Quarter of 2024, including lesson artifacts, observation notes, visual recordings, and samples of student surveys. We focused on implementing a special lesson using a key set of the revised learning outcomes in ELA Level 5 (see Figure 4). The lesson was taught in the

ELA Level 5 class in the morning, with 19 students of diverse backgrounds who gave their consent to be part of the study. The permission for investigation was granted by the administrators.

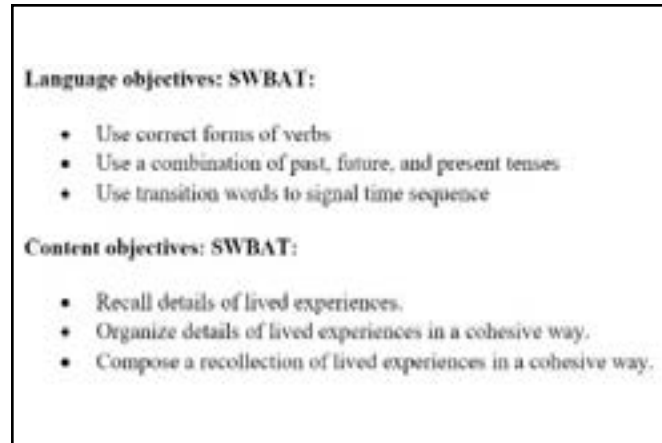


Figure 4. The key set of learning outcomes in ELA Level 5

Findings

1. Overview of the Target Lesson

The lesson implementation was broken down into two 2.5-hour instruction sessions. On the first day, with guidance and support from the teacher, students were prompted to write a narrative paragraph focusing on topics they learned during the course, such as immigration to the U.S., obstacles, stress, friends and families, community, work, individual strengths, and educational and professional plans. As the observer notes, “the students committed to the activity and communicated occasionally for clarification. Some of the Ukrainian-speaking students communicated in Ukrainian for explanation of some of the prompts and assistance with how to express certain things in writing. For the most part, students were focused on writing.”

On the second day, students were prompted to use their written narratives to create a mind-map on a given poster, in which each one of the prompt questions connects to a different aspect of the mind-map. Then, they participated in a Gallery Walk and listened to their friends present their projected lived experiences. They were encouraged to ask reflection questions regarding their friends' life journey and give sticky-note comments on the posters in their first language(s) (see Figure 5). Like the first day, the students were engaged and stayed on task.

2. Coding of the Data & Student Writing Samples

Essentially, data were coded in terms of the learning outcomes of the target lesson and the goals of the LS project. Thus, we examined the students' writing samples based on (1) how they narrate their lived experiences (e.g., immigration, obstacles, stress, and traumas) and (2) how they discuss their educational or professional plans with transferability to degree-seeking programs at SVC. A salient pattern among

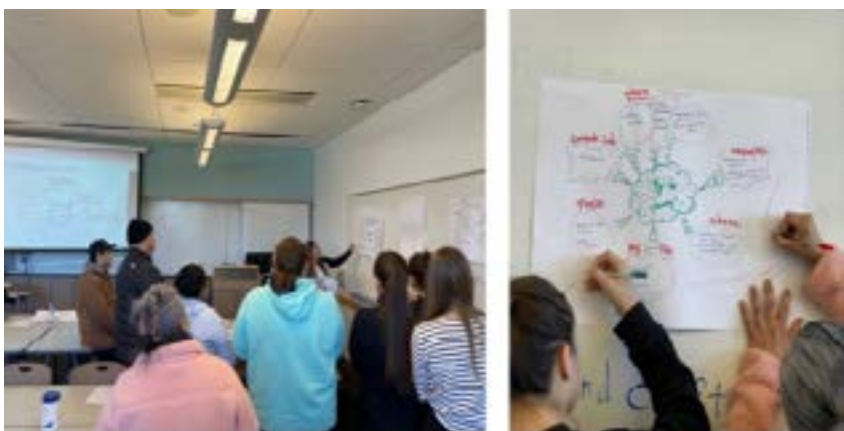


Figure 5. Students participating in the Gallery Walk activity

the narratives includes war-torn traumas from Ukrainian students (see Figure 6) and plans to aspiration to move to upper-level courses and pursue a degree or career beyond ELA (see Figure 7).

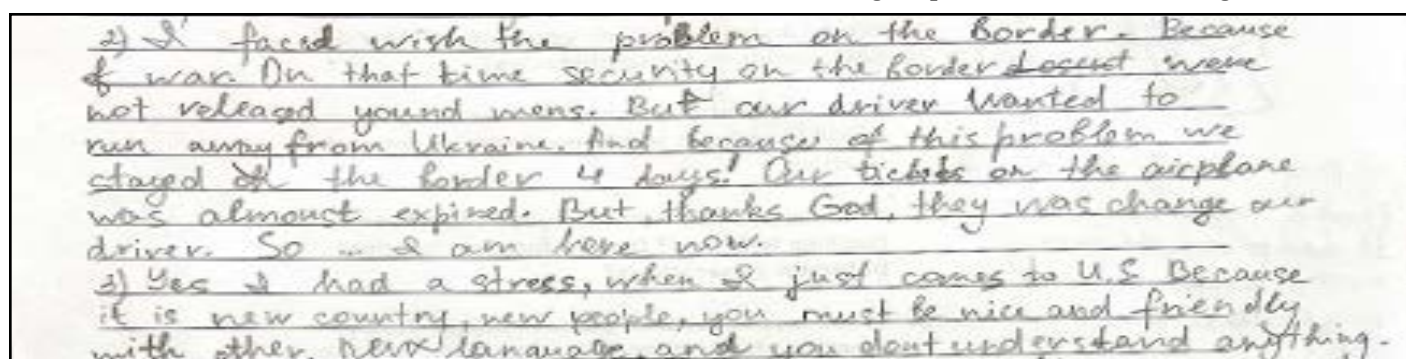


Figure 6. War-torn traumas of a student from Ukraine

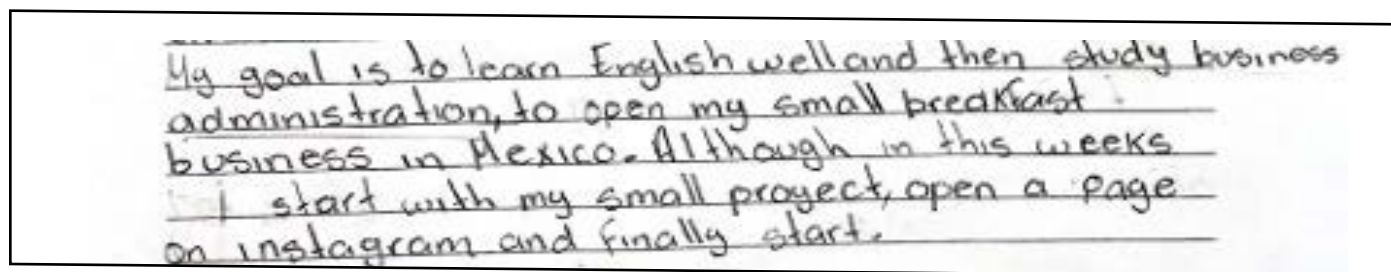


Figure 7. Aspiration to pursue a degree and start a business of a student from Mexico

3. Student Survey & Reflections

As noted above, a core component of LS involves the inclusion of students' voices. We thus designed a 12-item survey that focuses on (1) students' reflection on the target lesson, (2) their learning experiences in the ELA course and at SVC in general, and (3) their transferability to certificate- and degree-seeking programs. The survey was distributed on Canvas as an assignment, and the response rate was more than 50% with 10 out of 19 students completing the survey. Here we present some noteworthy responses.

In particular, 90% of respondents said "Yes" to the question "Did this lesson help you reflect on your life journey and influence your future plans?". Regarding the open-ended questions, students are encouraged to answer them in their

first language(s). For instance, in the question "what was helpful about this lesson?", three of the salient responses are:

- *To review my immigration journey with more details. First thing is that I can describe my journey, and lastly that I we immigrants mostly share the same challenges.*
- *Review past topics and improve the way of writing and narrating.*
- *Esta lesson me ayudó a entender mejor varias cosas en inglés. (This lesson helped me better understand various things in English.)*

When it comes to their educational or professional goals, only 20% of respondents mention they have taken ELA classes with the main purpose of improving their English. The other 80% express their wish to pursue higher qualifications or get a promotion at work (see Figure 8).

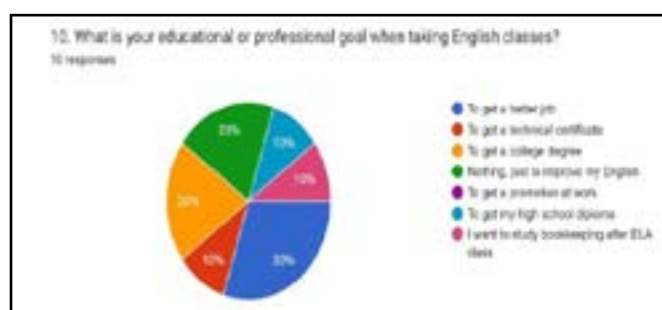


Figure 8. Students' responses regarding educational or professional plans

Discussion & Conclusion

Through our preliminary analyses of the ongoing LS cycles, we concur that most students in the target ELA Level 5 class

met the revised learning outcomes, with most outlining their professional or educational plans and aspiring to seek a degree 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.

In terms of limitations, 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 (e.g., Burns et al., 2022). This cycle repeats until the desired outcomes are established. This poses both opportunities and challenges, especially when it comes to sustainable practices (i.e.,

who would lead and sustain LS in the long term), time commitment, and incentives for involving part-time faculty. As part of the ongoing outcome revision work, future analyses will address some of these limitations outlined here.

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5 Ways to Get Involved with WAESOL



School and Public Library Partnership: Supporting Multilingual Students and Families

MARJETA BEJDO

Summary: This article emphasizes the reasons why public schools and public libraries should build partnerships to support multilingual students and their families. The findings from this study show that some of the benefits of such partnerships include increasing awareness of resources that the library provides, literacy improvement, community building, increasing involvement of multilingual families, and attending to students' needs.

Keywords: partnership, multilingual students, multilingual families, public school, public libraries, literacy improvement

Introduction

A substantial body of evidence points to the existence and significance of the opportunity gap in literacy achievement between multilingual students and monolingual English-speaking students. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2022) only 3% of our nation's multilingual students in twelfth grade, 5% of the multilingual students in eighth grade, and 10% of the multilingual students in fourth grade can read at or above grade level. This is compared to the 39% of monolingual English-speaking students in twelfth grade, 33% of monolingual English-speaking students in eighth grade, and 37% of monolingual English-speaking students in fourth grade who can read at or above grade level (NAEP, 2022). Research suggests that there is a persistence in the opportunity gap between multilingual students and monolingual English-speaking students. Some scholars have framed the term achievement gap as an opportunity gap to suggest that the lack of opportunities multilingual students face is the cause of observed differences in achievement (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Genesee et al., 2005; Umansky et al., 2017). In this article I use the term opportunity gap when I refer to the differences in literacy achievement between multilingual and monolingual English-speaking students. I also suggest that it is important that educational organizations work together in closing this opportunity gap.

Literature Review

Public schools and public libraries could both be seen as educational institutions that play a significant role in children's literacy development. While public schools serve students in grades K-12, public libraries serve a much wider population and are not exclusively educational institutions. They each have their own organizational structures and strive to

support the changing needs of students and communities that they serve. Clay III (2009) refers to libraries as "educational support centers" (p. 13) which provide additional resources to school libraries to enhance student learning. The most recent example of how public libraries take such role was evident during the Covid-19 pandemic during which public schools and public libraries engaged in high levels of collaboration to best support the learning needs of all students (Thompson et al., 2023).

In a case study about collaboration between school and public librarians Moreland and Kammer (2020) found that all the librarians involved in the study were involved in collaboration of some form and they identified three areas of collaboration among school and public librarians which included "sharing resources, sharing space and sharing programing" (p. 42). Lopez et al., (2016) found public libraries and the plethora of resources that they provide to be important spaces for family engagement. They share that the programs and resources that the libraries provide support breaking inequities that negatively impact the opportunities to succeed between children that come from low-income families and those that come from high-income families. According to Lopez et al., (2016) low-income families, including immigrant families use public libraries for "training, job searches, and service for immigrants or first-generation Americans." (p. 6). The authors refer to public libraries as platforms that create opportunities for different stakeholders including schools, families and communities to work together and create ways to support student learning.

Both public libraries and schools strive to support immigrant families and students who bring a wide range of linguistic diversity in our communities. Hwang Lynch (2015) discussed the important role that libraries play in supporting newcomer immigrant families and the work that both public libraries and public schools do to diversify their book collections in

order to reflect the linguistic needs of the communities that they serve. Murvosh (2013) emphasized the importance of collaboration between public schools and public libraries in order to support the needs of students and she shares examples of such collaborative projects across America.

Methods

This exploratory action research study investigates the possibility of a partnership between a public library and an elementary school located in Northwestern United States to support multilingual students and their families. The research question that guided this study was: How can classroom teachers /schools build partnerships with public libraries to support multilingual students in literacy?

For this qualitative study data was collected through semi structured interviews with two children’s librarians and a school staff member who is a former librarian. Qualitative data was also collected through a short survey that was sent to 34 certificated staff and 25 classified staff. The survey was completed by 22 staff members and 21 of those who completed the survey gave consent for their responses to be used for the purpose of this research.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed using the Otter.ai app. The survey was administered using Google forms and the data was exported to an Excel document. The interview transcripts and the survey data were analyzed using Saldana’s step by step guide. Deductive, inductive, and in vivo coding was used during initial coding and axial coding was used during the second cycle of coding before extracting themes.

Results

Five overarching themes that help answer the research question emerged from the data analysis.

- 1. Librarians pinpointed services that they provide for multilingual families.
- 2. Teachers and librarians identified partnership ideas that require low cost and time commitment.
- 3. Teachers and librarians identified partnership ideas that could be costly and require time commitment.
- 4. Teachers and librarians acknowledged benefits of partnership.
- 5. Teachers and librarians acknowledged challenges of partnership.

Table 1 shows the themes that emerged from the data analysis that address the research question How can classroom teachers /schools build partnerships with public libraries to support multilingual students in literacy?

Table 1
Descriptive Table

Overarching Themes	Description of categories within overarching themes
Librarians pinpointed services that they provide for multilingual families	- English classes for multilingual families - Language line - Multilingual story time - Welcome center
Teachers and librarians identified partnership ideas that require low cost and time commitment	- Librarian school visits - Library & PTA partnership - Increasing awareness of library programs and resources - Library cards
Teachers and librarians identified partnership ideas that could be costly and require time commitment	- Attending to students’ needs - Field trips to library - Family reading night
Teachers and librarians acknowledged benefits of partnership	- Access to library resources - Literacy improvement - Building community - Engaging more multilingual families
Teachers and librarians acknowledged challenges of partnership	- Funding and lack of resources - Organizational structures - Time and scheduling - Teachers are maxed out

Librarians pinpointed services that they provide for multilingual families.

Both librarians shared that the public library provides different services for multilingual families. They acknowledged that before the pandemic the library was providing more services which they moved online during the pandemic and now they are trying to bring back in person. They have beginner English classes and talk time sessions weekly which are well attended. They also teach basic computer skills. The librarians shared about Language Line, a service that the library has in place to support people with limited English in the community, by having videocalls with interpreters as needed. The library also offers story time in languages other than English including, Mandarin, Spanish, Hindi, Arabic and Vietnamese. Two of the libraries in the county’s library system which are in neighborhoods with high immigrant population have a welcome center for immigrant families. They provide support with different services according to one of the librarians including “job searching, getting help for their kids, all of those things.” The people who lead the weekly informational sessions on those welcome centers are immigrants who have been able to succeed here and try to give back to their community. The libraries have collections of books in Spanish, Russian and Chinese and as one of the librarians shared, they are identifying what other languages are spoken in the community and work on “getting a certain collection of those other languages added to the collection”.

Teachers and librarians identified partnership ideas

that require low cost and time commitment.

One of the partnership ideas that was identified was increasing awareness of services that the library offers not only for multilingual families but also for all families. One of the staff members shared “I think the public library could share this info in the district newsletters, and as a print flyer in multiple languages that could go home in the first day packet, and then again, a bit later in the year. Teachers could mention this at conferences, etc.” The librarians also shared that it is important to remind the community that the library is there and as one of the librarians shared “And we’re not here just with books. There are so many other things that we’re trying to do.” Asking librarians to visit the local schools is another low-cost partnership idea. This is a current partnership that happens twice a year when the librarian comes to schools to advertise the summer reading program or for the Otter program.

The librarians were open to working with the PTA and being part of different events that the PTA organizes so they can increase awareness of programs at the library and sign up students and families for a library card. Ten of the staff members who took the survey identified “ensuring students have library cards” as a partnership idea.

Teachers and librarians identified partnership ideas that could be costly and require time commitment.

Attending to students’ needs was a category of this theme. The librarian that was assigned to the school in which this study took place has also partnered with the Justice Equity Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) student team and they are working on having the JEDI team work on book displays at the library which is a partnership that is very powerful for the students involved and promising for the future. Of those who took the survey, nine out of the 22 staff members said that having field trips at the library would be another partnership idea, even though they acknowledge that the cost of transportation to the library could be a challenge that schools need to deal with.

Teachers and librarians acknowledged benefits of partnership.

One of the benefits of school and library partnership that was identified was access to library resources. One of the staff members said that “Multilingual families would have access to the resources that the library provides” while the librarians shared all the programs that they offer during the school year and especially during the summer months when school is not in session. One of the librarians said, “in summer we have a lot of programs just because the kids are out of school.” When he has talking about the importance of partnering with local public school the other librarian shared “I feel like then we can reach a lot of kids and kind of give them resources that they can use for life and then reaching out to the families from there.” The second benefit they identified was building community, as one of the librarians shared “the library is

for anyone and everyone. And to me, the beauty is we are an educational institution, but it’s informal, and I would like to think it feels open and welcoming.” The other librarian shared that they are working on a needs assessment project in which they are collecting data from the community to better understand what the needs are as they are “trying to make the library feel like a community center.” Staff members also shared that one of the benefits of partnering with libraries could be that “students and families will feel more connected to their communities and understand resources.” Both school staff and librarians added that engaging multilingual families and ensuring that they have access to library resources is another benefit of this kind of partnership.

Teachers and librarians acknowledged challenges of partnership

One of the challenges of partnership identified was funding. The school staff reported that transportation for fieldtrips to the library costs money, and the library shared that sometimes they might have an idea, but they need to find the funds to implement it. Organizational structures of both institutions could pose challenges of partnership since according to school staff “The library and the district have regulations about official relationships and volunteer protocols that can make these relationships complicated to set up.” Another challenge that was identified by many participants was finding time to build relationships and partnership as well as finding the best time to plan activities that will work with everyone’s schedule. The last challenge identified was that teachers are maxed out and the librarians are well aware of the teachers’ capacity to add more to their plates.

Limitations

The limitations of this study could include the small number of participants, especially the number of librarians interviewed. Another limitation could be the fact that both librarians that were interviewed were serving the same library system. It would be helpful to interview librarians from other counties to get some insight on how partnerships between public schools and public libraries look in other counties. Limiting the stakeholders only to librarians and school staff could be another limitation of this study. Adding the voices of stakeholders like parents of multilingual students and multilingual students themselves would be helpful for future research.

Conclusion

This qualitative study explored the question How can classroom teachers/schools build partnerships with public libraries to support multilingual students in literacy? The data collected by the interviews with 22 school staff members, 2 interviews with children’s librarians and one with a staff member who was a former librarian showed that libraries provide different services for multilingual families; there are low cost and time partnership ideas as well as those

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Back-chaining: Teaching Pronunciation that Sticks

KARA ELIZABETH PADGETT FREEMAN

Summary: This article discusses the importance of pronunciation as a skill and reminds teachers the use of back-chaining as a strategy. This article connects how back-chaining helps with unlearning “broken words” and potential mistakes in the linguistic transfer that happens with many learners. The author also reflects on how it helps to highlight pronunciation roadblocks in students. Back-chaining works by retraining the brain, developing new muscle memory, and making English less intimidating by breaking it up.

Keywords: pronunciation, back-chaining, linguistic transfer, muscle memory, multilingual classrooms

Pronunciation is crucial. If an individual struggles greatly with pronunciation, it is hard for the listener to know if it's an issue of the correct word, grammar, tone, or so on. In other words, if pronunciation impedes the understanding, it is difficult to help progress the learner. Alongside the production of language, coherent understanding of pronunciation helps new learners grasp language more quickly. Gabriel Wyner said on his handbook to language fluency, “The more accurately we learn its pronunciation, the better we’ll remember it” (2014, p.22). This means that pronunciation isn’t just important for language production, but also for language comprehension.

I have only taught two monolingual classes: a Cantonese group and a Spanish group. Other than those two classrooms, most of my experiences have been language-diverse with a mix of nationalities, cultures, accents, languages, and so on. A multilingual class allows students to practice their English more, instead of being in a monolingual group where they can talk to each other in their L1 (first language). On the other hand, in a monolingual classroom it may be easier to focus on improving pronunciation. This is often because there are shared pronunciation obstacles in their shared language. In my Cantonese group, I quickly learned that /l/ and /r/ need extra attention. With the Spanish speaking group, most struggled with the difference between /v/ and /b/. In both situations, I was able to craft lessons and multiple moments into tackling these obstacles with them. With my other classrooms, it has been difficult when students are coming from varying languages and their unique obstacles related to a sound. This is because with each accent comes a different obstacle. It gets particularly difficult as an educator to help all students improve on their pronunciation simultaneously. There is only so much a photo of mouth placement and face mirroring one can do. We must do more than just “listen” and “repeat”.

A difficult habit to break is unlearning broken words. A

broken word happens when you think a word is pronounced one way, when it is actually pronounced a different way. When this happens, the broken word gets imbedded into our memory. It can live there for months, or even years, before the learner later tries to unlearn it and learn the correct pronunciation. An example of this is when I first learned the word “enfermo” in Spanish. The broken word – incorrect pronunciation – that lives in my head is with an extra vowel, as if it was spelled “enfiermo” (incorrect spelling). I misheard it years ago when I first started learning Spanish, and even as I understand the correct pronunciation, my brain first grasps for the broken word before the corrected one. It’s important to teach accurate pronunciation that sticks so that students can understand, so they can remember and connect better with the language, and so they do not have to hunt down broken words (Wyner, 2014).

So, how do we teach a class with different language obstacles a pronunciation strategy that can do all of this? A unifying technique that has been practiced in classrooms for many years is the practice of back-chaining. Back-chaining is a speaking drill targeted to help learners pronounce challenging sound groups, words, or phrases (Backchaining). It is different from other English pronunciation strategies because it involves saying the word from back to front. It has been so successful historically that actors, singers, public speakers, and others have used it while singing and talking in languages unknown to them. Additionally, speech pathologists often use this method (Learn English with Rebecca, 2017). As someone who went to speech therapy for seven years, back-chaining has helped me improve my own personal pronunciation in English (my native language).

As I teach back-chaining, I follow the advice of “How to Better Pronounce Long Words” with their three-step process. Step one is “Break It Up” (2017). Many educators and learners are familiar with this strategy. Breaking up the word means to

chop it into small pieces. If it is a multisyllabic word, it is often separated by syllable. Multisyllabic means that it is a word that has more than one syllable. An example of a multisyllabic word is “refrigerator”, which could be broken up hypothetically as “re-frig-er-a-tor”. Back-chaining is often talked about for multisyllabic words, which is why the first step is to break it up. If smaller words need pronunciation help, chopping it up by the isolated sounds is also useful. There is no limit to back-chaining, as the central key is to make these complicated words – may it be a long word or a short word– less complicated in smaller steps. It can be used for multisyllabic words like “refrigerator” or the monosyllabic “run”.

Step two is “Forget About Spelling” (How To Better Pronounce Long Words, 2017). This is where I have a slight deviation in the method. Agreeably, for pronunciation we should not follow the rules of spelling. That is the classic devilish behavior of English. The similarly spelled words of “tough”, “though”, “through” and “thorough” with their differing phonetic rules haunt students of all language abilities. English has been referred to as “not a phonetic language” because the words are not pronounced how they are spelled (Sousa, 2011, p. 62). But in truth, we shall never completely forget about spelling. My slight divergence on this step is that regardless of the pronunciation, teachers shouldn’t misspell a word on the board. Even if you instruct students not to copy, one or two may still copy. It has the potential of accidentally teaching a misspelled word. It could also confuse students in that they may think you are teaching two different words. Teachers can, instead, write the correct spelling and the “sound spelling” above it. Try using different colored markers for absolute division. Some teachers teach the phonetic alphabet, while other teachers prefer to spell out how it sounds. The international phonetic alphabet (IPA) takes a long time to teach, even though it is an incredible tool we could all refer back to. I don’t teach the IPA. With a word like “talkative”, I have spelled out the “a” like /uh/ above the true spelling. The /uh/ is the most accurate way to pronounce that medial “a” in the accent of our surrounding environment, so it makes the most sense to teach the class that. It isn’t a perfect system, but it does help affirm any confusion from the student’s perspective. Because English pronunciation is hardly consistent, I recommend you practice the technique with target words before you do it in front of your students. I first did this wrong with “talkative”. My native English brain knew the “a” is the /uh/ sound, but when I chopped it up and had them repeat, I said aloud the short /a/ sound. Regrettably, my students repeated after me once before I realized my mistake. I am regrettably wondering if I taught them a broken word.

Step three is what makes back-chaining unique “Start From the End” (How To Better Pronounce Long Words, 2017). This is where the back in back-chaining comes from. This is also the part that helps re-train the brain. We can understand the need to re-train aspects of our learning while noting linguistic transfer. Linguistic transfer is the process

of applying language rules or thought from one’s native language to one’s new language. This happens negatively at times, and that is called negative transfer. (Sabbah, 2015). An example of this is when a student’s L1 has the adjective after the noun, while in English the adjectives come before a noun. In this situation, a common language transfer is when the student mistakenly keeps putting the adjective after the noun. This happens a lot because many languages have adjectives following nouns. For example, in Spanish it would be “camisa verde” which translates to “shirt green”. In English, adjectives come before nouns. So, it is “green shirt”. Linguistic transfer is profound in pronunciation, and it delays learning if not interrupted. Besides that possibility, with pronunciation, it is often that a student does not have that phonetic sound in their L1. This makes it difficult for their mouth to produce a new sound. Their linguistic memory will often grab the phonetic ability closest the target phonetic sound. This is when pronunciation really needs extra special focus, and how back-chaining aids in the unlearning and re-training of both the brain and muscle memory of our mouths. Developing strong muscle memory with back-chaining is especially important in English as it is a language spoken with notable stress. The English language stresses hard on some syllables while none on others. These variations in word stress make it particularly difficult to understand and produce accurate, consistent pronunciation (Sousa, 2011).

Back-chaining has notably been used as a method for pronouncing long, multisyllable words, but as I mentioned earlier, I use it for monosyllable words. This has been helpful for the pesky dual consonants, as well as hard stops. There are certain words that are notoriously challenging for most new learners, like words that end in “x”. Let’s look at the word, “fix”. When I practice back-chaining here, I will focus on the “x” which makes the sound of /ks/ together. The class does not move on until we have that “x” down well. After, I’ll slide over to the short /i/ sound. Finally, we’ll begin with the “f”. By beginning from the back to front, this helps the speaker not get lost along the way. By then, their tongue and lingual memory have more confidence, so there isn’t an accidentally wrong turn on the pronunciation route. It creates confidence in their language learning, encouraging them to speak more. This is especially important because those who struggle most with pronunciation may feel too intimidated to speak or open their mouth, even though they understand. We must make language more “bite-sized” and less intimidating.

Why I use back-chaining is because of its invaluable process in highlighting a tricky phonetic roadblock for others. Often, students realize they aren’t pronouncing things as accurate as they want. By being able to break down a word into bite-sized pieces, it helps dial in exactly what needs to be improved. Just this past week, the word “thorough” terrorized my intermediate class. After my students realized they could confidently say “oh” and “or” (which are the third and second syllable sounding parts of the word), all that was left was the /th/. It was a clear way for me to see that this part of the word needed practice most for the students. Luckily,

I have a strategy that helps with /th/ pronunciation development. All that's needed are lightweight, thin objects that can be moved with subtle air. I like to use sticky notes. After modeling what the mouth should look like to form /th/, place the sticky note upward and near the mouth. With lightweight sticky notes, my students practiced their /th/ by blowing air through their teeth and tongue. If the sticky note didn't move, there was an obstruction. That obstruction was then identified and corrected. For most of my students, the obstruction was impeding their correct use of /th/. Practicing the voiced and voiceless "th" is always a norm in my classes, as it's one of many tricky pronunciation obstacles. But, without the practice of back-chaining, the students may not have realized the importance of why we had to practice the "th" sounds. It helped them have a clearer understanding of what was hard about a word and then realize that the pronunciation can be done by the back-chaining method. It wasn't such a monstrous thing to overcome once broken down. This doesn't solve pronunciation obstacles overnight, but it does give a firmer starting point.

With the longer words that are taught at the higher levels, back-chaining remains important. It is also a good time to introduce students to suffixes, infixes, and prefixes may come of use. Back-chaining with all the affixes helps students

understand both pronunciation and vocabulary comprehension. Whether affixes are addressed or not, back-chaining with multisyllabic words come naturally. To practice back-chaining as an instructor, try to remember steps one through three and pause on where you discover the flaw in the word production from your student(s). It's true: "If you split long, difficult words into small, easy chunks, you'll find that your tongue is capable of remarkable acrobatic feats" (Wyner, 2014, p. 70). More importantly, your students realize this.

This article concludes that in every level and every class, there should be focused work on pronunciation. At times, I have felt like I'm not doing enough in the pronunciation practices. In my search for showing up better for my students, I discovered back-chaining. Back-chaining and its unraveling nature to showcase the problematic portion of a word has made multilingual classrooms feel more unified with pronunciation practice.

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A book review of

Becker, H. (2021). *Himawari House*. First Second Books.

It's a Marathon, Not a Sprint! A Review of the Graphic Novel *Himawari House*

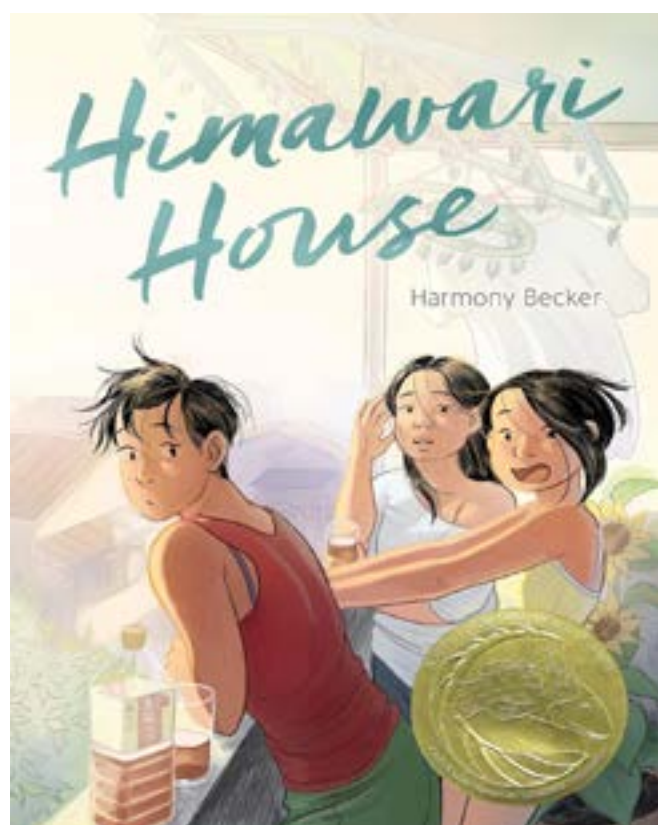
DARLENE RAMIREZ

When I started teaching in 2001 a coworker gave me a nugget of wisdom “Teaching is a marathon, not a sprint”. I had no idea what that meant until this 2023-2024 school year. I finally landed my dream job as a Multilingual Language Learner Specialist (MLL Specialist). Similar to running a marathon I had to have clear goals, find a support system, and not stress about going the long run. Ten years before I heard this saying I was trekking around Spain with a girl from California, both of us there to master Spanish as a second language. Now I sit in her living room helping her prepare for her pilgrimage back to Spain for the famous El Camino. I’m comfy with a book in hand reading while she finalizes last-minute responsibilities before her 6-week walk of endurance. She too is working on a marathon, not a sprint, as she creates goals for her cultural and challenging journey.

Ironically, the book in my lap is about young adults also on a cultural journey in another country where they, like Ellen and I, are immersed in a rich language-learning adventure. The book I plucked from her tidy decluttered bookshelf is *Himawari House* by Harmony Becker. Harmony Becker, winner of the 2023 Asian/Pacific American Award for Young Adult Fiction Literature does an excellent job walking us through the uncomfortable transformation of 3 young adults and their life abroad in Japan while they attend a preparatory school. This graphic novel takes me back to the time Ellen studied abroad similar to the characters of this book. This 2 Manga creation is a quick read that brilliantly executes the challenges of learning additional languages while fitting in and maturing into yourself without losing your future becoming. It is a great example of how we think in our native language and then have to produce communication output to connect with others simultaneously.

It has been over three decades since I stumbled into Spain and a long time since I had an emotional uptick in

nervousness speaking another language. Yet, reading *Himawari House* reminded me of the days of anxious traveling as I tried to make sense of a second language, what elders were saying, and the continuous neuroplasticity workout of a new environment. This story has us rooting for multilingual young people and their passage through the ups and downs of stepping out of their comfort zones as they acquire a new language. The author writes the scenes so well using language to dive us into the thoughts and struggles of each character as they attempt to communicate with others and assimilate to their new environment. A literary hike that reminds MLL



teachers how similar the characters in this book are to our students that start at the Early production stage and move to Speech Emergence.(Robertson, K., & Ford, K. (2009). This well-written peek into the lives of Nao who grew up in America but was born in Japan, a Korean student named Hyejung, and finally Tina from Singapore, all in the process of extending their Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). Panel by panel, we see the three main characters gaining an understanding of the language. Through their language development and personal triumphs, they create the deepest friendships. Like the characters in the book *Ellen and I* came from separate faraway places. We 3 continue to be ourselves much like the students at Himawari House but remain tethered because of our mutual language learning investment. Himawari House plops us into the experience of learning another language, the struggle to speak correctly, and the fearless courage it takes to do so. I gleaned so much

more from reading this 374-page graphic novel plucked from the shelf for the patient love of a friend. However, the most valuable takeaway is that learning a language is a marathon, not a sprint. Using excerpts of this book in class for upper grades may help students connect with the three main characters while aiding in comprehension through visual literacy. Reading this book will help teachers to remain cognizant that second language learning is a risk you train for. It is a whole-body experience, your students will trip, and fall but in the end create a level of comfort that will foster confidence and everlasting real friendships.

Don't believe me just ask Nao, Hyejung, and Tina. I would also tell you to ask Ellen, but she's busy right now lacing up her boots, weaving through her second language acquisition, and meandering on her marathon in Spain.

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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 WAE-SOL 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. Cherice Montgomery from Brigham Young University, titled “Sparkling 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/>



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- improve their writing.
- confirm what works well in articles, and
- receive feedback on what could work better.

Being a peer reviewer will

- provide a valuable form of professional development,
- extend professional development in our community, and
- help the Editorial Committee to select the strongest submissions.

EMAIL EDITOR@WAESOL.ORG TO APPLY.



GRANTS, AWARDS, SCHOLARSHIPS

APPLY FOR A GRANT OR NOMINATE A COLLEAGUE

WAESOL distributes \$2,500 in grants and awards and offers ten scholarships to attend the WAESOL Conference.

The impact of WAESOL grants, awards, and scholarships is great! A 500-word grant application could spark a meaningful project; an application for a scholarship could create a new professional opportunity. An award nomination could give back to someone whose generosity and dedication has impacted countless others. Grant applications open June 1.

*Only current members are eligible to submit a nomination or an application for a grant/scholarship. To become a member or renew your membership, visit the [Membership](#) page of the WAESOL website.

Apply for a

- Professional Development Grant (\$500)
- WAESOL Project Funding Grants (up to \$500)
- WAESOL Conference Scholarship

Nominate a colleague for the

- Sally Wellman Excellence in Teaching Award (\$500),
- Outstanding Volunteer Award (\$500).

Application deadline: September 25, 2024

Winners will be notified by October 1



MEET THE BOARD

OFFICERS



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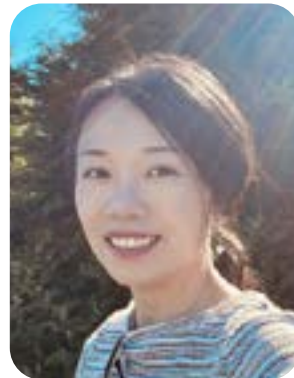
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All WAESOL Board members are volunteers who are also professionals in the TESOL field.

Learn more about the board members on the [WAESOL website](#).

Consider joining the board. Elections take place in November. Board meetings, held four times a year, are open to any WAESOL member.

Visit the [Nominations & Elections](#) page.



Ahmed Fahad



James Hunter



Krissy Wilcox

50th Annual WAESOL Conference

November 1st - Preconference Workshops



November 2nd - Conference

Stepping into 50 years!

ATTEND, LEARN, NETWORK, GROW!



KEYNOTE

Jessica Fagen (she/her) is the Education Specialist and Program Coordinator at **Voice of Witness**, where she develops oral history projects that connect students with family and community. As an educator with a passion for critical literacy studies, Jessica believes deeply in the power of storytelling to empower student voice and build critical skills. Jessica taught **English and Ethnic Studies** in **Oakland Unified School District** for five years before coming to Voice of Witness, and holds **MA in Education** from **UC Berkeley**.

REGISTRATION

Early Bird Registration through October 1st:

\$95 for WAESOL members
\$135 for non-members

Registration

October 2nd - October 25th:

\$105 for WAESOL members
\$155 for non-members

Week of Registration

October 26th - November 2nd:

\$120 for WAESOL members
\$160 for non-members

Up to 9 Clock Hours available for both days.

SCAN AND



REGISTER NOW

CALL FOR PROPOSALS IS OPEN



Submit yours!
Deadline is September 15th



Washington Association for the Education
of Speakers of Other Languages

Visit [waesol.org](https://www.waesol.org) for more information