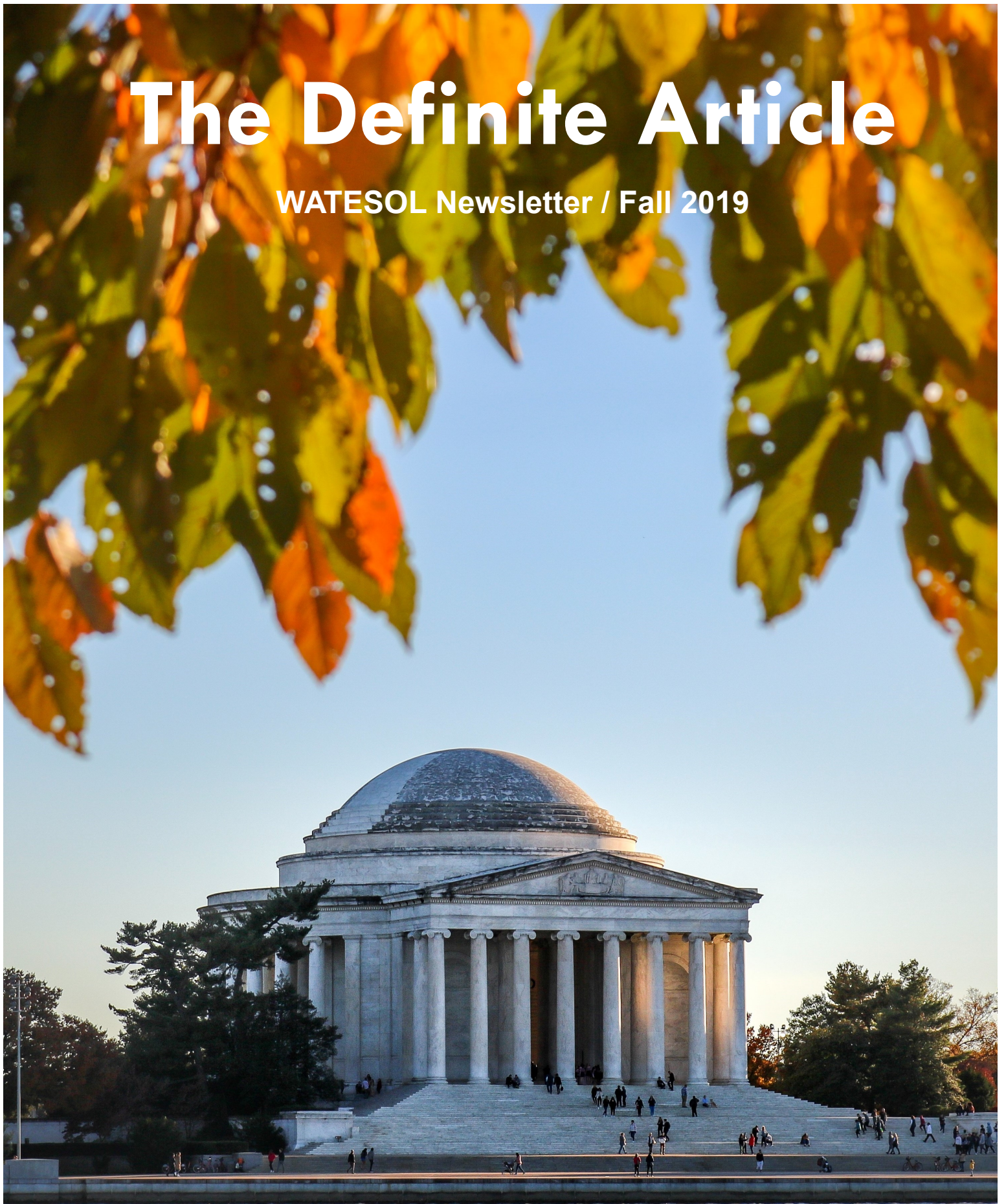


The Definite Article

WATESOL Newsletter / Fall 2019



Featured in this issue:

- Teaching Cultural Competence and Critical Thinking through Visual Literacy
- Examining the Community Roots of Adult ESL Instruction in the U.S.: The 1880s-1920s

WATESOL NEWS

In this issue:

FEATURE ARTICLES

Teaching Cultural Competence and Critical Thinking through Visual Literacy	4
TESOL Advocacy & Policy Summit	7
Examining the Community Roots of Adult ESL Instruction in the U.S.: The 1880s-1920s.....	9

REGULAR FEATURES

President's Message	3
Teaching Abroad Q&A: RELO Brazil .	13
Book Review: <i>Teachers as Allies</i>	15
Tech Tools Corner.....	16

REPORTS FROM SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

A Memorable Experience: TESOL for a First Timer	18
The new phonemics or, How to win by losing in teaching pronunciation	19
Advice for TESOLers	20

ON THE COVER

The Tidal Basin during the Fall 2018 season by local DC photographer Desmond Hester.

From the editors

Dear WATESOL Community,

We are delighted to share with you the inaugural issue of *The Definite Article*. It's the same great newsletter that WATESOL has always had, but with a new look, some new features (check out the book review on p. 15!), and a new name, which was coined by WATESOL-er Nancy L. Wolf — many thanks and congratulations to her for submitting the winning name in this summer's contest!

As always, we want to hear from you! Check out the website for new guidelines for newsletter submissions in the form of articles, teaching tips, book reviews, and more.

Finally, a special thank you to all of the newsletter contributors. We couldn't have done it without you.

Your Newsletter Editors,

Kelly Hill-Zirker and Heather Gregg Zitlau



WATESOL NEWS

Fall 2019

Dear wonderful WATESOL members,

Welcome to fall! It's hard to believe that it's time for our major professional development event of the year, WATESOL's annual conference. We're excited to bring together close to 200 members from across the DC metropolitan area as well as representatives from educational publishers, the U.S. Department of State, and TESOL International. It's a good time to look back at all that WATESOL has accomplished in the last year to support English-language teaching and learning. Since last year's fall conference, WATESOL has...



- Welcomed members and friends to quarterly special-interest-group (SIG) happy hours.
- Brought back WATESOL's spring mini-conference, with the generous support of community partner Carlos Rosario Adult Charter School.
- Organized a TESOL International meet-up in Atlanta, staffed an information booth at the conference, and participated in international affiliate workshops.
- Held an Advocacy Day event with co-sponsor American University TESOL that featured a book signing, panel discussion, and workshop on ways to make classrooms and curricula comfortable for all learners, including undocumented and LGBTQ students.
- Offered an online proposal-writing workshop.
- Hosted our first video interview series, "Entrepreneurs in ESL," available on the "members-only" section of our website.
- Launched two new social-media features to highlight member contributions.
- Enabled two members to represent WATESOL at TESOL's 2019 International Policy and Advocacy Summit.
- Revamped our newsletter, with a new name chosen and new features added.

Behind the scenes, the WATESOL Board had several important innovations as well, such as ...

- Streamlining our online payment-processing system so that it is integrated with our online member database and website.
- Adopting a new videoconferencing platform that allows board members to participate in all meetings remotely
- Creating an online orientation session for conference volunteers.

All of these accomplishments are reflective of WATESOL's commitment to continually meet the evolving professional development needs of its members.

In the year ahead, we'll continue our efforts to identify new and creative ways to support our caring community of TESOL practitioners as WATESOL moves into its 50th year. It has been an honor to serve the WATESOL community during such a pivotal year. I look forward to staying involved with this inspiring organization in my new role as Past President!

Betsy Lindeman Wong, President, 2018-2019

Teaching Cultural Competence and Critical Thinking through Visual Literacy

By Eva K. Sullivan



Eva K. Sullivan has been teaching ESOL in Montgomery County Public Schools (Maryland) for 20 years. During the 2017-2018 school year, she served as an English Language Fellow in Laos, South-east Asia, with the U.S. Department of State.

With more than five million English Language Learners (ELLs) in the public school system in the USA (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019), education professionals are looking for ways to connect with international students more intentionally. Explicit teaching and learning about culture helps create a safe space for students to process information effectively. The multi-day lesson described here uses components of visual literacy

and critical thinking to explore culture and identity in the classroom.

Before implementing this lesson, the teacher should

“Open-ended questions have no clear right or wrong answers, so they challenge students to think critically. Culturally competent teaching responds to the emotions behind the students’ responses and emphasizes positive interactions.”

begin with a team-building activity. A communal task helps to establish a learning environment that uses authentic talk and student-to-student partnerships. In her 2015 book, *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*, Zaretta Hammond discusses using “Trust Generators” like the team building activity below to show similarity of interests. Students are divided into groups and given a simple capture sheet. They have to find three points they have in common and something that makes each one unique. For lower level students, it helps to have an example. I like to use a timer so that there is subtle pressure to talk and get something on paper. Groups can create a name, design a symbol for their team, and make a poster or a visual to present to the class.

After students have gotten to know each other a little, I

introduce the lesson by showing the whole class a photograph. As a Trust Generator, I try to begin with a personal photo that shows some aspect of culture that is easily accessible to students at all levels, like food or clothing. Students describe what they see. As they call out answers, I record them in two columns – what is directly observable and objective (facts), and what inferences they make (opinions). It is important to record all answers, no matter how off-base they are. This makes it clear that student voice and agency are respected, and provides a model for the task they will soon be asked to do in groups. As they continue, I explain that we all make assumptions based on our life experiences; understanding this human tendency is an important building block in the development of cross cultural competence. By describing accurately what we see, we can remain as free as possible from bias and prejudice, and begin to imagine and explore alternatives.

I then give students a graphic organizer (below), and we categorize each observation: people, location, time of day, activities, and objects. It is easy to incorporate target language into the descriptions: prepositions of place, order of adjectives, or present continuous tense, for example.

Analyze a Photograph

Directly Observable (what I can see)	Inferences (conclusions I can draw)
people	<i>Is it possible that...?</i>
location	
time of day	
activities	
objects	

(How) do we know...?

Why do you think that?

For the inference column, I ask questions to suggest alternative scenarios to what they have already expressed. (*How do we know...? Is it possible that...? Why do you think that?*). Open-ended questions have no clear right or wrong answers, so they challenge students to think critically. Culturally competent teaching responds to the emotions behind the students' responses and emphasizes positive interactions.

A few years ago, I worked in a Visual Arts magnet school and discovered an excellent graphic organizer, which I have adapted for use with more advanced students. It invites them to ponder historical and sociological information as well as the photographer's purpose and point of view (*Who took the photograph? Why did the photographer choose to take this picture? Do you think the people knew their photo was being taken?*). Later in the school year, I connect this lesson on photographer's purpose to a lesson on author's purpose - a question that almost every K-12 student will be asked at one point on a standardized test, and more importantly, a question that strong critical thinkers use when they approach a reading text.



To model the activity, I like to share a personal photograph from a time when I made a cultural mistake. I tell the following story: when I worked with university professors in southeast Asia, we often ate a meal together after class. The first time we ate together, I didn't know that they all ate communally with their fingers. They put a bowl in front of me with a big spoon. I thought I was being polite by

eating everything in the bowl, but it was supposed to be passed around the table. The spoon was a serving spoon – not for my personal use. Sharing a moment of personal vulnerability with students is a way to show my human side and connect with those who might be making similar adjustments. Selective vulnerability is another Trust Generator (Hammond, 2015). When used strategically, this technique builds connections with students and allows them to take risks in the classroom that lead to growth.

Next, in small groups, students analyze different images related to a particular element of culture. The best images for this lesson show people interacting in a way in which there may be some ambiguity. I like to use images from my travels to other countries, but have also used photojournalist images, *National Geographic*, or online images that relate to the topic of an upcoming unit. Depending on the ultimate goal, it may help to have culturally-relevant images from the students' community and everyday life. I sometimes give each group a different image and ask them to share their responses in order to create an opportunity for reciprocal learning.

One benefit of using photographs is that students at all levels of language proficiency can access the content. For beginners, I provide simple sentence frames, like the ones below (left). For advanced students, I provide higher-level language frames (right). Even if students do not understand the cultural context of what is happening in the photo, they can use language to describe it. This task gives dependent learners a chance to process the information in a way that is comfortable to them before they are asked to do a more cognitively-demanding task.

For low level English proficiency Fill-in-the-blank

- Objects and people: *there is* and *there are*
There is a _____
There are _____
+ Preposition of location (*on, at, in front of, next to, behind, to the left of, in, under*)
- Activities: Present Continuous Tense
They are _____-ing
The man is _____-ing

For advanced English proficiency Sentence Frames

It is **possible that** _____
They way they are dressed **suggests that** _____
The photo **suggests that** _____
They **might be** _____
Maybe they are **related**.
They are **probably** *mother and daughter*.
I **think/ feel/ believe** that _____.

I have seen this work with teachers during a training in El Salvador. American teachers were given images from Salvadoran artists that they did not naturally connect with. Instead of completing the assignment, they shut down and refused to participate. The teachers who had followed the steps of the process above – first using objective descriptions – were able to begin processing information on a different level. How many times during the day do our students feel overwhelmed by the demands of similar tasks? Without a culturally competent teacher who also understands the need to build critical thinking ability, they may waste days, weeks and months feeling a sense of helplessness.

Once we have completed the photo-analysis (which may take an entire class period), I assign an age and level-appropriate passage about an element of American culture. (It is somewhat dated, but for intermediate-level high school students, I like *Our Own Stories, Readings for Cross-Cultural Communication*, by Norine Dresser). We read and discuss the articles or stories, either as a whole group or using jigsaw technique. Next, students create a presentation about one aspect of their own culture. I usually limit this to food, clothing, music, or holidays. Last year, my students identified this as their favorite activity at the end of the year.

We also discuss: What is Culture? Anthropologists define culture as what people make, think, and do. This could also be identified as the 3P's: **Product**, **Practices**, and **Perspectives**. **Products** are food, clothing, music, and literature. These are sometimes called the superficial aspects of culture (often the easiest entry point to American culture for newcomer students). **Practices** are traditions and communication – what to talk about, gestures, topics, and formal vs. informal speech. **Perspectives** are what people think, feel and value. (American English Webinar, 2018).

Teachers of K-12 ELLs have a unique role in preparing students for both academic success and effective intercultural encounters. Young language learners may be struggling with issues of culture and identity that set them apart from their peers. In a second language, the learner

encounters unclear language in reading and listening – however, they must be clear and exact in writing and speaking. Culturally competent teachers take responsibility for reducing the social-emotional stress that our learners experience. We need to be aware of potential misunderstandings and conflicts related to cultural differences and learning styles.

“It is our job as ESOL professionals to create an environment that is socially and intellectually safe for learning.”

Activities that help students make natural connections with their peers help create a powerful learning environment where students can process increasingly complex tasks and take ownership of their learning.

It is our job as ESOL professionals to create an environment that is socially and intellectually safe for learning. We must provide explicit language instruction for self-awareness, self-expression, and self-efficacy. Critical thinking can be practiced at all levels of language proficiency. Analyzing images and providing sentence frames for clarity is an effective way to develop critical thinking *and* to start the process of developing intercultural competence in the classroom.

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[All photos taken by Eva K. Sullivan]

WATESOL participates in 2019 TESOL Advocacy & Policy Summit

By Micayla Burrows and Catherine Falknor

On June 17-19, 2019, after the school year had ended and while Congress was still in session, WATESOL representatives joined other national affiliates in a Washington DC advocacy conference intended to brief educators about important legislation and to participate in an interactive advocacy effort on behalf of our students and our profession. We met to lobby our senators and representatives to support legislation and fully fund appropriations that help teachers in the classroom, students who need job training and placement, and pre-service teachers for ESOL training, as well as address the needs of students who are eligible for the American Dream and Promise Act (HR 6, S 874).

During the first two days of the 3-day TESOL Advocacy and Policy Summit, 25 state delegations of ESOL teachers and administrators (including Puerto Rico) converged to learn about pending legislation and appropriations working their way through the stages of bill passage in the House of Representatives and the Senate. By the end of the third and final day, TESOL members had visited the offices of over 150 representatives and senators.

WATESOL affiliate representatives Micayla Burrows and Catherine Falknor teamed up with the Virginia state affiliate representatives to visit the Congressional offices of Virginia Representative Don Beyer and Senators Tim Kaine and Mark Warner. Their reception was very supportive, and Representative Beyer together with Maryland Representative Jamie Raskin and DC Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton had added their names in support of robust funding of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WOIA). Title II of WOIA funds adult and family literacy programs which help immigrant families to improve English language proficiency. Another pending bill was the Reaching English Learners Act (HR 1153, S 545), which addresses the critical shortage of EL teachers by providing grants for EL teacher education. After our TESOL Summit and visits to Congressional offices, eleven more legislators offered to co-sponsor it.

In addition to the focused effort to influence legislation and garner more support for funding our schools, programs, and teacher training, we at the Advocacy Summit had the opportunity to hear from administrators in the Department of Education, legislative aides on Capitol Hill, and experts from NGOs such as Migration Policy Institute, National Skills Coalition, Center for Applied Linguistics, and Migrant Legal Action Program. We also prepared talking points, relying on our individual experiences as educators of ELs and/or personal stories as ELs ourselves.



Meeting at Senator Warner's office, with Legislative Assistants from Senator Warren's and Kaine's offices

The day we visited Capitol Hill, Wednesday June 19, was abuzz with excitement. It is celebrated as Juneteenth, the day in 1865 when all slaves were notified by Federal troops of their emancipation. That day on the Hill, actor Danny Glover and author Ta-nehisi Coates gave testimony on a bill (HR 40) for reparations to families of ex-slaves. Many tourists were visiting, and the House and Senate chambers were bustling. In the evening, when we returned to the conference with our stories of surprise, connection, and support, we celebrated over dinner, sharing our varied exchanges, meetings, and success stories. Overall, we agreed, it was a unique and motivating experience that continues to bring TESOL members back, year after year, to interact directly with our members of Congress.

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Examining the Community Roots of Adult ESL Instruction in the U.S.: The 1880s-1920s

By Sarah Young Knowles

Sarah Knowles is a faculty member in American University's TESOL program, specializing in language teaching methods and second language acquisition. She is fascinated by what methods and materials were used historically and how the field of TESOL has adapted to the needs of immigrants over time.

Have you ever wondered about how the adult ESL field has evolved since its formal beginnings in the late 1800s? What were the linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds of adult English language learners over 100 years ago? What instructional methods, materials, and resources were used? How were students recruited, enrolled, and retained? Did immigrant education receive public support? How were adult ESL teachers trained?

In this article, I focus on adult English language learners during the time period known as the 'Third Wave of Immigration' (approximately 1880-1920); during this period, the United States received the largest numbers of immigrants, many of whom came with limited schooling in their native countries. As a result of growing public

already in place to serve the millions of non-native English-speaking immigrants. There was a strong push toward 'Americanization' at this time, which emphasized cultural and political assimilation as well as English proficiency. Eventually, the federal Adult Education Act of 1966 and amendments to it in 1970 expanded educational services to include ESL and citizenship classes.

Who were the immigrants during the Third Wave?

From 1899-1921, a total of 13,886,993 immigrants arrived in the United States from Europe. These "new immigrants" (*labor* seekers mainly from Southern and Eastern Europe) were deemed by many as inferior to the "old immigrants" (*land* seekers mainly from Northern and Western Europe). Immigrants from other parts of the world were a significant minority, with 87,000 arriving from South or Central America and 488,078 arriving from Asia (Alexander, 2007; Jenks & Lauck, 1922).

Most immigrants during this time were joining family or friends in the U.S. There was a relatively high rate of mobility between native countries and the U.S., with many immigrants working to send money back home. Similar to today, some immigrants arrived with limited educational backgrounds and literacy skills in their native languages.

Who were the instructional providers during this time period?

At the time, the term "ESL" had not yet been coined. People called adult ESL classes "Americanization classes" or "English classes for the foreign born." These classes were offered by a variety of providers. There were community-based and private local organizations such as the YMCA, the YWCA, and the Daughters and Sons of the American Revolution that pushed for workplace, citizenship, and Americanization classes.



This photo is an "Americanization class" in Washington, D.C., circa 1920. Thirty nations were represented, "Italy having the largest number," according to a 1922 article in the Washington Post. "The Hebrews come second, with Greece third." National Photo Company Collection glass negative from <http://www.shorpy.com/node/9454>.

sentiment against the foreign-born and the start of World War I in 1914, the United States eventually initiated strict quotas resulting in a significant drop in immigration for much of the 20th century. However, by then a robust system of community, state, and federal ESL programs was

Residents in Buffalo, New York wore buttons saying, “I am making Buffalo a Christmas present. Ask me!,” indicating that they had donated \$1 to help pay for an immigrant’s English instruction. Federal agencies such as the National Americanization Committee, the Federal Bureau of Education, and the Department of Immigration and

“People called adult ESL classes ‘Americanization classes.’”

Naturalization sponsored civics and English classes as well (Seller, 1978). One community-based program in Wilmington,

Delaware recruited students in what we might think of as a rather aggressive approach nowadays. The program leaders wrote a kind of “how to” manual for like-minded community programs and included the following sample recruitment letter that was sent out in the immigrants’ native languages (Hart & Burnett, 1919):

English is the language of America. If you cannot talk English, you cannot use your tongue. You cannot make yourself understood. You must give up your right to speak. You give up your liberty.

When you do not know you are afraid and suspect. English words come to your ears. You are deaf. It is like darkness to your eyes. You do not share in American life. You are a prisoner in a free country.

Who among you knows English? He is your leader. He speaks for you. He is your master. He has American friends. He is free in a free country.

Learn English. Use your tongue. Be your own master. Be free. Be an American.

Learn English.

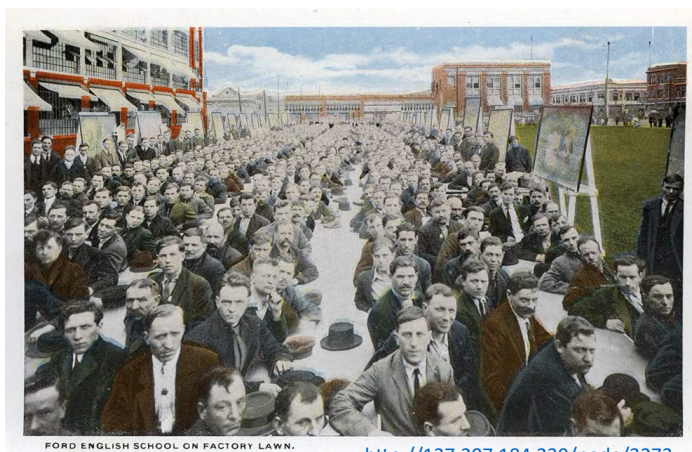
“Uncle Sam”

Public schools and local education agencies in large urban centers like New York, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, and Philadelphia began offering organized adult English programs starting in 1901. In 1914, 253 programs existed in 10 states with large immigrant populations; by 1919, that number had almost doubled to 504 programs. In the early 1920s, the male-to-female ratio of students was 3:1, with different content areas typically offered for men and

women. Some classes were only offered to men, either before or after their work, and focused primarily on topics such as banking, employment, and citizenship. Attendance and persistence rates tended to be low (Alexander, 2007).

In some parts of the country, English classes for women were offered in the women’s homes to accommodate their childcare and household duties. Home classes for immigrant mothers were often the only way that women received English language instruction: “The foreign-born mother has been the last member of the family to be considered worthy of education” (Newman, 1920, p. 1). We might say that these classes were among the first “English for specific purposes” offerings in our field, with topics including the importance of ventilation in keeping a healthy home, how to dress a doll, feeding and weighing infants, the use of handkerchiefs to prevent illness, and the physical effects of ‘moving pictures.’

Much of the push for adult ESL classes came from the perspective of employers, who were concerned about



<http://137.207.184.239/node/3273>

communication, safety, and quality control among workers who were not English proficient. In a 1924 volume titled *Adjusting Immigrant and Industry*, one labor expert explained, “The non-English speaking worker is recognized as a potential source of disturbance or waste, largely because it is difficult to convey to him the intentions of the management when there are just instructions regarding safety, health, and other conditions of employment” (Leiserson, 1924, p. 120).

In 1906, the YMCA was one of the first organizations to offer workplace ESL classes. However, the most well-known workplace ESL program of the time was the Ford Motor Company's English school, established in 1914. The program grew to 150 instructors, all Ford factory workers, and over 2,500 students by 1915.

How were English teachers trained?

As there were no formal degree or certification programs for English teachers, published training manuals started appearing in the early 1900s, with many more appearing as Americanization efforts picked up around 1920. In a 1922 Americanization manual for teachers, the seven main content areas were listed as school, work, home, travel, business interests, social interests, and civic interests (State of Ohio, 1922). The topics were highly practical, and



COURTESY INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE, NEW YORK CITY
A Group that "Talks United States"
Women attending an English class, with the caption A Group that
"Talks United States" (Newman, 1920)

were designed to prepare learners for participating in daily activities as well as building their real-world vocabulary and understanding of the naturalization process. Advice was given to teachers, much of which still resonates today, as seen in this list of 'Suggestions to teachers' (Brown, 1918):

1. Have your methods and material meet the peculiar needs of your own locality.
2. Be sure you have a plan book and a time schedule.
3. Prepare all lessons systematically. Do not use a "hit or miss" scheme.
4. Teach patriotic songs and memory gems to inspire a proper American spirit.

5. Hide your chair when you enter the room. Walk about among your pupils.
6. Make your classroom a busy workshop. Have it buzzing all evening.
7. Be a "dramatic" teacher.
8. Be sympathetic, humorous, cheerful, courteous, encouraging, patient.
9. Don't let a student miss a session without knowing the reason. Don't give him a start in "cutting."
10. Don't be a slave to the textbook.
11. Have real, every-day conversation lessons, something that the pupils may use when they leave the class at night.

There are so many primary documents from this time period available online now that provide a fascinating look into our profession over 100 years ago. Although circumstances and the origins of immigrants have changed, it is often surprising to me how similar some of the textbooks are to what we use today. My search has also made me realize that TESOL has always been a grassroots kind of profession, with practitioners passing on tips for "what works" based on their own experiences.

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Teaching Abroad: RELO Brazil

By Jennifer Uhler



Jennifer Uhler is a Regional English Language Officer (RELO) with the U.S. Department of State. She currently is RELO for Brazil, and has also served as a RELO in Washington, D.C., Indonesia and East Timor, and Central Asia. Prior to joining the State Department, she taught academic writing and methodology at the University of Tartu in Estonia. Her experience includes teaching domestically at Georgetown University and American University as well as internationally in Romania, Mexico, Slovakia, Turkey, and Austria.

Tell us about a rewarding aspect of your job. The single greatest joy that I have in my job is being part of the journey of other educators. I love providing opportunities to see Brazilian and U.S. TESOL professionals try something new and grow as a result. This mentoring happens incidentally through the other work that we do, but I love providing opportunity. I regularly am involved in encouraging (sometimes cajoling!), coaching, and applauding fellow professionals in taking on challenges – from presenting at a national or international conference for the first time to taking on an action research project to designing curricula or assessments to cobbling together new ways to reach teachers and learners. Through the process, I gain a lot of energy and momentum for my daily tasks. I also learn an immense amount by being

“[We] sometimes underestimate the voice that we have and how much those around us are willing to listen.”

surrounded by diverse profiles of professionals that makes me better at what I do as a Regional English Language Officer.

What was the transition from classroom educator to administration like? Honestly, I am not sure that you ever fully transition. I am not a bureaucrat or an administrator at heart but rather a teacher. I think teachers who become language program administrators must maintain a foot in both realities. It is a great privilege to be a conduit and to understand the concerns and opportunities of, in my case, public diplomacy officers and State Department officials as well as those of classroom teachers. Over time, I have understood that some of the skills I have as a teacher are valuable assets outside of the classroom. Quick preparation for working with groups, social adaptability and tolerance, classroom management, and plenty of

heuristics for team building and group work are pieces of my classroom teacher identity that I employ on a daily basis.



Tell us about an interesting/surprising experience that you've had as a RELO. I regularly have imposter syndrome in my job, especially when I am meeting with veteran teachers, academics, government officials, or “famous” professionals from the field of TESOL. I think that I am continuously surprised to be sitting at a table with various luminaries and to realize that I have something to share and that people listen. I think that we as TESOL professionals in general sometimes underestimate the voice that we have and how much those around us are willing to listen. My perspective is constantly widened, and I am constantly humbled by the position.

What is one of the biggest challenges that you face? We have a lot of programs and people that we work with. The territories are immense and the interest is great.

I struggle to maintain focus so that my team and I put our energies in the correct places. In the midst of multi-tasking and traveling, it can be difficult to remember to keep balance with personal life. I have the privilege of learning languages, living in interesting places, and meeting incredible people. Sometimes I have to remind myself to breathe and enjoy it.

What are you most proud of? Surviving and thriving in my position. The learning curve of working at the Department of State and figuring out public diplomacy and English teaching is steep. I feel like my first years were spent treading water and trying to understand and prioritize. Now that I have a better sense of the landscape, I feel like it is easier to empower those I work with to innovate and learn.

You're running programs and conducting teacher trainings - but what have you learned about teaching from the educators that you've worked with? I think that we are an amalgamation of those we work with as teachers – both students and colleagues. From each workshop I attend with an English Language Specialist or Fellow I take away a new resource, a new technique for working with groups, or a new idea to research. I am

reminded in my interactions about the patience, tolerance, and inquiry that is embedded in our field. I recently interacted with a professional that has exposed



me to new ideas related to coaching and some great active listening techniques. A call with English Language Fellows yesterday exposed me to ideas about self-directed learning, design thinking, and English as a Medium of Instruction. The learning through exposure from educators keeps me fresh as a professional.

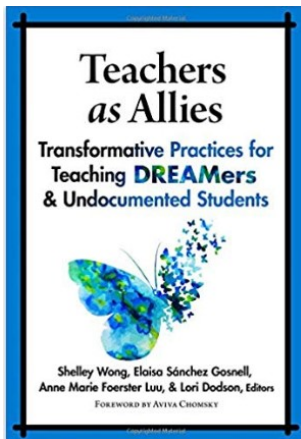
In Memoriam



It is with sadness that we report the passing of Dr. David Payne Harris, former president of both WATESOL and TESOL International. He was a treasured former member of the Georgetown University Linguistics Department. He was the author of several books, journal articles, and book reviews. Anyone who knew Professor Harris will remember him as a scholar and a gentleman, kind and attentive to students, unfailingly as gracious as he was erudite.

Book Review: *Teachers as Allies*

By Megan Fullarton



Teachers as Allies is a thorough discussion of challenges faced by DREAMers and undocumented students as seen by their teachers. The book includes captivating, first-hand accounts from English language educators, some of whom are undocumented themselves. They provide numerous suggestions for frameworks,

activities, and resources for working with these students.

Part I: Working with Undocumented Students and Their Families: Understanding the Issues and Strategies

Chapter 1 opens the book with an explanation of different immigration statuses and pertinent terminology, as well as an overview of recent legislation that affects immigrants. Chapters 2 and 3 discuss relationships between educators and students' families, including potential challenges introduced by fear of deportation. The authors suggest a "dilemma" framework for working with families of unknown or mixed documentation status.

Part II: Reaching Students from Immigrant Families Through Transformative Culturally Responsive Education

Part II suggests culturally responsive techniques for improving inclusivity. Chapter 4 addresses ways to avoid subtle racism in lessons and interactions with students, while Chapter 5 describes a course unit about the DREAM Act that culminated in students meeting with lawmakers on Capitol Hill. Chapter 6 examines the use of personal narratives to help students discover and discuss identity.

Part III: Accessing, Surviving, and Thriving: DREAMers Go to College

In Chapter 7, the author addresses specific difficulties – especially financial – faced by undocumented students and DREAMers applying for college, while Chapter 8 describes the establishment of the Arlington Dream Project. The next two chapters make recommendations for creating safe spaces in the classroom for LGBTQ students (Ch. 9) and through reflection and personal narratives (Ch. 10).

Part IV: Finding, Sharing, and Transforming Identity Through Art: DREAMers Perform

Part IV includes methods to allow students to examine identity through creative means. Chapter 11 examines a class of students who do critical analyses of music relating to immigration, and Chapter 12 addresses the use of interviews and theatre to capture community narratives. In line with this, the book features a number of poems and illustrations by immigrant artists.

Part V: Becoming an Ally

The book concludes with a direct call to action (Chapter 13) for educators to take steps to advocate for DREAMers and undocumented students and to "respond creatively" to students' challenges. In Chapter 14, the editors provide a lengthy list of organizations, books, websites, and other resources for educators to use and share with other allies. (Royalties from *Teachers as Allies* support *United We Dream*.)

Teachers as Allies is an invaluable guide for ESL instructors and those working with immigrants in the United States. This book also provides specific suggestions to advocate for those students through interactions with content-area teachers, administrations, non-profit organizations, and local and federal governments.

Specific recommendations are provided for young students with deported parents, students applying to college, DREAMers of color in STEM fields, LGBTQ students, and beyond. **"The true measure of educational success is reaching the student who is the hardest to teach" (p. 2)**

This book is especially pertinent to WATESOL members, who are within close proximity of federal offices, and national DREAM organizations headquartered in the Washington, D.C. area. *Teachers as Allies* can support us in taking better advantage of these resources in our journey to improve ourselves as educators and allies.

Wong, S., Sánchez Gosnell, E., Luu, A. M. F., & Dodson, L. (2018). *Teachers as allies: transformative practices for teaching DREAMers & undocumented students*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Tech Tools Corner

Amplifying Student Voices: *and the scaffolds that can help*

By Lindsey Crifasi

What could be more empowering than telling your story, the way you lived it, so that you can be heard? Our students need to have their stories heard, and we as teachers can provide the platforms, skills, and tools to help them.

storyboardthat.com

At a recent PD event at my school, our speaker, Meagan Alderton, showed the group was Storyboardthat.com. There is a free version that includes thousands of scenes, characters, shapes, infographics and more. Creating a visual version of writing allows students to gather their thoughts and creativity in a succinct and fun way.

readwritethink.org

This website is a fantastic resource to keep in your back pocket for all things reading and writing. In fact, just recently I found a very useful game for my literacy students to practice sorting word families! Under *Classroom Resources* → *Student Interactives* you'll find many easy-to-use engaging graphic organizers to get your students' thoughts ready to express on paper. The Story Mapping resource offers different graphic organizers which students can print. Each will encourage details through prompts as the writer moves through each map. Teachers can filter through the resources by grade level, type of writing, learning objective, theme and tech capabilities (saving, printing, emailing).

studenttreasures.com

Studenttreasures Publishing is a company dedicated to inspiring young authors through publishing their writing in a hardbound book, and they do it free of cost! Teachers can receive the Classbook kit which comes with 66 pages to edit, half for illustrations and half for text. Teachers can also opt for students to do their own individual books; those kits come with 14 pages, also evenly split for text and illustration.

Both kits come with a worksheet for the cover illustration,

title and dedication pages, and an "About the Author" page. Imagine how accomplished and proud our students would be to own a beautifully bound copy of their hard work!

I would be remiss if I didn't include some examples of amplified student voices in this column for inspiration. My school, Carlos Rosario International PCS, has been publishing a student literary-arts magazine for around 10 years. Editions through the years can be accessed through carlosrosario.org or this link [In Our Own Words](#). It's a huge hit every spring!

I'm always impressed by the work coming out of [Colorín Colorado](#), whose mission is to provide free research-based information, activities, and advice to parents, schools, and communities of ELLs. They spearheaded the first digital magazine for and by Latina youth, [Las Latinitas](#). It's published online bilingually and is "focused on informing, entertaining and inspiring young Latinas to grow into healthy, confident and successful women". They also promote enrichment programs and social networking for girls and young Latinas.

Finally, I needed to feature [Green Card Voices](#), which I heard about through one of my professors at Hamline University in St. Paul, MN. Green Card Voices harnesses digital storytelling and printed books to help build bridges between immigrant and non-immigrant communities and advocates across the world. Their book *Green Card Youth Voices*, St. Paul features 30 personal essays written by immigrant youth from 12 countries along with their portraits. There are videos on their website to accompany the essays; they are empowering and incredibly important to amplify in these divisive times.

Writing is always hard, but can be healing, cathartic and unifying. Let's take this especially difficult time for immigrants as a point of inspiration to amplify their voices. Perhaps doing so can create a little more solidarity and freedom in the world.



Join CAL As We Celebrate Our 60th Anniversary

2019 marks the 60th anniversary of CAL's founding.

CAL's anniversary theme of **Valuing All Voices** represents our long history of supporting language and cultural diversity around the globe and serves as a guide for activities during our anniversary year and beyond.

Please join us as we renew our commitment to finding innovative solutions to the language and cultural issues that affect us all.

Together, we look forward to writing the history of CAL's next 60 years.

Watch our website for updates throughout the year.

www.cal.org

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A Memorable Experience: TESOL for a First Timer

By Greer Mancuso

WATESOL Scholarships are given to WATESOL members who seek funding in support of their professional development activities. Recipients are required to submit a summary report of their experience for the WATESOL Newsletter. Greer Mancuso used her scholarship to attend her first TESOL International Convention.

This past March I attended the TESOL International Convention for the first time after having been awarded the WATESOL travel grant. Not only was it my first time attending a TESOL conference, but it was also my first time presenting for such a large audience.

During the conference, I attended an eye-opening session that discussed endangered languages and how over half of the world's languages are endangered and may go extinct in this century. I also had the opportunity to attend several engaging sessions on refugee experiences. I was able to learn about how Second Language Acquisition (SLA) differs in refugees and to understand more about their funds of knowledge.

My research interests focus on students who have had interrupted schooling and the ESOL teachers who work with them. My presentation was titled, "Students with Interrupted Schooling: What ESOL Teachers Now Need to Know." It was quite overwhelming to decide which other sessions to attend, but I tried to focus on sessions that I might be able to connect with my own research interests. There were several sessions offered on Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) and their funds of knowledge. I chose sessions focusing on SIFE and refugees since both groups have experienced similar experiences such as interruptions in schooling and might have unique socioemotional needs.

This most valuable experience for me was networking and exchanging information with other teachers across the globe who shared similar interests. I was amazed by the positive feedback TESOL members were giving presenters on social media following their sessions. I greatly appreciated the feedback I received as well. I enjoyed exchanging business cards and e-mails with like-minded teachers who are interested in collaborating and making our classrooms better together.

Another incredible experience was having the researchers that I cite in my own work attend my conference presentations. When new teacher researchers read journal articles, we start to think of the authors as experts that are unapproachable in the real world. I was humbled to have some of my favorite authors attend my session and introduce themselves afterwards, share their contact information, and offer positive encouragement and show a desire to be part of my future work. I have been an ESOL teacher for 14 years, but my journey in research is just now beginning.

I am grateful to have been awarded the WATESOL travel grant so that I could participate in this professional opportunity. I would highly recommend that our WATESOL members attend some of the major TESOL conventions in the future. It is a valuable and rewarding experience that will help us all grow in our profession and improve our future instruction for ELs.



Greer Mancuso has been an ESOL teacher for the past 14 years in Virginia public schools. She has worked at both the elementary and secondary level. She is a Nationally Board Certified Teacher in the area of English as a New Language. She is also a doctoral candidate at George Mason University.

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The new phonemics or, How to win by losing in teaching pronunciation

By Mark W. Sherman

WATESOL Scholarships are given to WATESOL members who seek funding in support of their professional development activities. Recipients are required to submit a summary report of their experience for the WATESOL Newsletter. Mark Sherman used a Jim Weaver Professional Development Scholarship from WATESOL to further his training in the Color Vowel® approach.

When I was 10, wrapping up a five-year stint in England, our maths teacher (it's plural there) let us know that what we were learning was the "new maths," whatever that was. We were oblivious — if there was an old maths, we couldn't have told you the difference.

Likewise, the ink on my TESOL certificate was barely dry before I ran into a method of teaching pronunciation devised right here in the D.C. area, called the Color Vowel® approach. And so the very first training I received on that topic was in that system — if there's an "old" way of teaching pronunciation, I'm only dimly aware of it.

Nonetheless, I have some sense of how pronunciation is usually taught. For example, students are told that words like "hate," "mate" and "rate" all sound like the name of the letter A, which is appealing because it suggests that English pronunciation, like English grammar, is a rules-based system. Yes, there are exceptions, just as there are exceptions in grammar. Nonetheless, the world remains a rational place — it is simply a matter of learning the caveats.

It turns out, however, that the number of exceptions soon outstrips the number of principles. For example, "dome" sounds like "home," but "come" and "some" do not. To make matters worse, many of the exceptions occur in high-frequency words. For example, "are" does not sound like "care," and "were" does not sound like "here," let alone "there."

Embracing rather than resisting these departures from logic, the Color Vowel® system does not try to follow a set of formulas, even though vestiges of formulas can be seen here and there.

The result is two kinds of word families -- one in which the words do not resemble each other visually but sound the same, such as "work," "purple," and "her," and one in which the words do resemble each other visually but sound very different, such as "move," "love" and "stove." It captures, in

sum, the history of English, a language that has gone through so many graftings that any attempt to explain its pronunciation in a rational way is bound to fail.

Still, I was nervous about using it — would students think it was silly or childish? Most important, would it work? And if it did, wouldn't that be cheating, like finding a shortcut that shouldn't exist?

And so I introduced it with a card game based on the system called Color it out! And yes, students were surprised — "machine" sounds like "dream" and "people," not "line"?

But along with their surprise came relief — at last, someone was coming clean about a system they had long suspected was rigged against the English learner, a deliberate plot to foil their attempts to sound like a native speaker. And once things no longer had to make sense, a weight was lifted and they could simply learn — or, as Stephen Krashen, the renegade linguist, might say — they could simply acquire.

There are teachers, no doubt, who are happy with the old way of teaching pronunciation, and if it works for their students, far be it from me to quarrel with the results. Likewise, the Color Vowel® system is not without its shortcomings -- for a long time, for example, it included only one of the R-controlled vowels; a second has recently been added.

Nonetheless, I think it represents a paradigm shift, and if I sound like an apostle, it is only because I have seen it work with my own eyes -- or, should I say, I have heard it work with my own ears! Indeed, it is always a shock to have students who seem locked forever in their accent suddenly sound American.

In short, I feel lucky to have been exposed to this way of teaching pronunciation before I knew of any other. Call it the new phonemics, if you want -- it really is different.



Mark Sherman is currently teaching at Lado International Institute. The views expressed in this article represent his opinion and do not constitute an official WATESOL endorsement.

Advice for TESOLers

By Megan Fullarton

WATESOL Scholarships are given to WATESOL members who seek funding in support of their professional development activities. Recipients are required to submit a summary report of their experience for the WATESOL Newsletter. Megan Fullarton used her travel grant to attend the TESOL International Convention in Atlanta, GA.

At the TESOL 2019 conference, I learned not only about research and teaching techniques, but walked away from the conference knowing more about the community, the resources, and the opportunities in the TESOL world. If you have the chance to go to TESOL in future years, here are my tips for first-timers to get the most out of the conference!

Get outside your comfort zone. Attend sessions on tough subjects or topics that are brand-new to you. No matter how uncomfortable it may be for us to sit through a session about it, our students could face far worse discomfort if they use a word - or are called a word - without understanding its impact!

Don't be afraid to float around during sessions. This one took some getting used to for me. At conferences like TESOL, it seems to be perfectly acceptable to arrive late and leave early during presentations. If you're interested in two sessions that are taking place at the same time, or a presentation turns out not to be relevant to you, the presenter will understand – just make sure to come in and out quietly!

Take care of yourself. With sessions running from 7:00am to 5:30pm, it's easy to come up with a full day's schedule of interesting presentations. However – don't push yourself too hard! If you take breaks to keep yourself revived, you'll get more out of the sessions you do attend!

Talk to the presenters. I was intimidated by the presenters on the first day, but became more comfortable and confident talking to them as the conference progressed. They're not there just for show – they're there to help other teachers and the TESOL field as a whole. Not all of the presenters are legendary experts in the field – and even if they are, they are very open to give advice to students and novice teachers. If you don't get a chance to talk with them in person, take note of their contact

information and shoot them an email.

Take advantage of technology. After furiously taking notes on the first day, I discovered that many of the speakers upload their handouts and Powerpoint presentations to the conference website. Many will also provide websites with materials or further information from their studies. Use these resources and save space in your notebook!

Be strategic in the exhibition hall. For the sake of my suitcase – and my wallet – I couldn't afford to buy every useful book I saw. I took pictures of materials that I was interested in buying, then waited till the last day to make my final decisions.

Get ideas for next year. By the end of the conference, I had a massive brainstorming list for lesson plans, graduate school assignments, and potential research topics. Make sure you take note of relevant resources, and share your ideas with others – someone else might be working on the same topic. The conference is the best place to get motivated to come up with something to present at the next one!

Synthesize and process afterwards. Put your notes away for a few days after you get back and give your brain a break. The next week, sort through your fliers, notes, materials, and handouts with fresh eyes. What still stands out to you a week later? Think about how you can apply this to your teaching, and how you can share information with your colleagues. Share some key findings at your next staff meeting or send a summary of conference highlights to your team!



Megan Fullarton is an MA TESOL student at American University. She works with undergraduate students in the English Language Training Academy and the International Accelerator Program at AU. Her interests include corpus linguistics, teaching academic writing, and Task-Based Language Teaching.