

WATESOL NEWS

Winter 2018 Edition

Dear WATESOL Community,

I hope your 2018 is off to a splendid start!

Firstly, I need to recognize Past President Heather Tatton-Harris for all of the work she has done over the past year to take WATESOL to new places, including premiering a host of new PD events and reviving the Advocacy committee along with Joana Duggan and others. In addition to many other things, she, along with other board members, has also made it possible for WATESOL to use simple and elegant new emails. Instead of our previous serviceable, but clunky @gmail.com emails, we now have beautiful new @watesol.org emails. Please find a full list on p. 22 and on our website, and use them to contact us!

I am excited to be working with the WATESOL Board to bring you a number of exciting opportunities including new web content to be released over the summer. So many of us want to take advantage of professional development opportunities, but are unable to do so in person due to work schedules, family obligations, and the need for at least some rest. That's why we are making a concerted effort to make professional development and networking possible in ways that work for your busy lives. We will be sending out more specific information as we get closer to the summer, so stay tuned to your emails and our web page!

That's not to say that we won't continue to offer in-person PD and networking opportunities. For example, we had our rescheduled Action Research workshop on Saturday, February 17th from 10am-2pm, followed immediately by an NNEST Caucus coffee and social hour. Both of these took place in the McDowell formal lounge at American University.

We will also host our mini-conference on March 3rd at Carlos Rosario.

Last year we had a great turnout! If you would be interested in practicing your presentation for an upcoming conference, [please consider participating!](#) For anyone planning to attend the TESOL International Convention in Chicago, I hope you will join us at our booth in the Expo hall on Thursday, March 29th from 1:30-2:30pm. Finally, we are looking forward to a proposal-writing workshop in early May (in time for the TESOL International Convention proposal submission deadline). Stay tuned for details.

We have also voted as a board to remove a clause in the WATESOL Constitution (Article VII, Section 5) that limits members to participation in only one SIG. Given the fact that so many of us work in more than one context, and/or with more than one audience, we thought it should be possible for members to contribute to and benefit from the SIGs that relate to their work and interests. This decision is up for referendum until March 15th, 2018. [Please vote](#) and let us know what you think. If the referendum passes, our fall conference schedule will look a little different to allow people to go to different SIG meetings.

I hope you will be in touch with ideas and suggestions for ways that we can serve the WATESOL community better. We are always looking for people who want to work with the organization in different capacities as well. Feel free to contact me president@watesol.org (see how simple and elegant?) or any of the other board members with your suggestions or any questions you may have.

Regards,

Rebecca S. Wilmer



WATESOL NEWS

From the editors

Dear WATESOL Community,

This issue is full of rich, relevant, and meaningful articles written by members. We hope you find the information useful and informative!

As always, we would like to extend our gratitude to all of the contributors to this newsletter. Enjoy the articles and we hope to see you soon at a WATESOL event!

Your Newsletter Editors,

Stephanie Gallop, Lindsey Crifasi, & Silvia Hildesheim



IN this issue:

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Teaching Abroad Q&A.....	3
ZPD and the Affective Filter.....	4
Student PSA Videos	8
Drama in the TESOL Classroom.....	11
Engagement and Learning	14
Pay Attention to the Body	17
Tech Tools Corner.....	21

WATESOL INFO

Upcoming Events.....	7
WATESOL Mini-Conference	10
WATESOL in Chicago.....	16
TESOL Advocacy Workshop	20
Newsletter Submission Info	20
WATESOL Board.....	22



Q&A: Lessons and stories from teaching abroad

Kelly Hill Zirker | Diplomatic Language Services | kzirker@gmail.com

What program did you do and where?

My husband's job took us to São Paulo, Brazil, and I'm teaching a community class to adults and teens in our neighborhood.

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

The location and class size didn't really surprise me, but what did was just how extremely varied my students' abilities are, even students that supposedly have been studying for the same amount of time in the same schools.

What did students expect of you?

I felt like my students had few, if any, expectations. The fact that I am a native English speaker seemed enough in their eyes to make me "qualified" to teach. They certainly did not expect to be asked to actually speak English in the classroom.

What challenged you the most?

My students vary in age, English abilities, and literacy level, and, as is common in many community classes, they all attend the same class. It's been challenging to create lessons that are appropriate and meaningful for everyone.

What words of wisdom would you have for a teacher thinking of teaching in Brazil and/or a teacher who may have students coming from Brazil?

Two things: 1) Teaching in Brazil is just plain fun. Brazilians are warm, welcoming, and enthusiastic. Along with that enthusiasm can sometimes come a lack of classroom discipline that has required me to adjust my classroom management style. 2) Most Brazilian students have "studied" English since grade school.

However, in my experience, many students are still unable to form a simple complete sentence in English. My students have blamed this on Brazil's language education style which emphasizes book work and rote memorization rather than communication. My students love activities that let them USE English in practical and realistic situations.

Kelly Hill Zirker lives in São Paulo, Brazil where she teaches community English courses and works as a curriculum developer for Arlington, VA-based Diplomatic Language Services.



MEMBERSHIP

Is your membership current?

Go to www.watesol.org/membership-benefits to ensure that your membership is active, or to join WATESOL.

Contact membership@watesol.org for questions.



Stress and the Zone of Proximal Development: Mitigating the Affective Filter in ESOL Students

Maria Keffler | The Falls Church Anglican ESOL Program | mariakeffler@gmail.com

The ability to communicate—to share ideas with others—is central to how others perceive our intelligence, character, and personhood. The need to acquire communication skills motivates students to take ESOL classes.

But that motivation can be derailed by another kind of motivation: stress.

Both the stress students bring with them and the stress experienced during the learning process can impede or shut down language acquisition.

Understanding how stress does this can inform our preparation, presentation, and demeanor in the classroom.

Stress & the Second-Language Learner

Stress is a physiological response to a threatening stimulus. The heart beats faster, the skin flushes hot and sweats, hands and knees may tremble, and one may even feel faint or nauseous. Learning is deprioritized when the brain thinks it's under attack.

Second-language classrooms consist largely of those outside the major culture. Chronic stressors for this population can include the trauma of displacement; grief over loss of their homes and lives; separation from support networks; finances; legal status; work and food instability; and the anxiety of being unable to fully participate in the national and cultural life of the host country. ¹

Classroom stress, on the other hand, can affect any learner, regardless of social status. It arises from the fear of being incapable of performing, and that punishment or humiliation will follow the failure to perform adequately. Have you ever been laughed at after giving a wrong answer? Were you mocked by a teacher for not responding quickly enough? Did you ever feel like the Forrest Gump in a class of Stephen Hawkings?

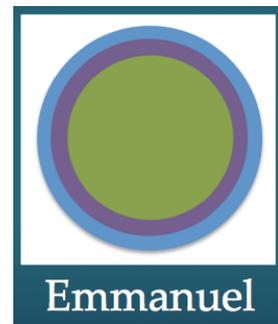
While we want to be mindful of the chronic stress many of our students experience, we only have the power to mitigate the stress of being in a classroom, learning challenging material. But to understand how stress sabotages learning, we need to appreciate how it interacts with the Zone of Proximal Development.

The Zone of Proximal Development ²

Learning capacity can be imagined as a series of three concentric circles. The innermost ring represents what the student already knows, their stock of knowledge. The outermost ring designates content and skills beyond the student's ability to grasp at this time. The middle ring indicates the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is the material that the student could learn right now, with a bit of help.



Julia



Emmanuel

Scaffolding takes place in the ZPD, which is where we aim to teach. When we realize that every student has a different set of rings, we begin to appreciate the challenge of teaching not just to the ZPD, but to every ZPD.

Even more troublesome (but perhaps more readily managed) than the variety of ZPDs in our classes, is the negative effect that stress has on the ZPD.

Increasing stress seems to shrink the “What I Can Do” ring. (Have you ever stood up to recite something you’d memorized, but drew a complete blank?) Stress can also cause the “What I Can’t Do” ring to expand. As a result the middle ring, or ZPD, gets compressed and little learning takes place.

How does stress manage this debilitating feat? It interferes with the affective domain.

The Three Learning Domains ³

Benjamin Bloom describes three different domains of learning: cognitive, psychomotor, and affective.

Teachers in traditional classrooms, with the exception of classes like physical education and music, tend to focus primarily on mental development. Acquisition of knowledge, recall, and intellectual skills reside in the cognitive domain:

The War of 1812 took place in 1812.

The chemical formula for water is H₂O.

Georges Seurat was a French, post-Impressionist painter.

The psychomotor domain manages physical movement, coordination, and motor skills. Sports coaches, gym teachers, and musicians spend much of their time in the psychomotor domain:

Throwing a Curveball

Mastering a Pirouette

Bowing a Violin

Emotions, attitudes, values, and motivations reside in the affective domain:

The ends do or do not justify the means.

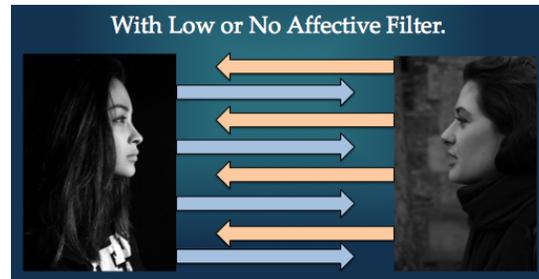
Everyone who worked on the project should (or should not) receive an equal grade.

I do/don't feel confident when speaking in public.

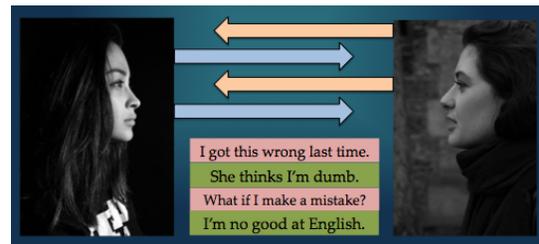
The affective domain deals with our relationship to others. In the classroom, it emerges when a student feels s/he is being assessed by the teacher or other students. The brain struggles to survive or evade the discomfort of being judged substandard. The affective filter goes up as a protective measure.

The Affective Filter ⁴

When there is no or low affective filter, communication flows well between this student and teacher.



But as student stress builds up, anxiety builds an invisible wall between her and others, stifling the free-flow of communication and learning.



If the student is inundated with negative thoughts about herself and others, very little learning can occur.



One of our most important jobs as teachers is to monitor indications that students may have high affective filters, and then help them reduce their anxiety.

Strategies for Reducing Student Anxiety

1. Warmth, Enthusiasm, and Organization

From the moment a student enters the classroom, the teacher can allay stress by being consistently warm, enthusiastic, and organized. When we greet each student by name and express pleasure at their presence, we give them the gift of being seen and valued. Teaching with enthusiasm—genuine enjoyment of the material and the teaching process—draws students into the teacher’s engagement and passion. And when the teacher has an organized system, students know what to expect from one class to another and from one

moment to the next.

2. Predictability

Research on infant attachment yields fascinating findings regarding the effects of predictability. The most secure child has a predictably dependable caregiver; the child with a predictably rejecting or undependable caregiver is less secure; but least secure is the child whose caregiver is inconsistent and mercurial. Such a child never knows what will happen, and therefore struggles to establish any sort of control or predictability in the relationship.⁵

In the classroom as well, students feel more secure when they know what to expect. Having a predictable pattern to each class (e.g., greeting, review, new material, a game, a closing activity) assures students that although the material may be difficult, the class structure is clear, understandable, and safe.

3. Collegiality

Both among the students and between the students and teacher a sense of collegiality can dispel stress by fostering friendship, equality, and goodwill. Rather than competitors or strangers, fellow students become resources and collaborators. The teacher who reveals his or her own fallibilities—even if it's only to try to say "Hello" in each of the students' primary languages—steps down from the lofty, expert's pedestal and eases the students' misconception that the teacher is some kind of awe-inspiring superhuman.

4. Safety Nets

Students who struggle in elementary and middle school classrooms are often provided strategies for extracting themselves from difficult situations. ESOL students benefit from having safety nets as well.

Seat a struggling student with others who speak his/her native language, who can assist with understanding. Smartphones allow access to Google Translate. Providing some manipulative materials such as word games, magazines, or fidgets can give students a safe place to redirect their attention if they need a cognitive break but don't want to look like they're lost.

5. Provide for Multiple Paths to Success

Every teacher tends to focus on certain favorite strategies and activities in the classroom, but what the instructor finds difficult vs. easy may be just the opposite to certain students.

Strive to design activities that reach across all three domains—cognitive, psychomotor, and affective—as well as which exercise all four aspects of language: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. For example:

Preparing and giving a one-minute speech about something that scares you accesses both the *cognitive* and *affective domains*, as well as requires *writing* and *speaking* skills.

Tossing a ball to students when asking a question, then having them toss it back after they answer engages the *psychomotor* and *cognitive domains*, as well as necessitates *listening* and *speaking* skills.

Playing the chair-change game ("Everyone who is wearing red, change chairs.") works in *all three domains* while it allows for *listening* and *speaking* practice.

And finally, we want to create variously easy, moderate, and difficult activities. Ideally, all students should be challenged, but none too much or too long. And it's no failure to find that an activity was easy for everyone. Sometimes a simple task gives an extra boost of confidence to someone who really needs it.

In Conclusion

As teachers we want to share knowledge with our students, and in ESOL classrooms the primary goal is moving each student into higher English fluency. But students must first feel that they are competent to learn. By employing strategies to mitigate stress and lower students' affective filters, we communicate to them that we believe in their capacity to be successful. As we create opportunities for them to feel confident, they will become successful. And so, therefore, will we.

References:

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² McLeod, Saul. (2010). Zone of Proximal Development. Retrieved December 18, 2017, from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/Zone-of-Proximal-Development.html>.

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⁴ Schütz, R. (2017, March 12). Stephen Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition. Retrieved December 19, 2017, from <http://www.sk.com.br/sk-krash-english.html>

⁵ Main, M., Hesse, E., & Kaplan, N. (2005). Predictability of Attachment Behavior and Representational Processes at 1, 6, and 19 Years of Age: The Berkeley Longitudinal Study. Retrieved December 18, 2017, from <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.473.8935&rep=rep1&type=pdf>



Maria Keffler lives in Arlington, VA near (but not in) the cemetery with her STEM-y hubs and three darling cherubs who all wish they were only children. She holds a degree in educational psychology, but would have to dig the diploma out of a box from the mawing abyss of horror and despair that is her basement in order to prove it. She is also an award-seeking novelist/blogger, and is writing her next book, as well as working on a simple formula to predict prime numbers to infinity.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- ◆ **WATESOL Mini Conference** — Saturday, March 3 Carlos Rosario Harvard Street Campus (see page 10 for more information)
- ◆ **Lecture: Rights of Immigrant Students in MD Public School** — Thursday, March 8, 2018 Notre Dame of Maryland University Baltimore, MD.
- ◆ **TESOL International Convention** — March 27 –30, 2018 Chicago, Illinois
- ◆ **Conference on Language, Learning, & Culture**—April 6-7, 2018 VIU Fairfax, Virginia
- ◆ **MAACCE Annual Conference** — May 3-4, 2018 Linthicum Heights, Maryland

Student-Made Video Public Service Announcements to Teach the 4Cs and Persuasive Writing Skills

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The effective use of critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication is an essential part of a strong 21st-century classroom culture. In leading students through a small-group project to create video public service announcements, you ensure that your English learners use the 4 Cs and improve their persuasive skills while putting their technology skills to work in a medium that many students use daily, though mostly for social purposes. Wilmot et al (2012) report that digital video reporting inspires and engages students when incorporated into student-centered learning by increasing motivation, developing learner autonomy, and enhancing teamwork and communication skills. Having experienced the enthusiasm of my upper-elementary students and how much they learned has me hoping that other teachers will take on this challenging, rewarding project. To that end, here is a plan to take you each step of the way, though of course you will make adjustments based on your students' ages and proficiency levels.

Introducing Persuasive Thinking and Language with Whole-Class Activities

A 4-corners activity is a simple yet engaging way to get students thinking, moving, and talking. Students can be asked to choose an answer from four choices (e.g., Which season do you think is the best – fall, winter, spring, or summer, and why?) or to agree or disagree with a statement and explain why (e.g., All public schools should follow year-round education. (1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Disagree and (4) Strongly disagree). [The Classroom Key](#) offers student-friendly debate topics that can easily be turned into 4-corners prompts, while the *New York Times* offers [401 Prompts for Argumentative Writing](#) for older students and adults.

After students have had time to reflect, direct them to walk to the corner where their chosen response is posted and share the reasons for their choice. Each group then chooses a presenter who shares the

group's thinking with the whole class. After all four groups have shared, tell students to stay where they are or to move to a different corner if their thinking has changed. Invariably, a few students will have changed their answer, which leads to a stimulating discussion on the power of persuasion.

Once students return to their seats, have them share with a shoulder partner a time they persuaded a friend to do something they really wanted to do, such as play a particular game at recess. Then allow students to share out, and discuss as a class what we say and do when we want to persuade someone to do or believe something.

Helping Students to Think Critically

Students are now ready to do a follow-up activity in which small groups are given a claim and must work together to think of three strong reasons to support it. Again, the age and proficiency level of students will determine whether the claim will be simple (*Dogs are better pets than cats.*) or more thought-provoking (*Farm animals should have more legal protections.*).

When students share their thinking, you will be able to assess how well they understand – or not – how to back up a claim with strong supporting reasons. To help students do the critical thinking necessary to offer strong support, [Read Write Think](#) offers a PowerPoint in student-friendly language that gives examples of the main persuasive techniques.

At this point, prepare students to watch a few student-made PSAs with a critical eye, evaluating them by using what they have learned about persuasive techniques. (YouTube is an excellent resource for finding age-appropriate PSAs.) Encourage students to take notes while watching so that they can discuss which persuasive techniques were used and their own reactions to the PSAs. Were the creators successful in making viewers care

about the claim? Did the creators support the claim with solid evidence?

As educators, we know that students are more engaged when given a choice, so present them with this driving question: What is a claim that you feel is important for others your age to support? Have students work together in small groups to come up with a list of possible claims. Write them all on a poster and discuss each claim to determine if it is age- and school-appropriate, concerns an issue students should care about, and can be supported with evidence. Any that do not meet these criteria should be crossed off.

Once you have a list of appropriate claims, divide students into pre-arranged small groups, taking into account their skills and personalities, and direct them to choose a claim. Students will have different opinions, so at this point, you will either be grateful that you have already spent considerable time developing academic conversation skills and have reference charts on the walls or dismayed that you haven't. Engaging in productive, respectful social and academic conversations is a skill that is critical to students' success both in school and daily life.

Planning and Filming PSAs

After groups have chosen their claim, carefully go over a student-teacher contract that answers the 5 Ws and 1 H of the project and states the expectations for using video equipment responsibly. Provide a detailed checklist that has a designated place for the teacher to initial each step as it is successfully completed. Give each group a work folder so that all papers are available for frequent group check-ins with the teacher.

To model how students will prepare for their own PSAs, work as a class to support a claim that no groups will be using. As an example, I worked with a class on the following claim: Children should have a time limit of one hour per day of video games. After reading and discussing two articles on the effects of spending a great deal of time playing video games, we pulled text evidence and combined it with students' own reasons from personal experience. We then chose the three

strongest supporting reasons and wrote them on the same graphic organizer used for a five-paragraph persuasive essay, for the thinking process is the same: a claim, three strong supporting reasons, and 2-3 facts or examples to support each reason. Students were now ready to do the same process with their own claim.

To get students into video mode, brainstorm the different jobs required to make a video, such as writer, director, set designer, cue card holder, etc. Explain that students will share the responsibilities of each job. That is, they will work together to write the script and will take turns with individual jobs so that everyone experiences the many aspects of video production.

To get students thinking about the many details of writing a script, I transcribed the narration from a short student-created PSA that I found on YouTube and typed it onto a script template. Students then brainstormed to complete the template by numbering the scenes, assigning jobs, and noting through written comments or sketches what would be filmed (background, props needed, etc.) to support the narration. Students then watched the PSA, giving them the opportunity to compare their own ideas to those of the PSA's creators.

The excitement is palpable when students write their scripts, for here is an opportunity to show their creativity. Continue to have frequent check-ins with each group, making corrections and suggestions as needed. Once all revisions are made, assign one student per group to type or neatly write the final version of the script, and make copies so that all group members are working from the same script while filming. It is important to give students filming tips and practice using the equipment to avoid common problems such as shaky footage. When students begin to film, allow them to work out technical difficulties and differences of opinion unless it is necessary to intervene.

Time and technical experience will determine who does the final editing job to produce a cohesive video. I had students delete bad takes until one

WATESOL MINI CONFERENCE

student suggested putting together a bloopers video. Needless to say, it was a big hit.

Sharing and Evaluating PSAs

When the moment comes for the world premiere, snacks and a program honor the time and work put into the PSAs. Although it is a celebration, I suggest students do a short but thoughtful evaluation of each video so that they receive feedback from their peers as well as from the teacher.

How you choose to evaluate your students is up to you. The end product is important but the process is equally so, if not more. What I assess is the final product, how students respond to the challenge, what they learn socially and academically, and how they feel about their work. Students' written reflections demonstrate both their enthusiasm for the project and their critical thinking skills, as all note specific changes they would make if they were to do the project again.

Final Thoughts

Creating PSAs with your students is well worth the effort, for in addition to the many gains they make in social and academic skills, students keep with them a positive learning experience that they will remember long after they have left your classroom.

References

Wilmot, P., Bramhall, M., & Radley, K. (2012). *Using digital video reporting to inspire and engage students* [Online]. Retrieved May 12, 2017, from www.raeng.org.uk/education/hestem/heip/pdf/Using_digital_video_reporting.pdf

Tracy M. Mannon earned her M.A. in Applied Linguistics/Teaching ESL from UCLA and has taught English learners of all ages and levels both in the U.S. and abroad. She is involved in animal rescue and adoption and is the author of *Travels with Tyler: A Mom's Journey with Her Aspie Son*.



Congratulations to all the WATESOL members presenting at upcoming conferences!

Check out the WATESOL website for **upcoming** information about each presentation. Are you presenting in a conference and haven't told us yet? Tell us [here!](#)

Be sure to **attend the Mini Conference on Saturday, March 3 at Carlos Rosario Harvard Street Campus**. This is a win-win opportunity for you to do a "dry run" of your upcoming presentation. Volunteer presenters will have a chance to present and receive feedback from our supportive WATESOL community. As an audience member, you'll have the chance to preview top-notch professional development sessions!

But don't just take our word for it. Here's what past presenters have said:

"This was a great way to test out the presentation and get feedback from audience members."

"Audience members knew it was practice, so they were there to give constructive feedback that was helpful."

"The event was a big opportunity for a presenter to practice and make necessary changes."

If you're interested in presenting, please contact watesoladultsig@gmail.com.

We hope to see you there!

ACTivate Language Learning: Drama in the TESOL classroom

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Drama activities are perfectly suited for the TESOL classrooms. Don't worry - we're not suggesting that TESOL educators ask their students to stage full dramatic productions. At least not at first! Rather, drama can be used in small ways in every lesson, every day. Drama can increase our students' motivation, interest, and learning. For example, when drama activities are presented in a lighthearted, low-risk manner, their use can help lower students' affective filters (Krashen, 1981), making students more comfortable with their classmates, teachers, and classroom contexts, and therefore better able to acquire language naturally. Drama also offers nearly unlimited opportunities for students to produce output and experiment with language production, an essential element in language acquisition (Swain, 1985). Of course, that output won't just be monologues - students will have opportunities for interaction with each other, and will get meaningful, contextualized feedback on their language learning progress (Long, 1996).

Based on this research and our own experiences using drama, we've identified five main opportunities that drama-based activities offer to students in ESOL classrooms. We call these potential benefits *The Five Cs*:

Communication

Ever had a day when eliciting student input was like pulling teeth? We all have! Drama activities can help you shake things up - they take students out of their routine conversations, and encourage discussion about novel and interesting topics. By adopting a role, students also gain the opportunity to practice language forms that rarely come up in everyday interaction.

Comfort

Whether they are refugees, unaccompanied minors, or "dreamers", ESOL students are

disproportionately likely to enter our classrooms with traumatic histories and uncertain futures. Typical language topics like "family," "childhood," or "future plans," can be more emotionally-laden than we might expect. Drama offers students the chance to express themselves without necessarily disclosing personal information, and this can increase their emotional comfort in the classroom.

Community

Drama activities require students to work together and build relationships with their classmates and teachers. More importantly, drama activities are fun! Shared positive experiences are the basis for supportive classroom environments where learning comes naturally.

Concentration

Language learning is hard mental work. Drama activities offer students the possibility of entering a "flow state" where they become so engrossed in their task that they lose track of the mental processes they are engaged in, and are able to use their language skills in a natural way.

Collaboration

Collaboration has been identified as a "21st century skill." To be successful in today's knowledge-based economy, learners need language skills, but they also need the interpersonal skills to work effectively with others. Drama helps students consider other people's perspectives, anticipate their actions, and work together to create a final product they can all be proud of.

This list isn't exhaustive - in fact, you might be able to come up with a few more "C"s! The important thing to remember is that drama holds great potential to support students' language learning. In the rest of the article, we'll share some activities to use drama in your TESOL classroom

Action Strategies for Language Teaching

Our approach to using drama in TESOL classrooms is based on Jeff Wilhelm's work in K-12 classrooms (Wilhelm, 2002; Wilhelm, 2007). Wilhelm calls drama-in-education techniques "action strategies," noting they are usually spontaneous, short, and unscripted, requiring no elaborate costumes, props, rehearsal, or stage. Wilhelm notes that action strategies are especially useful before, during, and after reading, giving students new entry points into a text and its ideas. During these activities, students are practicing a whole range of strategies, from predicting and visualizing to asking questions and drawing conclusions. Over time, students internalize these social and interactive strategies as part of their learning repertoire. Through the use of basic improvisational action strategy structures, some of which we describe below, students are invited to "imagine together". The essential ingredients to any enactment are roles, relationships, goals, and some basic norms. Thus, if students are summarizing a scene from *Romeo and Juliet* in a newscast format, the teacher should help cast students in various roles and remind students of their relationship to one another, for instance, by saying, "remember, you are a townsperson and you don't know Juliet very well, so if the reporter interviews you, only say what you think you saw just happened." Regarding goals, a teacher might ask, "What is the goal of the nightly news?" or "What is the goal of the field reporter?" prompting students to recall that their main goal is to summarize what happened and to capture some important "on the record" quotes from major and minor characters. Basic norms are connected to the scene and the roles; for instance, reporters tend to avoid very rude questions. Teachers can interject at any moment to remind students of their roles, goals, relationships, and norms. Below, we share some action strategies that can be used to engage students in drama while learning and practicing language.

Visiting Stranger Enactment

Either during or after reading, the teacher pretends to be a visiting stranger. The students can play the general public, or characters from the story, and must respond to the visiting stranger's questions. For example, if students just finished the last chapter of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, the teacher can play the "stranger" by posing as a reporter for an African-American newspaper in the North, asking students "What is going on here in the

South?" The students have a clear purpose: they need to think about what this stranger needs to know and why. This strategy could also be adapted for use by the students themselves – in small groups, one student could be the stranger, while their classmates must explain a situation.

Character Think-Alouds

Effective literacy teachers often use think-alouds to model effective reading skills. However, we can also ask our students to engage in think-alouds. We can expand on think-alouds by having students think-aloud in character, as they encounter a text or a situation. For example, if students have recently read an article about holiday traditions around the world, we can ask them to talk through the reaction of someone attending a certain celebration for the first time. Students can engage in think-alouds verbally or through writing.

Talk Show

In this activity, students play the role of experts in a panel discussion. Each student takes on one role from inside or outside the text. One student, or the teacher, plays the role of host to get the discussion started. Each student answers questions and interacts with other panelists in role. This activity helps students empathize with characters, anticipate misconceptions, and engage with the perspectives of various characters.

One-Sentence Round Robin Monologues

This is an engaging full group activity. Students form a circle, and every student imagines they are the same character faced with a particular situation. Students are told to come up with one "internal thought" sentence that expresses their feelings or perspectives. Students then share-out our sentences aloud, going around the circle. Students are advised to try to build their sentences on other students' comments. This strategy can be expanded to make claims, cite evidence, and respond to other perspectives.

Hot-seating

This quick and easy activity can take place using both fiction and nonfiction texts. Students or teachers take the hot-seat in front of the class,

becoming a certain character. Hot-seating puts students-in-role “on the spot,” so they can be addressed, advised, questioned, and so forth. This strategy helps students hone their ability to analyze characters, infer, elaborate, and think on their feet. The hot-seated role might be a character, an author, a real life figure, a group or representative of a group, an idea, a force, or a concept. This activity can also be used in small groups in order to maximize student talk-time. For example, students could take on the various roles of the Younger family from *A Raisin in the Sun*, with the students prodding for the motives behind a character’s actions, while their classmate has to decide what his/her motives were as that character. This can also be done in other courses, including history and the sciences, where students take on the role of a person from history or a particular planet or part of a plant, for example. This requires students to understand their importance or role in the larger scheme of things.

These activities are a great starting point to begin using drama in the TESOL classroom. Once teachers start using action strategies like these, both students and teachers will begin to naturally take advantages of opportunities to take on roles and to consider new and divergent perspectives. Doing so offers the possibility of improving students’ communication, comfort, community, concentration, and collaboration – as well as their language skills. We hope you will ACTivate your students’ language learning potential by trying some of these activities!

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Increasing Engagement and Learning by Encouraging Students to Seek Rejection

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Instructors typically support student learning by creating classroom environments where the consequences of risk-taking are minimized, essentially taking the risk out of risk-taking. However, the following activity encourages students to actively seek rejection outside of the “safety” of the classroom environment. Such an idea, though seemingly counterintuitive, leads to surprisingly positive results in terms of communicative competence and student confidence.

Project Origin

When preparing to teach another iteration of an upper level listening/speaking course, I found inspiration in the *Accidental Creative* podcast “Jia Jiang on Confronting Rejection in Life and Work.” In it, a NNS describes his experiment to overcome rejection: seeking rejection for 100 days with different rejection-worthy requests to desensitize himself to his fears. Jiang’s experiment is not about language learning; however, some of his statements, in particular, the statement “[I realized] there are so many things that I could do. Maybe I could stay engaged and not run away” mirrored my reflections about students’ fears and my desire for them to take risks to interact (and improve) more.

I developed a project based on Jiang’s rejection-seeking premise in which students regularly interact with native speakers by seeking rejection. Over the course of the term, students attempt five rejections, following ground rules determined as a class. Specifically, each rejection experience includes a rejection plan, a rejection attempt, presenting the rejection experience, and evaluating peer experiences.

From the perspective of curriculum, the project addresses course objectives related to using strategies to negotiate and extend conversations appropriately, specifically focusing on increasing student awareness about effective interaction in regard to balance (amount of meaningful input provided by each interlocutor) and register, areas typically challenging to incorporate into class effectively. In addition, the project includes

discussions and presentations. Furthermore, project activity components can be formally evaluated.

To help students transition from learning language to *using* language, the project encourages authentic interaction in terms of student engagement as well as the actual communicative act. Given Campbell Larsen’s (2015) conclusions that instructor-generated assignments curb student investment in interaction, the project allows for student input when choosing the rejections they seek. The activity repetition helps students build cultural knowledge of how English functions within its linguacultural community. Student choice, cultural understanding, and the task itself address students’ affective barriers as seeking rejection is a win-win: If the student is rejected, they achieve their goal. If not, they get what they ask for! Ultimately, students can’t fail in this interaction, positively contributing to the “direct and reciprocal relationship in language learning between competence and confidence” (Arnold, 2011).

Finally, the project can stimulate the instructor’s engagement with otherwise familiar content.

Rejection Project Sequence

Preliminary activities for the project focus on making the idea of rejection clear and relevant and heightening students’ awareness of their affective filters. Informal activities include class surveys about student interaction with NS and discussions about what inhibits/encourages such interaction as well as about critical thinking (i.e., moving from understanding a linguistic tool to its application). Additional activities include formal discussions related to the topics of fear and rejection specifically. Students may respond to the introduction of Jiang’s written text; however, neither the discussions nor the project require use of the text.

The class brainstorms ground rules. I presented two ground rules (#2-3), and the class eventually developed the following rules for their rejection attempts:

1. The rejection sought must be planned in advance.
2. The rejection attempt must not put you in personal danger.
3. The rejection attempt must be made alone.
4. The interaction must be with a stranger (not family member or friend).
5. The project should not be explained to the NS.
6. The rejection plan must not repeat other students' work.

Students develop rejection plans and attempt the rejection by the project due date, when they give brief, informal presentations including a summary ("What was your plan?", "What did you do?", and "What happened?") and an explanation ("What did you learn?"). Later, the explanation is presented first followed by the experience and more explanation to emphasize the use of the experience as support.

After the presentations, students write a report about other students' experiences, responding to the following questions: "Which rejection summary was the most significant to you?", "What did you learn?", and "How will your next rejection be different?". The reports are intended to increase student awareness and contribute to the cyclical nature of the experience (Kolb, 1984). By focusing on the other students, students are less likely to be self-deprecating, although often comparing others' work to their own.

Project Outcomes

Examples follow of student-generated rejection attempts presented in class, with asterisks indicating student requests that were accepted (the norm). The conclusions are based on evidence from students' written work.

"I will ask someone to read a poem for me."* *In this case, the NS read the poem, helped the student with her pronunciation, and then made a recording for the student's later use.*

Students quickly realize that they need to take risks and doing so is beneficial. Instructors often tell students this, but in this case, the students learn it, one student noting, "If you just live in a very ordinary way, you would not have ever known the world or your life can be better than what you thought."

"I will ask, 'Can I borrow your car?'" *The request was rejected, but the student provided rationale and evidence of her trustworthiness in the interaction.*

Students also appreciate the importance of register, the need to approach strangers with more formality than only "please" and "thank you" and to continue the formality throughout the exchange. They frequently discussed what "being respectful" means in their presentations and in writing, stating "[...] obviously you need to be respectful and you'll get surprise of how many people offers to help you."

"I will ask a stranger for his telephone number."* *After an initial rejection, the student explained that he was pursuing a business degree and wanted to learn from a professional in the field, resulting in a 45 minute conversation, the number, and later interaction.*

Whether rejected initially or not, students often feel the desire to try again, a reflection of their investment in the rejection. They noted the value of persistence, insistence, and humor; furthermore, their self-awareness was complimented by an awareness of other, as in the student statement that "[r]ejection is a human interaction with two sides. It often says more about the rejector than rejectee."

Additionally, they communicate more and more effectively to improve the atmosphere and possibly to direct the outcome. They ask "Why?" and actively negotiate with counterproposals. What's more, the students actively linked confidence with speaking more, noting the ways in which the context sometimes dictated interaction but often could be manipulated for positive outcomes.

"I will ask a police officer if I can take a picture with him." *The rejection prompted discussion about what the male Saudi student could have done differently, another student proposing that adding the statement "There aren't female police officers in my country" to the question would have changed the outcome of the interaction with the female police officer.*

Students learn about culture via their incorrect assumptions about what is "rejection worthy." As ever, learning about another culture requires learning about one's self and own culture. The increase in student awareness was evident in a student's description of his hesitation to cross cultural boundaries: "I'm starting to believe that we are more afraid to get rejected for our culture; I mean everybody know what is good and what is wrong,

but we have this 'taboo' that maybe we are getting reject for our accent, color, or whatever, except for our request."

"I will go to a restaurant without enough money pay."* The student left her cell phone at home along with her wallet to avoid having "an out," but the server simply told her to pay come back later to pay.

Student engagement in the project transfers to speaking activities. Attention to each other's presentations increased dramatically, in regard to following content as well as to what made presentations particularly enjoyable or informative. They also asked meaningful questions, though not required, using strategies reviewed in class. Additionally, the students practiced the simple past and past progressive, not project goals but needed nonetheless.

Final Words

The project can be easily adapted to be a major or minor course component, but I believe student choice and a series of attempts are integral to its success. I continue to look for avenues for student choice as well as continuity between assigned communicative acts. Furthermore, the project has led me to help students better address their fears as well as with encouraging them to do their best.

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A graphic with a blue background. At the top, there is a world map with white lines connecting various points. Below the map, there are silhouettes of a group of people in business attire. In the foreground, two men in suits are shaking hands. Below the image, the text reads: "JOIN US!" followed by "Join us at TESOL in Chicago! We will have a booth in the Expo Hall. Thursday, March 29th 1:30-2:30pm".

JOIN US!

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We will have a booth in the Expo Hall.
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1:30-2:30pm

Pay Attention to the Body

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Place your right hand on the left side of your chest, under your left arm.

Wrap your left hand around your right shoulder.

Stay in that position and notice what is going on inside your body.

In a language classroom, these imperatives sound like Total Physical Response for learners at the intermediate level. But they are more than TPR. This set of movements is used by psychologist Peter Levine (Buczynski and Levine, 2017) with trauma-affected clients who come to him for help. Levine follows up this self-hug with some questions to his client: “How do you feel? What is going on in your body?”

Leading experts in the treatment of trauma, focus on their patients’ bodies because, in the words of Ruth Buczynski, “trauma is something that happens deep in the core of our brain and body” (Buczynski and Levine, 2017). The traumatic events in which people have been caught up cannot be undone, nor can they be treated; we can only deal with the “imprints of the trauma on body, mind, and soul,” observes Bessel van der Kolk, author of the influential book *The Body keeps the score: Brain, mind, and body in the healing of trauma* (2014, p. 205).

While teachers recognize that language lessons should not be therapy sessions, many realize the need to implement instruction that is sensitive to the traumatic experiences of their many immigrant and refugee learners. One important way of doing that is to pay attention to the bodies and feelings of learners.

Attention to the body and to feelings is nothing new

in language pedagogy. In the 1960s J.J. Asher’s careful research demonstrated the effectiveness of Total Physical Response in language learning. In the next decade, Charles A. Curran’s “counseling-learning method” gave rise to community language learning (CLL), in which students were encouraged to express their feelings as they processed their encounters with the new language. Promiselow (1998) describes many practical movement and breathing activities that can enhance learning. And currently, William Acton and his associates promote a haptic pronunciation teaching system in which sounds, intonation, and stress are associated with motion and touch (see www.actonhaptic.com).

What is new about involvement of the body in language instruction is a realization that while movement enhances language learning for almost all persons, a focus on the body is especially helpful in trauma-sensitive teaching. Without a lot of space in this article to unpack the needs of trauma-affected learners¹, a meaty quotation from van der Kolk (2014) can suffice to state succinctly what the challenges are:

Trauma robs you of the feeling that you are in charge of yourself....The challenge of recovery is to reestablish ownership of your body and your mind—or yourself. This means feeling free to know what you know and to feel what you feel without becoming overwhelmed, enraged, ashamed, or collapsed. For most people this involves (1) finding a way to become calm and focused, (2) learning to maintain that calm in response to images, thoughts, sounds, or physical sensations that remind you of the past, (3) finding a way to be fully alive in the present and engaged with the people around you, (4) not having to keep secrets from yourself, including secrets about the

ways you have managed to survive” (pp 205-6).

The set of three simple imperatives given above—let’s call it Levine’s self-hug—is designed to help people feel calm and arouse an awareness of what is going on in the body. A language teacher, after practicing this short TPR sequence until learners respond automatically, could, like Levine, open up a brief discussion of the question: “When you are in this position, how do you feel?” Whereas the imperatives themselves focus on developing language to talk about the body, the discussion question opens space to learn words for feelings: *calm, nervous, alert, tense, tired, sleepy, achy, energized*, etc. Adult ESL curricula aim to prepare students for doctor visits or hospital stays by teaching the vocabulary of body parts and feelings. Using movement sequences like Levine’s self-hug achieves the dual purpose of catering to these practical linguistic needs while caring for the somatic and psychological needs of trauma-affected class members.

Not attending to the body in language teaching is a serious mistake because language learning is an embodied activity, requiring both fine and large muscle coordination and control. By attending to the body for the sake of learners affected by stress, teachers can work to integrate listening, speaking, vocabulary & grammar learning with these psychological outcomes: calming and soothing the self; increasing focus and attention; decreasing dissociation and detachment by connecting mind and body; and appealing to kinesthetic learning tendencies. The body “keeps the score.”

In addition to “Levine’s self-hug, here are three more significant movement activities

1) Tactical breathing is an exercise that originated in the training of snipers for the military. A sniper’s need for calmness, focus, and control are, ironically, similar to a person who may have been traumatized by gun shots. In its pure version,

tactical breathing consists of these steps (Medley, 2017, p. 25)

- a. Breathe in through your nose and count slowly to four (*mentally* 1, 2, 3, 4). Let your stomach expand when you breath in. Count silently--in your head.
- b. Hold your breath and count to four (1, 2, 3, 4)
- c. Slowly let your breath out through puckered lips and count to four (1, 2, 3, 4)
- d. With empty lungs, count to four (1, 2, 3, 4).
- e. Begin the cycle again by breathing in while you count to four..
- f. Repeat this cycle at least 3 times.

In addition to its emotional and physical benefits, tactical breathing holds interesting possibilities for language pedagogy. While the class is breathing, the teacher can substitute for the numbers appropriate vocabulary: *Breathe in love, joy, peace. Breathe out fear, sadness, anger. Or for more advanced learners: Breathe in courage, wisdom, goodness. Breathe out cowardice, ignorance, evil.* Once this vocabulary has been heard many times during the breathing exercise, the teacher can prompt learners to review it mentally while they breathe.

2) Various kinds of self-massage can be used to help learners under stress to become more calm and relaxed, including shaking limbs, tensing and laxing muscles and self-massaging different parts of the body—arms, legs, feet, shoulders, neck forehead, and fingers (Medley, 2017). Once again, these kinds of movements help to draw attention to the body for trauma-affected folks who are dissociating from their bodies. TPR would be the main way to implement self-massage, practicing an expanded array of anatomical vocabulary and action words. Not all TPR, however, needs to be framed as naked imperatives: other aspects of grammar can be taught this way, especially

modals, which equip learners with more polite ways of directing the behavior of others.

“Rub your forehead with your fingertips”

“You should rub your forehead with your fingertips”

“You can rub your jaws in the same way”

“You could rub your jaws or rub the sides of your neck”

“You might shake your hands, one at a time.”

“I’m going to give to some new vocabulary. But before I do that, I suggest that you gently massage your ears” (Promiselow (1998) asserts that massaging the outer ear enhances readiness to listen, perceive, and focus, which all learners need, but especially those caught up in the nervous vigilance of traumatic stress.)

3) One last activity that connects linguistic expression with bodily sensations is the tapping of acupressure points while repeating a series of affirmations. This intervention, which some counselors have applied with success for clients struggling with stressful circumstances, is called Emotional Freedom Techniques. We ask learners to use their first two fingers to tap on several acupuncture points: the karate chop point on their hand; the crown of the head; the center of the forehead just above the eyebrows; beside the eyes; the upper lip; the chin; either side of the collar bone; under both arms. While tapping, they talk to themselves about the stressful circumstance they are facing, repeating a series of simple sentences that reflect collective stresses experienced in language learning, for example nervousness about a test or lack of motivation to complete a task. A Youtube video by EFT practitioner Brad Yates (2018) entitled “Dealing with Tedious Tasks” could become a springboard for developing a tapping activity in a language classroom to help learners focus on their work and clear their resistance to it. After tapping through the acupuncture points with sentences expressing their nervousness or boredom, they eventually switch to a sentence like, “Even though I feel bored, I deeply and completely accept

myself,” and repeat that sentence as they tap through the acupuncture points again. The activity weds movement and touch with a kind of linguistic repetition more impactful to learners than the kind typically done in classrooms.²

Whether they are tapping, massaging, breathing, or self-hugging, learners use their bodies, sense of touch, and muscle movements to connect with both their emotional and rational brains, to integrate themselves, to learn how to tolerate their negative emotions, and to move ahead with calm focus. As with any learning tools, teachers will have to prompt students to remember to use them. Once some of these moves are learned and being used independently by students, the teacher may be able to observe occasions when learners are using them, allowing them to identify possible triggers of stress, or simply informing them that learners are having a rough day. Teachers can also encourage students to use these techniques on their own when they are away from class to soothe and calm themselves, reduce stress, and to improve their ability to focus on their learning.---

This article is based on the presentation entitled “Trauma-Sensitive Teaching Tip #1: Pay Attention to the Body,” given at the WATESOL fall conference, October 7, 2017.

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¹Medley (2012) explains how an understanding of trauma can impact language instruction more broadly.

²Medley (2017) gives expanded instructions for how to carry out EFT, which for lack of space are omitted here.



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TESOL Advocacy Workshop: Skills for the ELT Professional

The WATESOL Advocacy co-chairs, Colleen Shaughnessy and Andrea Veloza, attended the TESOL Advocacy Workshop on November 4, 2017. David Cutler, TESOL Policy and Communication Specialist, and John Segota, TESOL Associate Executive Director for Public Policy & Professional Relations, presented the workshop to fifteen participants from around the DMV and as far reaching as Vermont. The workshop was focused on explaining the advocacy landscape, analyzing advocacy needs, and advocating to local and national legislators. The workshop was very practical and aimed to empower those in attendance to access advocacy channels.

Interested in submitting to the newsletter?

Contact newsletter@watesol.org for questions. Contributions can include: connecting research to practice, current topics of interest to the membership, and teaching tips.

Guidelines include:

- 1,500 words or less
- Up to 5 citations, following APA citation style
- 2-3 sentence author biography
- Author photo (digital head shot)
- Include a byline with your name, email, and affiliation

Tech Tools Corner

Lindsey Crifasi | Watesol Newsletter Staff | lcrifasi@carlosrosario.org

Students texting or on social media during class? Translating every word you wrote on the board? Having devices in class can be a double-edged sword. How can we get the most out of having technology in class and impact students' digital citizenship outside the class?

You can have all the tech tools in the world, but classroom management is the key to helping your students shine during times they use devices. It doesn't have to be complicated but may take some practice. When you remove the barriers of bad behavior, everyone wins. Students can follow clear guidelines and know what your expectations are. What is the most effective way to make expectations clear to students?

Here are some tips to promote solid tech behavior in your class, which students can apply outside the classroom.

1. Never underestimate the power of having a "tech-spert" in your class. A "tech-spert" is a student who is tech-savvy and needs extension activities or alternate activities during the times you are using devices. This helper can range from the star student to the rambunctious learner who needs direction, but also has the tech wherewithal to help others get their activities going. They are an invaluable resource to you while you circulate to help students struggling to access their activity. Chat with the student before class and help coach them on polite ways to offer help. Outside of class they will be helpful to parents or others to teach them how to use their smartphones, operate complicated televisions or other connected appliances.
2. Welcome students during the first days of school by offering clear guidelines. Common Sense Media designed a stoplight poster that makes it easy for students to see if "students should keep their devices stored, have them out but facedown, or be on task with the devices" (www.common sense media.org). The three colored stoplight has a moveable arrow you can change to help cue students to follow that description. Common Sense recommends getting clever and creative with those descriptions. Go over and practice the different expectations for each color, allowing weeks of practice before students are expected to be able to always recognize and follow each standard. When they leave the classroom, they will have a improved intuition of when it is not desirable to be on your device.
3. With all the guidance you give to students on appropriate technology use, they deserve the opportunity to use their own device during free time, like indoor recess or during break. These exploratory moments allow for growth in their own way. Students learn how to share new games or troubleshoot. With some encouragement from their teachers, this free time can be cultivated into a time of sharing whether it be a new game, a funny video, or a troubleshooting tip. These semi-sheltered playing times reinforce the good manners you have been teaching. The more these good habits are practiced in school, the more they will become second nature outside of class.



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