

WATESOL NEWS

Fall 2016 Edition

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

WATESOL has had a wonderfully productive year! Many of our members attended TESOL in Baltimore and were able to connect with one another at our WATESOL booth and breakfast. We are proud of our members who gave presentations in Baltimore for representing WATESOL and the DC region so well: great work, everyone!

We also had a very successful event this spring that was put together by our SIG chairs and held at Carlos Rosario School. This event, which had 2 concurrent workshops for Adult/Higher Ed and K12, was well-attended and well-received. We were so pleased with the outcome that we hope to continue to put on SIG events such as this one every year. This is really an opportunity for you to get involved as well: your SIG chairs are responsible for providing events and activities that you find interesting and useful, so if you have any ideas for future events, please do not hesitate to contact your SIG chair! Email addresses for all Board members can be found on our website.

As for this fall, I am pleased to welcome Dr. Misty Adoniou as our keynote speaker! Dr. Adoniou is a Senior Lecturer in Language, Literacy and TESL at the University of Canberra in Australia. She comes to us courtesy of TESOL's Affiliate Speaker program, in which TESOL helps financially when local affiliates are seeking speakers for conferences and events. Dr. Adoniou worked as a primary school ESL teacher for 10 years before moving to Greece and working in the field of EFL. In 2002 she moved into Teacher Education in Australia where she teaches courses in TESOL, writing pedagogies and children's literature. We are so excited and grateful to have Dr. Adoniou with us this year to give both our keynote on the first day of the conference (Saturday, October 15th) and a workshop on the second (Sunday, October 16th). I look forward to seeing many of you there!

Finally, a semi-goodbye. As you know, last year the WATESOL membership voted to change a few points in our Constitution, not the least of which was a change in the structuring of the Presidential positions. In order to provide more support within the Executive Board and preserve institutional memory, the positions of Vice President, President, and Past President have become succeeding 1-year terms, meaning that a person who has agreed to be the Vice President has signed up for a total of 3 years in 3 positions. I have just completed my second of these 3 years—my year as President—and I am looking forward to continuing to serve you in this coming year as Past President. I would also like to welcome Heather Tatton-Harris as our new incoming President—I am positive that WATESOL will continue to grow under her leadership. Thank you for this opportunity to lead and grow within such an opening organization and community!

Sharla Rivera

2015-2016 WATESOL President



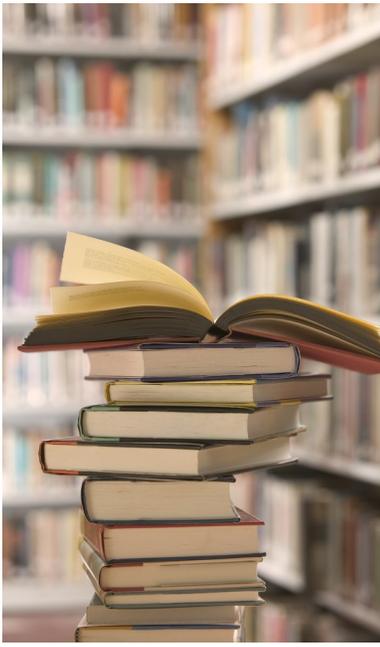
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FROM THE EDITORS

Dear WATESOL Community,

Welcome back to a new school year! We are pleased to publish this edition of the newsletter and hope it contains practical, relevant, and thought provoking information. Included in this edition is:

- A reflection on the use of VoiceThread in the classroom
- A description of an action research study involving screencasting
- An example of an integrated oral presentation project
- Debriefings and take aways from the international conferences TESOL & AAAL
- Practical advice for maximizing the benefits of peer review in your classroom

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

“Many students have commented about how much they enjoy using media and the increased opportunities they have to communicate.”

VOICETHREAD: IMPROVING STUDENT INTERACTION THROUGH DIGITAL CONVERSATIONS

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

The following is a summary of the presentation VoiceThread: Improving student interaction through digital conversations, given at the Electronic Village at the TESOL Conference on 6 April 2016.

VoiceThread is an online application that allows students and teachers to interact orally through digital conversations. Users have real-time or recorded conversations in/out of class by uploading a recording and responding with audio, video, or text comments. Digital text, sound, and images can maximize learning and reach a diverse group of learners (Rose and Meyer, 2002). I originally began using VoiceThread to save precious class time; I had a large speaking class where students were expected to give several 8-10 minute presentations per semester, and I needed a way to reduce the number of passive hours spent in class. VoiceThread allowed me to spend more time in class focusing on communicative skills while still accomplishing the course requirements. I eventually expanded my use of VoiceThread to giving assignments and instruction in grammar and writing classes.

Features

VoiceThread is a cloud application and therefore does not require any software. It allows users to upload almost any type of media files (Word, PowerPoint, wav, wmv, mp3, etc) and respond with audio, video, or text comments. It can be easily integrated with an LMS, such as Blackboard or Canvas, making it simple for students to access. VoiceThread's privacy options allow instructors and students to share projects with specific people, groups, or the entire VoiceThread community. Finally, the website also includes a Digital Library, which is a database of VoiceThread projects, varying in subject and age group, that other classes have successfully undertaken.

What this looks like

Here are some examples of how I have incorporated VoiceThread in my classes:

- Flipped-style instruction: I uploaded a short PowerPoint instructing how to use present progressive verbs for a low intermediate gram-

mar class. Students watched my VoiceThread at home and then orally practiced in the class the next day.

- Debates: Students uploaded a photo or video clip that shows a strong opinion. They left a short explanation of their opinion on that topic and responded to each other's views.
- Online presentations or presentation practice:
 - Students gave an introduction and conclusion to a presentation and received teacher feedback.
 - Students uploaded a PowerPoint and then recorded their presentation. Then they listened to two other presentations and left questions for the speaker. Finally, they went back to their own presentation, listened to the questions, and answered them.
- Peer feedback for written tasks: Students uploaded a short essay in need of revision. They read some of their classmates' essays and left comments (focusing on grammar or content as needed).
- Spoken grammar practice: Students uploaded a picture of something that represents their personality. Their classmates asked them indirect questions about the item.

“Voicethread is just plain fun...”

Challenges

After several semesters of using VoiceThread, I have identified three main challenges. First, like any technological device, some students struggle at first to learn how to use the site or encounter tech difficulties at various points. In these instances, students feel frustrated and are reluctant and/or complain about using VoiceThread in future assignments. Second, because of the collaborative nature of VoiceThread, students depend on other students to complete an assignment. For example, if they are assigned to post a recording and then respond with comments to three other recordings, they have to wait until their classmates have finished their part to

complete their own assignment. More eager students may feel irritated by their classmates' procrastination and the way in which it affects them. Finally, although VoiceThread has saved valuable class and prep time, it has sometimes increased the teacher workload outside of class, depending on what sort of feedback was given.

Student Feedback

I have received predominantly positive feedback from students using VoiceThread. They enjoy the flexibility VoiceThread offers; being able to choose when, where, and how (on the website or app) to do their assignment gives students autonomy they welcome. Many students find the self-assessment aspect of being able to record, listen to themselves, and record again if needed to be extremely useful. Another positive aspect is the amount of time spent actively participating in class while still receiving useful individual teacher feedback. Finally, VoiceThread is just plain fun; even students who are normally more reserved when speaking in class are more apt to interact on VoiceThread assignments. Many students have commented about how much they enjoy using media and the increased opportunities they have to communicate.

Please visit the link below to see a sample VoiceThread explaining how to create your own project. <https://voicethread.com/share/8120833>

Reference:

Rose, D.H., & Meyer, A. (2002). *Teaching every student in the digital age: Universal design for learning*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Kelly Hill Zirker is a Curriculum Developer for Diplomatic Language Services. She believes in providing students with creative but practical opportunities to use language and technology to interact and develop critical thinking skills.

WASHINGTON, DC IMMIGRATION INDEX

- As of 2009, 90.8% of children in Washington, DC with immigrant parents were “English proficient” .
- According to the Fiscal Policy Institute, immigrants accounted for 20% of the economic output in the Washington, DC area as of 2007.
- Between 2000 and 2011, the number of immigrants with college degrees increased by 45.4%, from a Migration Policy Institute study.
- In Washington, DC, 3.7% of voters in the 2012 election were Latino.

Source: “New Americans in Washington, DC: The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in Our Nation’s Capital.” August 2015. American Immigration Council.

IS SCREENCASTING FEEDBACK WORTH IT? SPOILER ALERT—YES IT IS!

By Samantha Parkes, Mariah Schuemann, and Matt Kaeiser | The University of Miami |

samparkes@gmail.com, mschuemann@miami.edu, mkaeiser@miami.edu

New technologies can overwhelm and intimidate frazzled teachers, but they have high face value with today’s students growing up in the digital age. With this in mind, seasoned teachers must continue to innovate and integrate new technologies into their teaching practices, but they need to be selective at the same time, and careful not to use technology just for technology’s sake. Screencasting is one tech solution for teachers that can ensure each student receives personal attention in a digital format. Yet, the question for us, three teachers at the University of Miami’s Intensive English Program, was “Is screencasting worth the time and effort?”

What Is Screencasting?

Screencasting also known as “veedback or video feedback” (Thompson and Lee, 2012) is a relatively new technology and has been little studied in the L2 classroom. Essentially, a teacher can make “digital recordings of the activity on one’s computer screen accompanied by voice over narration” (Thompson and Lee, 2012). Making a screencast is as though the teacher turns a video camera on their computer screen and records what they are doing in real time (e.g., editing, typing comments, highlighting, etc.) while simultaneously recording oral feedback (e.g., offering suggestions and corrections). In this way, when the student watches the screencast, they are able to see the displayed assignment with teacher annotations as well as listen to the teacher’s narrated commentary.

“Characterized by Stannard (2007) as ‘a halfway

house between handing back a student a written piece of work with comments on it and actually meeting the student to mark their work’ (para. 5), [the effectiveness of screencasting] is rooted in the belief that multimodal feedback allows for a wider range of individual learning styles and preferences (Mayer, 2003) and is more likely to provide a learning experience that students will find memorable (Brick and Holmes, 2008)” (as quoted in Séror, 2012).

“The screencasting feedback in the writing/reading class was the most useful tool...for me. With this kind of feedback we can understand what the teacher want us to do and mostly important we can understand why.”

Inspiration for Our Study

We first discovered screencasting at an E-village presentation by University of Iowa faculty, Elizabeth Baertlein and David Nott, during the 2015 International TESOL Conference. Their research asked students to rank four methods of teacher feedback on papers: written feedback, typed feedback, conferenced screencast (screencasting while conferencing with a student) and, teacher-only screencast (teacher screencasts comments on student paper while student watches video

alone). Baertlein and Nott (2015) discovered that students preferred teacher-only screencasts over all the other kinds of feedback. On a scale of 1 to 10 (ten being the best), they found that students ranked written feedback 6.97, typed feedback 7.75, conferenced screencast 8.59 and teacher-only screencast 9.36. Therefore, as we began our research, we knew already that students would react positively to screencasting on the whole, so our question became: Is it worth the time and effort for teachers?

Our Study

We decided to conduct action research in our reading and writing courses during AY 2015. Although there are numerous online screencasting programs, (Screencast-o-matic, Jing, and Snagit), we used Kaltura because it is part of our university supported course management system and is supported by our IT department. Students upload papers to Blackboard where the teacher can download them, make a screencast, and upload them back to Blackboard in private folders for each student. The students then have time in class to watch their videos and ask questions. As students revise at home, they can watch the screencast as many times as necessary to fully digest and incorporate teacher feedback.

In providing students with screencasted feedback, we commented on format, content, organization, grammar, mechanics, and suggested repair strategies. Initially, we each used different screencast feedback approaches of varying time commitments. For example, one of us would read papers cold, commenting on issues as they arose, whereas the other two would each read the papers first, prepare some notes, and then make screencasts. We met regularly to share our experiences and surveyed the students to systematically collect their reactions to screencasting. Students overwhelmingly favored this method of feedback over other editing approaches which is consistent with Baertlein and Nott's findings (2015). One student said, "The screencasting feedback in the writing/reading class was the most useful tool of the entire course for me. With this kind of feedback we can understand what the teacher want us to do and mostly important we can understand why. With handwritten feedback maybe I would not be able to understand what are the problems in my essay, but screencasting makes it easier."

An Evolving Feedback Protocol

Based on our reflections and student survey data, we adapted and improved our methods throughout an academic year. We agreed it was best to avoid spending more time on feedback than we would on other feedback methods (i.e., handwritten/typed comments or conferencing). Consequently, by the end of the academic year, no longer did any in our group read student essays before screencasting as some did in the initial trials of working with the new technology. In order to be efficient evaluators, while still offering effective commentary, we found screencasting directly over digital copies of students' essays to be the best practice. Our end protocol then became reading student essays out loud while pausing where necessary to provide corrections and alternatives. Throughout this action research process, a consistent, and comparable, grading strategy evolved.

Conclusions

Our major take-away is that yes, screencasting is worth the time and effort. However, teachers must consider their individual contexts: number of students, the need for a quiet atmosphere to screencast, whether or not they will have tech support if they decide to use this new method of commenting on papers, etc. We stress that patience is key and, as with using any new technology, the practitioner should be prepared for tech glitches. With this technology, teachers can provide valuable feedback to students that is more beneficial than written feedback and it is logistically simpler than individual conferencing. Our experiments with this feedback medium have led us to become more effective evaluators and screencasting has improved our ability to:

1. offer better and more consistent positive feedback,
2. inspire more learner autonomy by providing alternative sentence options,
3. give more individualized grammar instruction,
4. build more rapport with students without face-to-face conferencing,
5. become more cognizant of our own feedback styles, and develop our metacognitive awareness.

Ultimately, we find this method of giving feedback to be more productive than other methods. Even though there is a learning curve, in the long run, making screencasts takes us roughly the

same amount of time as giving handwritten or typed comments the “old-fashioned way.” Another advantage of screencasting is that students get a sense for how much time and effort their teachers put into giving them feedback on drafts and begin to better appreciate the work we do for them. The success of our project has led a considerable number of faculty members in our program to adopt screencasting into their practice, even those hesitant to embrace new technologies. Moving forward, we are now also using this method with students’ oral presentation videos, and this has been a success too. After experimenting with a program called *Snagit*, which we found to be more user-friendly than *Kaltura*, our administration acknowledged the pedagogical value of screencasting by purchasing licenses for every teacher’s work computer. As proponents of using screencasting technology in the L2 classroom, we posit that instead of overwhelming and intimidating teachers, screencasting increases student satisfaction and builds rapport between teachers and students. This technology is certainly worth the time and effort.

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Samantha Parkes, MA, is a faculty lecturer with interests in second language composition, pronunciation, and CALL.

Mariah Schuemann, MA, serves as a faculty lecturer with interests in curriculum development, CALL, and academic writing.

Matt Kaeiser is a lecturer and ITA coordinator with interests in active learning, music to enhance learning, and brain research.

TECH TOOLS CORNER

Be sure to keep these fun, free, and easy-to-use tech tools in your back pocket. They are great for checking understanding and for independent practice:

- ◆ **Quizlet Live:** Teams work together to match vocabulary words to pictures. Create your lists and use Quizlet’s images or upload your own.
- ◆ **Vocaroo:** This user-friendly voice recording website makes speaking and listening practice authentic. Users can email their finished recordings.
- ◆ **EdPuzzle:** Take any video and turn them into interactive learning experiences. Engage learners by adding multiple choice/short answer, and opportunities to comment during the video.

INTEGRATED LANGUAGE SKILLS IN STUDENT ORAL PRESENTATION PROJECT

By Kristy Stoesz and Ruth Ticktin | Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School |
kstoesz@carlosrosario.org and rticktin@carlosrosario.org

To effectively learn English, students need to experience various ways of accessing the language, practice using it, and understand its cultural context. The oral presentation project that our students engage in uses a connected process that applies technology, listening, speaking, grammar, reading, writing and research. Students integrate these skills by demonstrating mastery of a U.S. authored speech, song or poem. Students choose, read aloud, and explain a selection of less than 200 words as a final project.

The project gives students a choice of a US authored speech, a poem, or song from a variety of cultural and historical sources, and guides them through a connected process of language acquisition. The literary and civic selections broaden borders as they inform nonnative ESL students of texts commonly learned by native speakers in formal education and used in the social fabric of life in the US.

In this article we share our experiences and the step-by-step process of oral presentation rooted in best practices. Through the project, students integrate the following language skills and are able to:

- Improve speaking: “The use of literary devices for speech and pronunciation allows ESL students to conceptualize the language and learn the process of making meaning.” (Hoang, 2014);
- Read fluently with understanding: “...to increase reading fluency, use texts read orally that are relatively short--probably 50-200 words and a variety of reading materials.” (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001);
- Identify grammar in context: “Many famous speeches in US history contain noun clauses corroborating the assertions in grammar for ESL students in active engagement.” (Ackles, 2003);
- Use technology for research, audio and video components and language practice: “Computer technology has unique multifunc-

tional and multi-use aspects, which brings [sic] several levels of intricacy and applications in L2 learning.” (Levy, 2009).

Additionally, we provide resources and technology tips to use in high intermediate ELL classes, as well as a framework for adapting it to specific contexts.

The genres that we use are all themes of American importance including: musical; political; medical; literary; poetic; historical; contemporary; human rights; and civil rights for African Americans, Native Americans, women and men. These can be adapted and changed per your class focus for the semester: We use excerpts of 200 words or less. They can be from a specific time period or presentations on heroes and leaders based on readings or prior knowledge. The project works well for English Language Learners in high school and adult education programs, as well as ESL college classes, by using the same process and substituting other selections.

Here are the speeches, songs and poems that we use in an adult education program. These were chosen because our students had expressed interest in U.S. figures: well-known in history, the media, and their children’s lessons. Some of these have been edited to make sure that they have fewer than 200 words.

Speeches, songs and poems spoken during 208 years of U.S. History

- first paragraph/last paragraph “I Have a Dream” speech; Martin Luther King 1963
- introduction statement to the U. S. Constitution written, 1787/1st amendment 1789
- poem written on Statue of Liberty in New York by Emma Lazarus 1903
- first paragraph/last paragraph inauguration speech “Ask not...”; John Kennedy 1961
- song written by Shaker Religion for dance/prayer “Simple Gifts” 1848
- speech by Abe Lincoln (excerpt) after civil war battle in Gettysburg 1863

- speech by Chief Tecumseh to Indian tribe re unity, 1811/poem to his son
- excerpt Walden, a book about nature by Henry David Thoreau 1854
- speech "4 freedoms" (excerpt)/speech "Fear" (excerpt) written by F.D. Roosevelt 1941
- song "Imagine"/"Attica State" written by John Lennon 1971
- speech excerpt on women given at U. N. by Hilary R. Clinton 1995
- song "We Are the World"/song "Heal the World" by Michael Jackson 1985
- poem "Still I Rise" (excerpt)/poem "Caged Bird" written by Maya Angelou 1978
- speech "to School Children" about perseverance by Helen Keller 1948
- speech by Dr. Charles Drew on discrimination/scientific contribution 1944
- song by Woody Guthrie "This Land Is Your Land" 1940

"Students write reflections and share what they liked the most, what was new and interesting to them, what they want to learn more about and how they grew..."

Step by Step

Ahead of time the teacher selects poems, speeches and songs relevant to the course of study. Create a power point presentation to introduce one selection per slide.

1. Students Select Oral Presentation (Day one)

- a. Project examples are explained by teacher. Introduce speeches, poems, or songs by handing list to students and having them watch slides corresponding to the numbered selections. Share some information about each while encouraging students that they can be open to it, if it sounds interesting, even if it's new to them.
- b. Look and listen to project titles. As the power point continues on a timed loop, give students a small piece of paper where they write their name on one side, and they write their first, second and third choice on the other side. That small paper is

gathered and put into a box. The papers are then drawn, with every effort made to give students one of their first three choices, while having a diversity of selections among the class.

2. Research the context (Day two)

Hand out to students a copy of their selection and the research begins. First students read through and look up unknown vocabulary. Then they research in Wikipedia, Library books, and Spark3000.

3. Practice and Listen to Improve pronunciation (Day three)

- a. Students find a recording of the speech and listen to it,
- b. Students practice speaking by recording themselves with voice recognition software such as Power Point audio record or Audacity.

4. Prepare a presentation (Day four)

Students create a poster or slide (Google presentation, Power Point, or Prezi) that highlights some background and visuals of the speech. The information shared can answer: what, where, when, how and why.

5. The Student Oral Presentation: (These take approximately 15 minutes each)

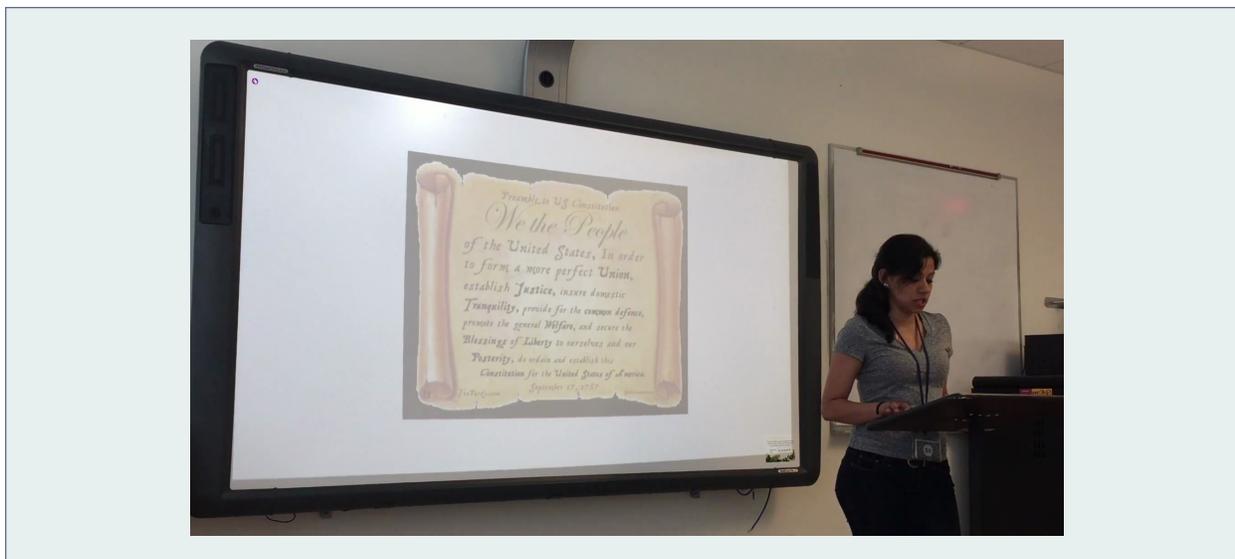
At presentation time, students speak briefly from note cards about their selection, then students read the speech, poem or song. Meanwhile the other students take notes as they listen. After the reading, the actual text is projected so students can also see the words and engage in a question/answer discussion. At that time students may choose to share a video they found of the original speech, a concert, or a recording they liked.

6. Rubric

If your program has grades, you may want to consider using a grading rubric and making each student aware of the components of their project.

7. Extension Activities

- a. Recognizing Language in Context: Follow up quizzes and activities can be given using noun phrases, modals and other language skills observed in the speeches, poems, and songs. Matching and filling in the blank activities can also be made. We used student written reflections as a quiz on modal usage.



For example:

Hillary Clinton spoke at the U.N. that every woman _____ be treated with respect and dignity.

John F. Kennedy believed that people _____ ask what they _____ do for their country.

b. Students write reflections and share what they liked the most, what was new and interesting to them, what they want to learn more about and how they grew in the process and will continue learning in the future.

For example:

In my opinion, not everything that is written is over. Those who wrote them fought, lived and died for these values. Not enough just to read, it is our duty to maintain and enhance the speeches, poems and songs. And it is our moral duty to act, no matter how small it could be, to make them a reality. -Abraham C. ESL 7, 2015

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For more information on the project, please email rticktin@carlosrosario.org or kstoesz@carlosrosario.org. We will be glad to send you links, share specifics and hope to hear from you how it goes.

Ruth Ticktin is an experienced professional working with adult ESOL students; having coordinated programs, advised, trained, and taught in a variety of settings. She is focused on helping English language learners (ELLs) perfect the language skills necessary to take advantage of available opportunities. She has taught at Carlos Rosario Intl Public Charter School for ten years and co-written "What's Ahead? Transitioning from Adult Education to a Career."

Kristy Stoesz applies her background in education, language learning and intercultural experiences when teaching adult language learners at Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School in Washington, DC. Her contributions to this article demonstrate how language and technology can be taught simultaneously to increase students' knowledge and confidence, and are examples of ways to integrate immigrants more fully into American culture.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE DAY IN CHARM CITY

By Betsy Lindeman Wong | Northern Virginia Community College | blwong@nvcc.edu

Imagine a day of workshops devoted to community-college issues, such as placement testing, bring-your-own device (BYOD) technology, academic writing that is “good enough,” and ways to meet the unique needs of a changing student population. WATESOL’s travel grant allowed me to explore these topics at TESOL’s first Community College Day, which preceded the 2016 TESOL International Convention.

New Ideas in Placement Testing

Muhammad Ali Khan, of Michigan Technological University, presented an overview of placement tests currently used at the community college level. Citing Anthony Green (2012), Khan noted that IEPs commonly used two types of placement tests: Those tailored to an individual program’s curricular objectives, content, and tasks; and generic tests that assess language skills at different proficiency levels. As Green notes, time and cost constraints may cause programs to opt for standardized tests that may have limited value, as they do not reflect actual classroom communicative tasks.

“This information could enable teacher and program administrators to make more holistic placement decisions...”

For this reason, multiple tools generally yield more useful and reliable placement results than single tests, according to Green (2012). Citing Green’s mention of self-assessment as a potentially valuable component of placement decisions, Khan presented a self-evaluation questionnaire that would allow students to rate both their ability and ease in performing a wide variety of realistic classroom and everyday language functions in English. This information could enable teachers and program administrators to make more holistic placement decisions that took into consideration students’ needs and preferences, according to Khan, who hopes to pilot his survey in the future.

Personal Devices in the Classroom: Distraction or Engagement?

Nellie Deutsch, of Atlantic University (Toronto), described the need to help students overcome cellphone and tablet “WODs,” or “weapons of distraction,” in order to focus. While personal devices are a “must” in that they encourage learning everywhere, they also cause students to be “all over the place” – necessitating explicit techniques to foster mindfulness, or what Daniel Goleman (2013) calls “phase-locking.” Teachers can facilitate “phase-locking,” or paying attention to one thing and blocking everything else out, by having students choose a small object like a penny and keep their eyes on it for one minute, making themselves bring their attention back if they feel it wander off.

“Phase-locking” is one way to help students stay “focused within distractions,” Deutsch said. She also recommends engaging students with the Tenacity meditative breath-counting app or online adventure games like Citizen Science. Another option is to use absurdity to help students focus; for example, teachers can show a picture and ask something impossible, such as “Smell the flowers.” The absurdity takes students away from their focus and brings them into yours, clearing the way for learning to occur.

When Is Second Language Writing Good Enough?

Denise L. Warner of Lansing Community College opened her session with the question of how to define good writing. When no single definition emerged, she noted that if it were difficult for us as ESL teachers to agree on what “good” writing is, what about faculty in liberal arts, business, education, and sciences?

According to Warner, this underscores the importance of understanding how writing was viewed across academic disciplines – both in terms of assignment types and grading criteria. To help familiarize students with expectations, Warner suggested providing writing and tutoring centers with assignments from different disciplines that tutors could draw on when ELLs came for help.

This type of support is particularly necessary given that many ELLs come to college with limited or interrupted formal education in the L1, Warner said. Yet even with these obstacles, students are able to succeed provided that they have high levels of support, as was shown in a recent study (Hirano, 2014) of refugee students who had graduated from high school without reaching standard college admissions literacy level yet were able to cope with tertiary academic writing in community college.

Warner said that these learners need to build “academic cultural capital” – that is, an awareness of the valued habits and practices in higher education, including the knowledge of where and how to find help. According to Warner, this includes taking an active role in learning by participating in discussions, asking questions in class and at teachers’ office hours, using student resources like the library or tutoring center, and navigating a portal like Blackboard for assignments and information.

Having this academic cultural capital was the key to success among community college ELLs and was more important than English proficiency in a study cited by Warner (Curry, 2004, p. 54). Therefore, Warner concluded, we will know when students’ writing is “good enough” when we have helped them develop familiarity with the college resources and practices needed for academic success.

Meeting Students Where They Are: EAP for the 21st-Century Classroom

Do our students’ learning styles, goals, and expectations match where we think they are coming from? Not so, said Ann Sallie and Usha Venkatesh of Montgomery College, who described their program’s changing demographics and their suggestions for responding.

English language learners at the three campuses of Montgomery College represent three demographic groups, Sallie and Venkatesh said: “Generation 1.5,” Millennials, and international students. Although these groups may overlap, each has distinct characteristics that influence how teachers can reach them.

Generation 1.5

“Generation 1.5ers” are students who immigrate in their early teens and have typically attended part of middle and high school in the U.S., according to Sallie and Venkatesh. They may experience a split

identity in terms of feeling American in many ways but not entirely. For example, they are uncomfortable if asked by well-intentioned ESL teachers to talk or write about their native culture, which they may not remember well.

Generation 1.5ers are often “ear learners,” said Sallie and Venkatesh, who may not have studied formal language elements very much in fluency-based language arts courses. They are familiar with U.S. culture, social customs, and idioms, whereas they may be losing literacy in their L1 and feel unable to communicate effectively with family at times. In college, these students may be “pigeonholed” as ELLs who are deficient in language skills, and they may resent placement in ESL classes with international students who have been here only a short time, said Sallie and Venkatesh.

Because they go by what “sounds correct,” Generation 1.5ers may struggle with assessments that rely on knowledge of the formal structures of English. For this reason, the presenters recommend explicit instruction in meta-language such as grammatical terminologies while presenting concepts in culturally relevant contexts such as American sports and music, which are often “loaded” and confusing for international students. Sallie and Venkatesh also recommend creating separate English language classes for Generation 1.5ers whenever possible.

Millennials

Many Generation 1.5ers are Millennials who represent the last generation born into the 20th century, according to Sallie and Venkatesh, and have grown up in an increasingly online and socially-networked world. This affects how they learn: They may respond well to technology-based delivery methods such as blended and online courses and prefer active learning methods with less lecture, more multimedia, peer collaboration, and flipped classrooms. Because they have grown up being able to Google anything they want to know, they do not typically value information for information’s sake and are in dire need of media literacy. For this group, the presenters recommend teaching grammar only in the context of the writing or speaking task engaged in at the moment.

Along the same lines, Millennials prefer a less formal learning environment in which they can informally interact with the professor and one another, so teachers should use rubrics that clearly spell out expectations for formal written or oral assignments.

Moreover, this group seems more willing to pursue learning outcomes when instructors connect with them on a personal level, so it is vital to “follow up and follow through,” the presenters said.

International Students

International students at the college generally have high levels of education, motivation, and some awareness of the demands of college coursework, although they may have less proficiency in everyday communication and may need extra “wait time” to formulate an answer in English, say Sallie and Venkatesh.

When working with this group, Sallie and Venkatesh said, teachers should think creatively about ways to draw on their special knowledge of their home culture and country – an approach that would not work with Generation 1.5ers. For international students, asking questions in class or volunteering comments may be challenging or uncomfortable, so teachers should provide an alternate means of interacting, such as providing an index card to write questions and comments, such as anything that wasn’t clear in class.

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Betsy Lindeman Wong teaches a variety of classes in NOVA’s Intensive English and TESOL certificate programs. She has co-authored a textbook and teacher’s guide for Pearson Longman and currently writes and consults for Burlington English.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Fall 2016

- * [VATESOL](#) *All in for ELLs: Advocacy, Advancement, Achievement* October 21-22, James Madison University Harrisonburg, VA
- * [ASCD](#) *Conference on Educational Leadership* November 4-6, National Harbor, MD
- * [MD TESOL](#) *Celebrating & Motivating Teachers* November 12, Howard Community College

Winter/Spring 2017

- * [TESOL International](#) *The World Comes Together at TESOL* March 21-24, Seattle, WA
- * [VIU](#) *Conference on Language, Learning, and Culture* April 7-8, Fairfax, VA

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OVERCOMING THE LIMITS & MAXIMIZING THE BENEFITS OF PEER REVIEW

By Heather Gregg Zitlau & Stephanie Gallop | Georgetown University | hg227@georgetown.edu; sg985@georgetown.edu

The following is a summary of *Making a Good Thing Better: Increased Guidance in Peer Review from the 2015 WATESOL conference*.

Peer review is standard practice in second language writing courses and is also used to some extent in the teaching of oral presentation skills. When surveyed, most of our students claim to have had some prior experience doing peer review, which speaks to its ubiquity in the field. However, this experience is simply not evident early in a semester when we begin using peer review; students do not seem comfortable with the process, and the results are often disappointing. We have discovered that many other instructors note similar frustrations, and some have even stopped using peer review because the challenges often seem to outweigh the benefits.

That position is certainly understandable, especially if we compare the significant time and effort invested and the less-than-ideal final outcome that is often seen on one particular paper or presentation. Even when the immediate results are disappointing, however, we believe that students benefit from the process in valuable ways that might be less visible.

Benefits of Peer Review

One obvious benefit of peer review is that students receive a greater quantity of feedback, which can lead to greater improvements in writing than instructor feedback alone (Kaufman & Schunn, 2008); despite the overall disappointment mentioned above, we have seen cases in which peer reviewers do in fact provide helpful critique resulting in a better final product. Peer review may also help students “clarify their own understanding of the assessment criteria” (Patri, 2002, p. 111), and we have found that student comments during the peer review process sometimes help us to see and intervene when students misunderstand assignment or assessment criteria.

Ideally, students benefit from peer review not only in the short term by improving a single assignment, but also in the long term by improving their ability to read and listen critically and to self-assess their own work more effectively (Cho & Cho, 2009;

Kaufman & Schunn, 2008). Regardless of how often we admonish students to keep the audience in mind when writing a paper or giving a presentation, the idea that only an instructor will read or grade the work often seems to mean that in the students’ minds, audience = teacher. Peer review is a good antidote to this problem; as Cho and Cho point out, it allows students to “examine writing from the perspective of the audience” (p. 630). The improved ability to view writing and speaking from an audience perspective is, in our minds, one of the biggest but perhaps most overlooked benefits of peer review.

Challenges/Limiting Factors with Peer Review

In our experience and according to research, however, these and other benefits are not always realized. Several factors play a limiting role; many students hesitate to provide critical commentary, students often fail to give specific comments, and uptake of peer commentary in revision is limited (Min, 2006; Ruegg, 2015). Also, some students question the validity of the peer review process (Zhao, 2014).

What follows is a brief explanation of some efforts that we have made in our classrooms to counter the limits and to achieve the potential positive outcomes of the peer review process.

In Practice: Writing (Gallop)

Regardless of the length of assignment or review process, limitations in writing are often the same: reviewers are reluctant to critique their classmates and give detailed feedback, and writers are skeptical of this feedback and use peer suggestions sparingly.

I have greatly reduced the use of paper peer review, where students trade assignments, write directly on their classmates’ paper, and fill out a review form with checkboxes and open-ended questions. Instead, students now share their files with one another electronically, either as Microsoft Word files or Google Doc files, and complete peer review tasks directly in the electronic files. Instructions are given via a projected PowerPoint or on a

learning management system (such as Blackboard, Canvas, or Google Classroom), eliminating the need for any paper.

These electronic platforms allow students to interact with the text more cleanly and less obtrusively. Both Word and Google Docs offer multiple ways to underline, highlight, and otherwise modify text, in addition to sophisticated comment functions that appear outside the margins. These comment boxes support more detailed commenting and indirect (not face-to-face) dialogue between students.

In particular, using Google Docs provides more control and interaction by the instructor, and avoids problems with students who use different operating systems. The instructor and multiple students can have access to the same document, which permits more extensive feedback, and gives students the peace of mind that the instructor is part of the process. Google Docs also keeps a revision history, which logs all changes (and who made them) to the document. The sharing and privacy settings on Google Docs can be manipulated, which gives a varying level of control at the discretion of the instructor.

“The most striking observation I’ve made when doing anonymous peer review is that students recognize they are not alone in the problems they have...This seems to be a great confidence booster.”

Compared to the traditional pen-and-paper methods of peer review, use of electronic materials and platforms yields more error correction (possibly from noticing), and comments are more abundant and free-flowing. However, some students continue to be reserved when commenting on their peers’ work.

For shorter assignments, I’ve found discussion boards to be a practical way to introduce anonymity, and this feature is part of both Blackboard and Canvas. Students post their work anonymously under a number or pseudonym, and reviewers answer in kind. Reviewers are able to answer ques-

tions about their classmates’ work more fully and with more confidence, and offer more suggestions than when this process is not anonymous.

The most striking observation I’ve made when doing anonymous peer review is that students recognize they are not alone in the problems they have or the type of errors that they make. This seems to be a great confidence booster, which hopefully underlies other tasks in the course.

In Practice: Oral Presentation (Zitlau)

I recently revamped my use of peer review in an advanced-level business English course in order to make it part of the presentation revision process (rather than a peer critique of the final product) and to guide students in a way that would ideally lead them to provide specific, useful feedback to their peers.

Students do multiple short presentations throughout the semester, and I highlight additional skills with each presentation. As the first peer review exercise, students reviewed each other’s PowerPoint slides in a computer lab during class, using specific criteria for the design of each slide. This exercise resulted in an improved final product with regard to students’ visual aids, and critiquing each other on this point reinforced the importance of design principles such as grammatical parallelism - not only for this presentation, but for future presentations, too. It also clarified the assessment criteria that I use when evaluating students’ visual aids, and student reflections on the exercise evidenced increased audience awareness. One student wrote, “Peers’ opinions helped me to understand how my slides were showed to them;” another said, “I realize that sometimes, what I wrote, didn’t always mean what I want to say in my mind.”

Peer review for subsequent presentations focused on other aspects during the preparation phase; in one, students gave each other feedback on their ideas for opening hooks; in another, they focused on transition wording; in a third, they practiced the full presentation and their classmates identified sections where they as listeners found a lack of clarity.

Because I was present for the review pieces that were done in class, I could both answer students’ questions and provide confirmation that the re

Tips for Successful Peer Review	
Hesitance to provide critical commentary	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give time for students to feel comfortable with one another before first review activity • Provide confirmation for reviewers, especially in early rounds of peer review and when students show hesitation 	
Failure to give specific comments	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide specific evaluation criteria • Model desirable comments and feedback • Give manageable chunks of material to review 	
Lack of confidence in peer feedback	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow students more “face” time with one another, but still “save face” while communicating with instructor 	
Limited uptake in revision	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide confirmation to writer / presenter 	
Challenges with technology	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model use of technology • Use standard programs and operating systems 	

viewer had indeed identified a problem; the latter, in my experience, serves as a subtle way to overcome students' tendency to mistrust their classmates and builds confidence in the value of the peer review process.

Conclusion

The challenges involved with peer review are significant, but we hope that the brief descriptions of our practice here and the tips in the accompanying table renew your enthusiasm for the use of peer review and spark ideas for its effective use in your classroom - ideas that will allow you and your students to overcome the challenges and provide your students with the valuable short-term and long-term benefits that the process can provide.

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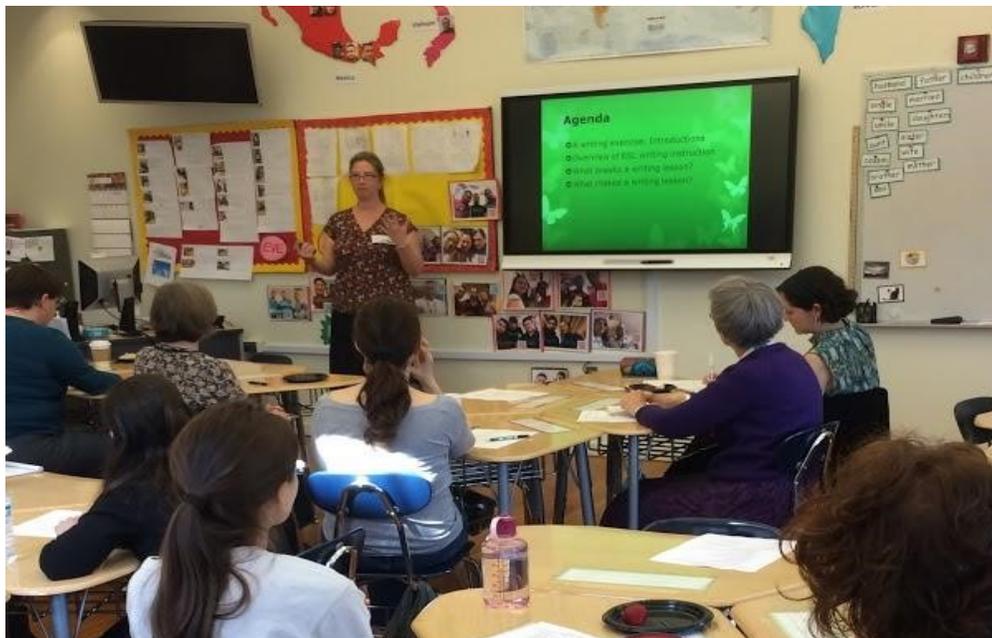
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Heather Gregg Zitlaw is an Assistant Teaching Professor in the Center for Language Education and Development at Georgetown University, where she teaches a variety of academic and business English courses.

Stephanie Gallop is (also) an Assistant Teaching Professor in the Center for Language Education and Development at Georgetown University, where she primarily teaches academic English courses in writing, reading, and grammar.

REFLECTION ON ADULT ED AND HIGH ED SIG SPRING PD EVENT

By Erin Ross & Christyann Helm | watesoladultsig@gmail.com



This past May, WATESOL was pleased to host Dr. Sarah Young from American University who presented “*Teaching Writing to Adult Learners*”. During this three hour workshop, she demonstrated strategies that could be used in the classroom to build students’ second language writing skills. Sarah emphasized the key elements of a good writing lesson: meaningful tasks that suit the learner context, pre-writing activities that scaffold the particular writing genre, focusing on ideas before corrections and using a cycle of drafting and revising. Participants left the workshop with ideas that could be applied to learners of varying proficiency and needs.

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OBSERVATIONS FROM AAAL: USING AND DOING RESEARCH IN THE CLASSROOM

By Silvia Hildesheim | American University | silviahildesheim@hotmail.com

The American Association for Applied Linguistics conference (AAAL) was a humbling, yet inspiring experience for me. To begin with, surrounded by famous accomplished researchers and bright PhD candidates, it was easy to feel lost. Looking at the conference program I chose my sessions based on the following criteria: what percentage of the title do I actually understand? Even though I have been exposed to some of the jargon through my MA TESOL program, the complex and specialized vocabulary included in the titles and abstracts swam in front of my eyes; it was in one ear out the other.

I wasn't sure what to expect walking into this conference which primarily focuses on academic research in applied linguistics. Would the information I gain help me with my ESL tutoring in addition to my graduate studies? What I found were complex second language acquisition (SLA) research studies. However, in addition to this, I found research which can be directly used in classroom teaching and research being done by classroom teachers. I can't help but think that many teachers and graduate students feel uncomfortable or overwhelmed in front of this type of research. In describing my experiences at AAAL I hope to show

“Many teachers and graduate students feel uncomfortable or overwhelmed in front of this type of research. I hope to show that this research is both accessible and... useful.”

that this research is both more accessible and more useful to teachers than may be commonly thought.

Research that can be used by teachers

All the research presentations I went to have helped me by giving me a deeper understanding of SLA. With each presentation, I gained a little more insight into how my students might be learning English. However, it takes time and energy to dissect the papers, understand them, and then

make connections between the broad overarching scientific conclusions, and the everyday reality of your classroom and students' needs. Almost in contrast to that, each research paper is so specific that it seems to not apply to our students or the contexts we're teaching in. Because of these reasons and others, this type of research can sometimes feel distant and inaccessible. However, I participated in sessions in which I saw the immediate relevance and applicability of research to classrooms.

For example, on the third day I sat in on the colloquium “TESOL at AAAL: Issues in Creating Practical Corpus-Based Lexical Lists.” It was led by Keith Folse and consisted of 6 presentations all about why and how word lists can be created and used in classrooms to enhance instruction. In his presentation, Folse (2016) makes a point I think all of us can agree on: students need to be taught vocabulary that is useful and common outside of the classroom. He and other participants of this colloquia believe corpora, or computerized lists of naturally occurring language, can be used to create lists to help teachers determine what are the most commonly used words or combinations of words. In his presentation, he discusses using The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA <http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>) to find the most common words or phrases associated with a particular grammatical point. For example, according to findings in COCA, the most common verbs used in present continuous include: get, try, talk, go, and do. Because of their frequency, they should be incorporated when teaching this grammar point. Folse argues that grammar and vocabulary are tied and that corpus based lists can help teachers identify the most common vocabulary within a grammatical point.

In the following presentation I caught on to a few of these lists that have been created. Norbert Schmitt was presenting on “lists of formulaic language.” He argued that meaning is not found in single words, but is tied up in multiword units. In his introduction he mentioned a study done by Martinez & Murphy (2011) which reported that students are reading word for word and therefore are often missing out on broader meanings. For

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ASK A LINGUIST!
WITH DR. ROBIN BARR | AMERICAN UNIVERSITY'S LINGUIST IN RESIDENCE | LINGUISTRWE@GMAIL.COM

Q: My students hate all the silent letters in English spelling. Where did they come from?

A: Many of the silent letters used to be pronounced in Old or Middle English. However, some silent letters were never there originally, and have been added to the spelling to make English look more like Latin or other more prestigious languages. For example, the word **debt** never had a [b] sound in English, since it was borrowed directly from French **dette**. But English grammarians in the 15th and 16th centuries added the to the spelling to show its relationship to the Latin word **debitum** (the ancestor of French **dette**), and also to make it more difficult to read and write English if you did not know Latin. These prescriptive grammarians also made some false etymologies, however: the <s> in **island** and the <h> in **author** have no legitimate source at all.

this, Schmitt (2016) argues it is important to teach vocabulary in chunks. He introduced several lists based on different criteria that he and colleagues have created showing the most common formulaic language. These include the PHaVE list and the PHRASE list. The PHaVE list created by Garnier & Schmitt (2015) includes the 150 most frequent phrasal verbs as determined using COCA. The list also highlights the most frequent meanings of each of the 100 phrasal verbs. The PHRASE list by Martinez & Schmitt (2012) is a list of the 505 most frequent non-transparent multiword expressions. Non-transparent expressions are those that cannot be decoded word for word and are therefore more difficult for students to learn (Martinez & Schmitt, 2012).

As we learn more and more about how students are acquiring and processing vocabulary, we see the need to teach students vocabulary in chunks that are meaningful and useful. This can be overwhelming due to the sheer number of phrasal verbs and multiword expressions. These lists briefly described here were created with teachers in mind and can be extremely helpful to teachers because they show us what expressions are common and might be of most use to our students. We can all agree that it's important to teach students language that is relevant to their lives. These lists then

just become another tool available to help us achieve that.

Research done by teachers

I was pleasantly surprised at the diversity of presentations at AAAL. In addition to the colloquium described above in which a facet of applied linguistic research was tied directly to teaching, I was able to attend sessions presented by educators who were conducting research in their own classrooms. Elizabeth Kissling presented on research done by herself and a colleague about self-assessment and language awareness in an advanced university Spanish as a foreign language course. By language awareness, the authors mean observing and identifying the gap between what students are producing and the language they want to be producing (Kissling & O'Donnell, 2015). The authors wanted to understand the effect self-assessment had on this awareness. Throughout the study, she had her students use the ACTFL proficiency guidelines to assess, through written comments, their oral performance. Studying these comments, the authors found the students had an increased language awareness which in turn led to an increase in self-efficacy and future growth.

Two ideas can be taken from this session. First, it

provides classroom teaching ideas. Here was a study which didn't have to be unpacked or decoded in order to find practical relevance. Listening to her presentation, I couldn't help but think of my students and how I could incorporate language awareness and self-evaluation in my teaching. Second, it narrows the gap between research and practice. Broadening our definition of what is scientific research, we see that classroom or action research can be helpful both for the one conducting the research and for those learning of the research.

Conclusion

I think about what I learned at the conference often both in my graduate classes and during lesson planning. I am starting to develop a familiarity with SLA theories and processes which I connect to the methods I learn about in my graduate classes and the activities I do with my students.

I am grateful to WATESOL for giving me the opportunity to attend AAAL. Not only did I walk away from the conference with a greater knowledge of SLA, but also a deeper understanding of the relationship between practice and research. The two are not as far apart as I had once thought and are definitely not mutually exclusive.

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Silvia Hildesheim works as a tutor at Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School. She is also finishing her master's in TESOL from American University.

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