Letter from the Editor

Dear WAESOL Community,

We are pleased to share with you the latest issue of the WAESOL World Quarterly! In this Winter 2015 issue, we hope you will enjoy learning about new pedagogical ideas and also learn more about the influential teachers who impact the lives of many students, daily.

First, I want to highlight two of WAESOL’s great accomplishments. This year, WAESOL turned 40! To celebrate this, WAESOL has been publishing weekly interviews with teachers who have impacted WAESOL. The interviews are available at: http://waesol.org/welcome/40th-anniversary/.

Also, in 2015, WAESOL partnered with local affiliates and hosted the Tri-TESOL Convention. The feedback was very positive and we look forward to these types of collaboration in a near future.

As you prepare for a new semester, take some time to read our Winter issue of the WAESOL World Quarterly. It might inspire you to write a short piece for the upcoming 2016 issue.

Warm greetings,

Caroline Payant
Editor, WWQ
Beth Iolean Whitfield

As a new teacher, I am constantly reflecting on my lessons and implementation with the same question in mind: Are my students learning? This question always weighed heaviest on the listening process. No matter how many times my students would watch a video they would still be missing a large amount of important information, and could not make connections between the various topics and details mentioned. When reviewing the information of a video as a class, it became apparent that they understood the vocabulary and grammar. Language, apparently, was not the issue—listening was. Students were struggling with attending to and processing what they were hearing. So I asked myself, “How do I teach listening?”

From a theoretical perspective, the answer is simple: metacognition. Metacognition is the ability to think about thinking. Learners are taught to plan, monitor, and evaluate their listening. This heightens their awareness of the listening process and teaches students to become more autonomous learners (Vandergift & Goh, 2012). As English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers, you may already know that linking theory to pedagogical practice is easier said than done. Upon reading theoretical literature, our question becomes, “How does this translate into student learning?” Thus, I had to figure out how to teach metacognition in order for my students to be less passive in their listening. Through trial-and-error, I developed a one hour lesson that has become extremely successful for advanced learners. It focuses on helping students to actively plan, monitor, and evaluate their listening. This lesson is guided by two learning objectives: (1) practice metacognitive listening skills and (2) differentiate between main points and details.
Dictogloss: Collaborative listening activity

Drawing on Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) cycle, the lesson includes a pre-task, a task, and a post-task (see Figure 1):

Before presenting the specific details of each cycle, I begin with the description of the main task. The task itself is a metacognitive dictogloss activity that focuses on the differentiation of main points and details of a video. The four-minute video, titled Sustainability Easily Explained, is sequenced in such a manner that main points and details are ordered logically with transitions between them—making main points distinguishable from one another. The video is played a total of five times where each time learners are asked to focus on a new dimension.

**Time 1.** Students are asked to simply listen, without taking notes. This exposes the students to the video’s content and provides an opportunity to comprehend the overall content without having to focus on particular linguistic elements.

**Time 2.** Students take notes solely on main points—leaving space between them to later add details. When students focus on one element during listening, in this case main points, they can plan their listening to identify transitions, pauses, and new information being introduced. They can then monitor their listening while the video is played. After the 2nd listen, students compare the main points in their notes with a partner. It is highly anticipated that students will have some
differences in their main points. This is a positive outcome because it gives students the opportunity to explain their chosen main points. This metalinguistic conversation, or language related episodes (LREs), allows students to talk about the linguistic elements being noticed (Swain & Lapkin, 1998). This talk about the language may generate a deeper level of cognitive processing.

**Time 3.** After students have had 7-10 minutes to negotiate the main points, students listen for details. After the video is completed, students again collaborate with the partner to negotiate the details mentioned for each main point. Because there are more details than main points, students will have more to talk about. Consequently, more time must be allocated—about 15-20 minutes. At this point, students should have a well-constructed outline of main points and details.

**Time 4.** Now, students watch the video and focus on target structures and form. Their goal now is to reconstruct the information in the video as precisely as they can with their partner. Students are given roughly fifteen minutes to complete this.

Once students have reconstructed the video in as much detail and accuracy as possible, the class will reconstruct the information in the video together. Each pair of students will have a reconstruction that is slightly or dramatically different from their peers’. Therefore, during this whole class activity, students might disagree, agree, build-off of each other, ask questions, and engage in metalinguistic collaboration. The teacher should allow the students to take charge of this process as much as possible, and should only act as a scribe of the class-developed reconstruction. The teacher should be writing the class reconstruction in such a way that all students can view it—white board, document camera, projected Word Doc, etc.

**Time 5.** This last instance serves comparison functions. If and when there are differences between the class script and the video, the students will say, “stop”. If the students do not catch the difference, the teacher should stop the video. The students should talk about what exactly is different, and changes will be made accordingly.

**Pre-task: Activating their knowledge**

To support this task, students engage in both a pre-task and a post-task. The pre-task for the lesson is an explicit conversation that reviews what main points and details are. This helps to engage students in the lesson, as well as prepare them for the task ahead. Students first discuss in partners what distinguishes main points from details. This allows an opportunity for students to express what they know and gain input from their peers. Allowing them to review or problem solve amongst each other is a great opportunity to practice the target-language. To finish the pre-task, students will share what they have discussed with the class.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_5r4IoXPyx8
Listening skills: Are we actually teaching them?

**Post-task: Meeting learning objectives**

The post-task will consist of a reflection and discussion about what students learned. This will be a formative assessment as to whether or not students met the objectives of the lesson. Students will be asked to write down what they learned and how this process helped them learn it. The teacher should then explain that integrating this similar pattern of planning, monitoring, and evaluating into their regular listening can improve their overall listening skills. The teacher should ask the students what distinguishes main points from details in speaking which engages the students in a conversation about the explicit linguistic elements. This will draw learners’ attention to the language forms that they had implicitly noticed.

**Linking theory and practice**

This lesson incorporates metacognition and collaboration to increase listening comprehension and the listening process of ESL learners. In addition, the lesson also offers opportunities for learners to notice gaps in their output. According to Gass and Mackey (2006), these opportunities allow for important interaction that consists of input, interaction, and output.

This task provides two benefits for students: 1) it helps students distinguish between main points and details and 2) it gives students the opportunity to develop their listening and speaking skills through metacognitive collaboration. In addition to the L2 learning benefits and flexibility of this lesson, the high level of engagement keeps students involved and interested in the task. This provides an opportunity for an abundance of production opportunities for quieter, more introverted students because students work in dyads for much of the task, instead of only whole class discussion. This lesson can be altered to meet various subjects or linguistic elements. It can also be modified to be used again with the same group of students.

Are we actually teaching listening? Unfortunately, I believe that the answer is often negative. Often, listening lessons tend to require learners to simply take notes and answer comprehension questions. This one-way listening can lead to passive listening on the part of the students. Therefore, it is important for language learners to participate in two-way listening tasks, in which they are engaging with the material and their classmates. By teaching listening in lessons like the one explained in this article, we provide students with the tools and autonomy they need to be successful listeners in their second language. With metacognition and collaboration, learners plan, monitor, and evaluate their listening—in addition to co-constructing knowledge and negotiating the language.
Listening skills: Are we actually teaching them?

References


Bio

Beth Iolean Whitfield received her M.A. in TESL from the University of Idaho. She is currently a lecturer at the American Language and Culture Program at the University of Idaho.
Adam Kessler

My first experience teaching in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) context was an internship for three consecutive sessions (approx. twenty-four weeks) at an Intensive English Program affiliated with a University. While teaching upper-division academic writing, I discovered that many of my students had a firm grasp on English, but were often hindered by their limited experience with idiomatic English and were bogged down with minutia. I felt it was part of my job (if not among my explicitly-stated learning objectives to work on this issue, as it was affecting my students' writing.

At the time, I had recently looked into articles on ways for students to improve their writing skills by using metacognitive strategies while reading (Jiuhuan & Newbern, 2012; Yang, 2013). In particular, these articles show that highly engaged students, once they knew the basics of English, could teach themselves idiomatic English. This process was said to be faster and more efficient than explicit teaching because the students were engaging in critical thinking about the language being used. In other words, students had to not only understand what they were reading, but also had to examine how it was said, and compare it to the techniques they already knew. They could then pick up on new idiomatic techniques, phrases, and sayings, increasing their proficiency level on their own, even after leaving the IEP setting.

The major concerning factor for my class was that my learning objectives were based on preparing my students for college-level research papers. Additionally, as seniors in the program, the students had very heavy workloads; these students had to deal with the academic demands of their three or four IEP classes, had to prepare for entering a U.S. college, and many were also preparing to take the TOEFL exam. Adding another major task, such as an academic reading journal as one of the articles proposed, would not only be out of the bounds of my learning objectives, but I felt it would unduly tax my students, and would possibly cause student 'burnout' (Yang, 2013). At the very least, it would make some of my students disinclined to be 'highly engaged' with the material.

Metacognitive mini-assignment implementation

After attempting to relay to my students that they needed to ‘read more,’ and seeing no results with my second cohort, I resolved to formally introduce metacognitive reading tasks into my
third session group, but in such a way that they would not become a burden to my students. Keeping in mind that I still had a class on academic essay writing to teach, I decided that these tasks should take the form of small homework assignments. These assignments needed to do three things:

- Encourage metacognitive thought while reading in order to foster growth,
- Be engaging enough that students actually paid attention to them, and
- Be short and unobtrusive enough that they did not interfere with the already demanding workload the students were under.

As my class involved students looking through research articles in order to write their academic papers, my first thought was to extend my annotated bibliography assignment that was already in my curriculum. However, that assignment had never received much in the way of student metacognitive thought. In retrospect, students may have been ‘cognitively overloaded’ by the prospect of translating and summarizing (Abasi, 2012).

Instead, I settled on a more simple homework assignment that I assigned three times during my final eight week semester. I asked my students to find a single sentence found in one of their research articles that they took issue with. These issues could range from lack of understanding, to confusion over why one phrase was used instead of another, to simply being surprise, (such as 'I didn't know you could do that in English.') They were asked to provide the sentence of interest, and then provide a three to four sentence summary of why the sentence was difficult or strange to them, and what they thought the sentence meant.

Initially I had thought of requiring two sentences from their academic articles. However, cognizant of the fact that I needed to keep my students as engaged as possible in order for true metacognition to take place, I decided to vary it up, and make the assignment more ‘fun.’ For the second part of the assignment, I asked students to take a sentence from a piece of popular media. This could be a television show, movie, internet blog, YouTube video, or any other form of ‘popular media’ that they found. The only needed to provide a link (or source) for the sentence, and again, analyze it faithfully.

After receiving the sentences, I commented on the constructions they had chosen, and sent them notes on what to look for in the future. The assignment was strictly pass/fail, the students either completed the assignments or not. Only one student ever received a low grade for vastly misquoting the source. All other students who chose to turn in the work told me that they
found the assignment interesting. As a follow-up, I showed my students how to look up future questions using the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and Google searches.

The students, for the most part, responded very positively to the assignment, and it seemed to accomplish all its stated goals. Students found the assignment interesting, were engaged, and relished the opportunity to understand some of the more esoteric aspects of English. One student quoted a courtroom scene from a popular TV show, and we talked about ‘legalese,’ and several brought up common idioms that they had not heard before. This also helped them unpack the information in their academic readings, and of the students who decided to turn in the assignment (a majority of the total population), there seemed to be few who did not engage in the material.

Benefits of the design

At a certain point, explicit teaching to increase language proficiency becomes prohibitively difficult. An educator simply cannot explicitly teach every word collocation set, idiom, and phrasal verb in the English language. Instead, students need to learn how to recognize new grammatical constructions by themselves in order to keep growing their English proficiency. In the absence of an entire class devoted to such an issue, this design serves to work towards this goal.

The issue is that most of my students, and likely many others around the world, had been put into the mindset that 'all learning must come from a teacher.' As educators, we need to show students that they can inductively and deductively reason as well. This task forced students to treat English input not just as a source of information, but also a source for furthering their study of the language. In this respect, I feel, the 'popular culture' sentence was crucial. For some students, it helped transform the assignment from 'just a homework assignment,' to something that had larger implications. It showed that this technique could be taken outside of the academic/classroom setting, and be applied to all forms of communication.

In the end, this relatively simple assignment is not designed to teach students every word collocation or idiom in English. It is designed as a simple task to introduce students to the idea of reasoning their way through a sentence they didn't understand, instead of 'giving up,' or immediately asking a teacher. It empowers students and opens up a new avenue of growth that many may not have known about before.
A Simple and Unobtrusive Way to Introduce EAP Students to Metacognitive Analysis

References


Bio

Adam Kessler received his M.A. in TESL from the University of Idaho.
Grants and Awards – Tri-TESOL

In October 2015, WAESOL, ORTESOL, and BC TEAL hosted Tri-TESOL 2015 in Des Moines, Washington. During this one-and-a-half-day event, we had the pleasure of learning from three Keynote speakers: Dr. Scott Roy Douglas, Dr. Elaine Tarone, and Dr. Carol Numrich. We also had more than 209 sessions to choose from. This event was very successful and we hope to repeat a similar event in years to come.

We, the WAESOL board, were honored to offer several grants, awards, and scholarships to the WAESOL community. The recipients for our various awards included:

* **Sally Wellman Volunteer Award**: Beth Ankcorn
  Instructor at the Intensive English Language Program in Spokane Falls, WA

**WAESOL Excellence in Teaching Award**: Dr. Ibtesam Hussein,
Instructor in the American Language and Culture Program in Moscow, ID

**Professional Development Grant**: Tenzin Dulal,
M.A. TESL student - University of Idaho

**WAESOL Project Grant**: Katherine Schifflbein,
Manager of the American Language and Culture Program in Moscow, ID

* **The Sally Wellman Award** is a co-sponsored award – we are grateful for the generous support from LaVona L. Reeves and from WAESOL.
Grants and Awards – Tri-TESOL

*Sally Wellman Volunteer Award: Beth Ankcorn

Instructor at the Intensive English Language Program in Spokane Falls, WA

From her nomination letter: Ms. Ankcorn has been teaching for thirteen years at Spokane Falls Community College and also has taught at Gonzaga University. She is continuously working to provide opportunities to her fellow colleagues, her students, other staff and instructors, and people in the community. Recently, she headed a NIEA Mini grant through the Global Education Committee on campus. The project was student-centered where international students held a forum for on-campus instructors about ways that they learned writing composition and rhetoric. This helped teachers understand possible instructor blind spots when it came to working with international students. It provided a direct line from the international students about multilingual and intercultural elements of learning that they had to work through to achieve excellence in American classrooms. It was a learning conversation that created greater educational harmony.

Additionally, Ms. Ankcorn is always seeking opportunities to develop professionalism with her colleagues. In the past year, she has presented at the Spokane Regional Conference. The workshops that she offered were also done in collaboration with other instructors, Ana Poliakova and Pei Ju Wong. The topics she presented on were "Teaching International Students with Love & Logic Strategies" and "Anchor Texts for Intensive English Program Placement". These topics covered tips in classroom management and assessment tools for placement of students. Ms. Ankcorn works on finding ways to provide more teacher training opportunities to her colleagues. She never sees herself as above others, but understands her colleagues as guides on a hike, each of them offering tips, tools and insights to complete the adventure.

Above and beyond this, Ms. Ankcorn still finds time to volunteer on various committees. She is organizing two events for the Diversity of Equity Committee next year. She is taking the lead on the subcommittee to offer a workshop called "Personal Growth Workshop," which will cover topics on growth mindset, moving beyond blame, shame and grit and that workshop will be offered in Spring 2016. Also, another project she is working on with colleagues is organizing an event to increase understanding of refugee and immigrant students at SFCC, which will be held in the Fall 2015. She hopes to organize similar events with other members of the Spokane Community Colleges on a larger scale as opportunities present themselves. The last committee she works on is the Early Alert Committee to help struggling students succeed. Ms. Ankcorn does a multitude of work beyond teaching, always striving to make a difference in our educational community and our greater world.
I have worked closely with Ibtesam at the ALCP for almost four years and she is a perfect example of an ESL teacher. Ibtesam Hussein is a quiet and strong-willed individual. I am nominating her for this "excellence in teaching award" based on her professionalism and disposition, as a highly dedicated and supportive teacher.

As a dedicated teacher, she plans her lessons very well to meet the needs of the students and also address the student learning outcomes. She tries to bring the best out of each of her student by creating additional time to meet with them outside of class even when it is not too convenient for her. She has a passion for ensuring that her students succeed in their academic endeavor. Her lesson plans and teaching strategies are all put together to ensure that her students learn and succeed in the various tasks. Even when the students do not meet the expectations, she finds other ways to make the lesson better and easier for them. A good example of this is in her Academic Research class which is an advanced class with students from different majors that have to write a literature review in their major. Ibtesam could tirelessly work with each student to ensure that they do a thorough job and see the task to a good end.

Her commitment to quality teaching can be seen in the publications, book reviews and the presentations she gives in different local conferences despite her busy schedule with her PhD studies. Through these professional activities, she addresses the issues that her students encounter, particularly in writing. In addition, Ibtesam is very supportive of her students and colleagues. She gives very thoughtful advice and contributions. She always brings ideas from conferences she attends, shares them with her colleagues and tries to implement them in her class. For example, she implemented the model-based approach in her level 6 writing class last session as a way to help her students get the best out of modeling texts. She has continued to use it in her classes as she finds it a productive approach that can benefit her students. Sharing her ideas and learning from other ESL teachers help her to improve her teaching strategies and material development as she continues to achieve excellence in her teaching.
Grants and Awards – Tri-TESOL

WAESOL Project Grant: Katherine Schiffelbein, Manager of the American Language and Culture Program in Moscow, ID

Professional Development Grant: Tenzin Dulal, M.A. TESL student - University of Idaho

Tri-TESOL conference registration scholarship winners:

Alessandra de Campos, Elaine Bedlion, John Harn, Mercy Hume, Derek Reagan, Tenzin Dulal, Nouf Alqahtani
As always, we encourage you to attend and present at local, regional, and international conferences. Visit their website to learn about their events, grants, awards, and publications.

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