Letter from the Editor

Dear WAESOL Community,

Fall semester has begun and as language educators this means new faces, new courses, and new networking opportunities.

We hope you will enjoy the Fall edition of the WAESOL World Quarterly. You will find publications written by language teachers about teaching and ideas that guide their practices. We also included some information about the TESOL Advocacy and Policy Summit 2015 that took place in D.C. during the summer 2015.

We would like to thank the contributors and the readers of the WWQ. If you are interested in publishing, consider sharing your ideas for the upcoming WAESOL World Quarterly, to be published in December 2015. Also, we will be giving a session during the Tri-TESOL about how to get published – be sure to come and check out the session.

Happy readings,

Caroline Payant
WAESOL World Quarterly, Editor

Special points of interest:

- We are gearing up for Tri-TESOL 2015 on October 2nd and 3rd at Highline College in Des Moines, Washington. WAESOL joins with Oregon and British Columbia affiliates for this exciting regional (and international!) conference.
- Join the WAESOL board: Nominations for board positions open through October 20th.
- Join the conversation: please consider sharing your ideas for our coming December issue!

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Tri-TESOL 2015-Joining our three neighboring affiliations

We are just a few days away from the 2015 Tri-TESOL conference. On October 2nd and 3rd, ORTESOL, BCTEAL, and WAESOL will host a conference at Highline College in Des Moines, Washington.

Keynote Speakers

Dr. Scott Roy Douglas,
Transcending Lexical Boundaries: Vocabulary Thresholds and English Language Proficiency.

Dr. Elaine Tarone,
Learning and Teaching Outside the ‘Silo’.

Dr. Carol Numrich
A few solutions to today’s biggest pedagogical challenges.

Visit Tri-TESOL.org for more information about their talks and program schedule.
Rachel Friend  
ESL Instructor

I was recently an English Language Fellow* at a university in northeast China. One of my duties was to teach a Business News Reading class. I wanted to use an instructional design that empowers students to take an active role in the course content, develop leadership roles, and think critically when reading the news. To do this, I decided to use Raphael’s (1986) Question Answer Relationships (QARs) structure as a framework for the class. Not only was it a successful approach for this course, but it also transfers to other teaching contexts.

QARs is a wonderful tool for showing students how to interact with a text in both an efficient way and an enjoyable and intrinsically motivating one. QARs helps students learn how to question a text in order to comprehend it. There are four question types (Right There, Think and Search, Author and Me, and On My Own) which engage the reader on a variety of levels, each progressing to a deeper comprehension of the material and more independent reasoning. A “Right There” type of question asks the reader to decode the text in one place of the passage. A “Think and Search” question asks direct reading comprehension questions, and to find the answers, readers must look in multiple parts of the text. An “Author and Me” question cannot be answered solely using the text. Instead, the reader must consider the author's point of view, read between the lines, use prior knowledge, and make inferences. Finally, an “On My Own” type of question asks the reader to connect the text with their prior knowledge. The text is merely a jumping off point for discussion, and students must use their previous experiences and feelings to respond to an “On My Own” question. Dividing reading comprehension questions into these categories helps students better understand the relationship between a text and their comprehension of it.

Setting the Class Structure

I selected three news sources for our class reading material that were relevant to the class context: The Wall Street Journal, The Economist, and The Atlantic. After teaching about the background information of the news sources, I facilitated reading comprehension classes using the QARs framework to model how these question types interact with the text. I did this modeling in order to prepare students to lead subsequent classes and teach a news article to their classmates using QARs. I prepared questions and answers according to the four categories of QARs. I used a variety of in-class activities to have students answer these four question types, such as stations and partner/group work. At the end of each class, we discussed the answers as a whole class.
Raphael's QARs for Teamwork, Student Leadership, and Critical Thinking, continued

**QARs Project Guidelines**

After I modeled QARs, student groups were then responsible for teaching an article to their peers using a QARs framework. I guided students in their preparation via small group meetings. Two weeks before teaching their articles, groups collectively chose an article from one of the three sources and participated in their first meeting with me to discuss background information, vocabulary, and their plan for organizing their QARs class.

In a follow-up meeting, student groups showed me the questions and answers that they wrote for their project. This was a great time to have concentrated, small group discussions on how their grammar affects the meaning of their questions, the material and concepts they chose to examine, their understanding of the question-answer-relationships, and the nature of “On My Own” questions which were a particular struggle for these students because they were not accustomed to open-ended questions. In addition, these small group discussions were particularly meaningful because class sizes in China are quite large, so through these meetings, I was able to better personalize my relationships with the students.

Once prepared, student groups led the class using the following structure. First, they introduced the background knowledge necessary for comprehending the article, usually in a way that excited their peers about their topic. They then read the article aloud while their peers followed along silently (vocabulary was either taught within the article or pre-taught before the reading according to the group’s decision.) After that, the leaders facilitated their QARs activity by giving instructions and then walking around to discuss and help their peers when necessary. Finally, the leaders designed an activity to go over the answers and provide any additional explanations if necessary. During their QARs activity, I also walked around the room and actively engaged with student groups.

**Benefits of this Design**

This is an effective method for creating a student-centered classroom that promotes teamwork and student leadership while simultaneously providing an opportunity for independent learning. Students need to think critically in order to write the QARs questions and decide how to teach their article, the vocabulary, and cultural knowledge. During the planning and execution of their QARs projects, the students were in charge and had to initiate and facilitate the interactions. Student talking time was at an all-time high!

Students learned to synthesize the reading so they could present it to their peers, which gave them a clear audience and purpose for their projects. They had to do a close reading of the text, learn the background knowledge, and comprehend the text well enough to teach it. This was quite a rigorous task, but since they chose their own article and designed their own class, they were much more intrinsically motivated than if the teacher had total control. Designing the course so that students had such responsibility also allowed for a rich variety in the reading material, style, and structure of each class every week. One teacher could not have possibly generated so many different approaches to facilitating a reading class.
Raphael’s QARs for Teamwork, Student Leadership, and Critical Thinking, continued

In post-class reflections, students overwhelmingly stated that they had learned how to cooperate and communicate with a team, gained courage to make independent and collaborative decisions, learned organizational and time management skills, and felt a sense of responsibility. Many commented that they had been inspired to keep reading the news and following current events.

Peers learning from one another opens a different channel for communicating, negotiating, and questioning that often seems more authentic than when students produce language only for the teacher. In teacher directed contexts, students can be reticent to question teachers, ask for clarification or further explanation, or admit that they don’t understand the meaning of a passage or the instructions for an activity. However, students are more likely to do so with their peers. When students were leading their reading classes, their peers uninhibitedly asked comprehension questions about the article or asked for clarification of their classmate leaders’ instructions. So in this way, when I took a step back and gave the students the floor, they spoke freely without the fear of being wrong, and therefore, they began to use English for the purpose of genuine, unrehearsed communication.

*English Language Fellowships are funded by the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs.

References

TESOL Advocacy and Policy Summit 2015

What is the TESOL Advocacy and Policy Summit?

It is a professional development opportunity for educators who strive to improve the support for English language learners and English language education in the US.

Who attends this event?

Each year, policy experts, advocates for English language education, teachers, and members of congress attend this event.

Why would I consider attending?

By attending and meeting with your members of congress, you can learn about the current policies that impact your state, you can inform the members of congress what your school and district needs, and you can network with colleagues from the nation.

WAESOL is proud to sponsor two WAESOL board members so that they can represent the state of Washington. Read what Joan Johnston Nelson and Anikke Trier gained from participating in this event.

Who, from the WAESOL board, attended this year?*

This past June, two WAESOL Board members, Joan Johnston Nelson (Treasurer) and Anikke Trier (Member-at-Large) were fortunate enough to attend the annual TESOL Advocacy and Policy Summit in Washington, D.C. This summit was a three-day event, with two days devoted to learning about policies affecting English language learners (ELLs) in the United States and the final day devoted to going to the Congressional offices of Senators and Representatives on Capitol Hill to advocate on behalf of ELLs.

Attending this year's Summit were over 90 participants from across the United States as well as international participants. Various areas of English language education were represented, including teachers and administrators from K-12, adult basic education, intensive English programs, and higher education.
One of the best parts of attending the Summit was meeting the many educators who share the common goal of informing our legislators and advocating for our students, while sharing our experiences, challenges, and ideas from across the country.

In addition to the attendees, the Summit brought in several speakers to speak on issues related to ELL education and policy. The Keynote speaker, Dr. Libia Gil, Assistant Deputy Secretary and Director of the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA), shared information on ELL education and the disaggregated data reported by the states. Dr. Gil gave specific kudos to Washington State for the work they’ve reported on disaggregating data for former ELLs.

Representatives from the Office for Civil Rights and the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education at the U.S. Department of Education each shared current information on ELL related issues pertaining to their respective offices. These speakers, as well as others, educated attendees during the first two days of the Summit in order to prepare attendees for their Capitol Hill visits.

The purpose of the Capitol Hill visits on the third day of the Summit was to meet with legislators from our State to advocate for ELL education and bring attention to the needs and struggles. The TESOL Summit was looking at specific legislation that is coming up in Congress and the effects on ELLs. A particular area of focus was the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) or No Child Left Behind (NCLB), which is once again a major piece of legislation being addressed. For example, TESOL is concerned about keeping the funding for Title I and Title III separate and for advocating for the importance of funding professional development for both ELL educators and mainstream educators who work with ELLs. These issues were just a few of the things participants advocated for when they talked with the States’ congressional offices.

For the two WAESOL board members, Joan and Anikke, the final day of the Summit was the most interesting, since it meant meeting with Washington State representatives or their aides to discuss the issues. Joan and Anikke were joined by Tobi Rosenberg, also from Washington State, to meet with the offices of Senator Patty Murray and Senator Maria Cantwell, as well as a Representative Suzan DelBene’s office. Joan was also able to meet with the legislative aide for Representative Derek Kilmer, a Member of the House Appropriations Committee. Everyone was very friendly and welcoming. They asked questions, took notes, and seemed genuinely interested and concerned with the issues impacting Washington State ELLs. Despite our sore feet and the DC heat, it was a good day for English language learner advocacy!

Since our visit in June, the House and the Senate have each passed their respective versions of the ESEA reauthorization: the Student Success Act in the House and the Every Child Achieves Act in the Senate. There’s more work to be done after the recess as they determine which of these will become law.

*Piece written by Joan Johnston Nelson (Treasurer) and Anikke Trier (Member-at-Large*
So You Say You Want Our Opinions: A Reflection on Student Participation

Simone Frazier
Intensive ESL Instructor
International Education Division

I smiled, I joked, I gently cajoled, but half of my students remained quiet, politely declining to share their thoughts on the topic at hand. Like you, I knew to expect a certain amount of reluctance the first few days with a new class. I reminded myself that I didn’t yet know their many different personalities, and I considered their varied cultural backgrounds. I was aware of the importance of those factors, and yet I consistently struggled with one question at the beginning of every quarter: What did my students truly hear when I said I cared more about their willingness to express their opinions than about their fluent use of language? Did they actually believe me?

The answer, not surprisingly, came from one of my own students, a woman from mainland China whom I’ll call Daiyu. One afternoon, after an upper-intermediate grammar class, she told me about her first intercultural learning experience. A few years prior, when Daiyu was still a young student in China, she transferred to a boarding school with North American teachers. Although the new school was still in her home country, Daiyu’s English-speaking teachers brought an entirely different approach to their classrooms. They explicitly asked students for their opinions. Daiyu explained that this transition in teaching styles was unnerving at first, causing herself and other new students to mistrust the teachers. The teenagers worried that their teachers were only claiming to want to hear a student’s individual ideas. Their fear was that once they expressed vulnerability by sharing their real thoughts and feelings, the teachers might discredit or embarrass them. However, with time, the students grew to deeply appreciate and enjoy both their teachers and their new interactions in class.

I latched on to that crucial moment between the students’ initial mistrust and their later confidence in the learning process. That was the mysterious cultural pivot I had been wondering about. Excitedly, I asked Daiyu what had convinced her and her friends to engage more openly in class. She responded with a striking comment about the profound importance of our actions as teachers: The teachers showed us that what they said was true; they respected our answers and encouraged us to share more.

Although this was only one student’s story, her insight answered my question about so many other students. Yes, my students hear what I am saying to them. Likely they all want to believe me from the very first day, but I need to prove that my words are true. Coming to this realization has changed how I experience the start of each quarter. I no longer agonize over why I cannot coax some of my students past those early hesitation hurdles faster. I have given up the fantasy that I can create rapport at first sight through the sheer force of my will and a few clever group activities. My own actions (and reactions) are the most powerful catalyst for changing our classroom dynamics and far more believable than my words alone. Nevertheless, they require time to unfold. Accepting this allows me to relax and concentrate on doing more and saying less, providing my students with the space to do the same.
For example, I now limit or eliminate the number of questions that I address to the entire class at the beginning of a quarter. Whether I am introducing a unit on writing paragraphs or a new reading, I assign students to small groups and ask them to discuss relevant questions together. This removes the pressure of responding in front of a large group of people who at that time are mostly strangers to each other. It also lowers the affective barrier some students might face sharing their opinions with an authority figure, while also activating their schemata to make learning more effective. As students are interacting with each other, I make as many individual connections as possible by visiting different groups. I demonstrate my respect for their opinions and knowledge by listening first. I show interest by asking follow-up questions. I use positive body language and affirmative responses.

When we come back together as a larger group, I present an opportunity for students to share elements of their group discussions with the class. While the majority of the class might still refrain from contributing, the situation is very different from the scenario that opened this article. This time, students have already had a meaningful personal interaction with me. They have observed my responses to others in their group. As I address the entire class, the smiles and positive feedback I offer those who respond are part of a larger pattern of behavior. My reactions to their participation help reinforce my words of encouragement and provide a context in which trust can grow. In the weeks to come, that trust is precisely what will generate the increased participation and engagement that make for successful learning.
WAESOL – Become a Board Member

Each year, a group of dedicated teachers volunteer on the WAESOL board. As a board, we organize conferences, we disseminate information via the WAESOL World Quarterly, offer grants, awards, and scholarships, and so much more! If this type of volunteer work interests you, consider nominating yourself for a position on the WAESOL board of directors.

Nominations are currently being accepted until October 20th 2015 for the following open positions:

- President Elect – one-year term, followed by one-year term as President, and one-year term as Past-President
- Recording Secretary
- Assistant Treasurer
- Five Member-at-Large positions

Contact a board member or our administrative assistant, Indira Hazbic, indira@waesol.org, if you

Meet the 2015 board

Front row (left to right): Naomi Hagen, Laura Sorocco, Joan Johnston Nelson, Judy Cressey, Kimberly Russell, Megan Nestor, Anikke Trier, Adam Sweeney

Back row: Martha Savage, Dawn Allen, Caroline Payant, Michelle Roth, Bevin Taylor

Say hello to your WAESOL board members at the Tri-TESOL conference.

We look forward to chatting with you!
Upcoming events and conferences

In the field of ESL, there are numerous professional development opportunities. Below, you will find a list of conferences that you may consider attending. We have also included the website information so that you can visit their pages and learn more about their events, their grants and awards, and about their publications.

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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Website</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tri-TESOL &amp; WAESOL</td>
<td>Des Moines, WA</td>
<td>October 2-3 2015</td>
<td><a href="http://tri-tesol.org/">http://tri-tesol.org/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Spokane Regional ESL Conference</td>
<td>Spokane, WA</td>
<td>February 27 2016</td>
<td><a href="http://spokaneesl.com/">http://spokaneesl.com/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Palouse Language &amp; Culture Symposium</td>
<td>Moscow, ID</td>
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Interested in Facebook? Tri-TESOL is there too! The official Facebook page of the Tri-TESOL Conference in Des Moines, WA - October 2-3, 2015.

A joint conference of ORTESOL, WAESOL, and BC TEAL is at Facebook:  
https://www.facebook.com/tritesol

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