Dear Colleagues,

For educators, summer is a time for reflection and rejuvenation. I hope each of you are able to set aside time to recount the successes of 2014-15 and to rest and refresh your mind and body. As you think ahead to the 2015-16 school year, how do you

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2014 SETESOL Conference Travel Grant Report

Faye Hardiman
Georgia Piedmont Technical College

Thanks to the GATESOL travel grant to attend the Southeast Regional TESOL conference, October 8-11, in Rogers, Arkansas, I was able to take advantage of all the conference offered: pre-conference site visits on October 8th as well as 2 ½ full days of conference sessions, and a wonderful reception at the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art. 

The site visits included an elementary school where we observed a Family Literacy Program, originally funded by a 3-year grant from Toyota, in which parents attended class with their children, participating in the class work and activities just as their children do for a period of time. The parents, then, gathered to talk in class-level groups to discuss what their children are learning. The discussion session was followed by an ESL class on an appropriate adult level. This program helps parents learn about school in the U.S. as well as encourages them to build their own language skills. The adult ESL teacher for this program is paid for by the technical college program in NE Arkansas which would be similar to the adult programs that the Technical College System of Georgia supports.

The high school and middle school programs we saw were structured to help students meet the curriculum standards for academic success and fill in the gaps in their English language skills.

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plan to keep your professional drive "nourished"? In my career, I've found the best

sources of nourishment to come from my professional network. One of the reasons I have volunteered my time with the GATESOL organization over the past seven years is because GATESOL has given so much to me. Within this organization I have connected with colleagues who never fail me when I need to bounce around an exciting new idea or troubleshoot a situation that perplexes me. For me, being involved in GATESOL started with a membership. Will you consider joining or renewing your membership this year?

I also owe a great deal of my professional growth to the professional learning opportunities that GATESOL provides. I have been attending the annual GATESOL conference since I entered the field in 2001, and I always leave the conference energized and excited about the new ideas and connections I have gathered from my colleagues. After several years as an attendee, I began to present sessions and found even more excitement and joy through participating as a presenter. Will you attend GATESOL in 2015? Will this be the year you present your first session (or your tenth?)?

Did you know that GATESOL offers thousands of dollars in grants each year? I was honored to be chosen as the Southeast TESOL Conference Grant recipient a number of years ago, and through the grant I was able to attend the SETESOL conference that was held in Miami that year. At a time when budgets were slim and moratoriums prevented travel to out of state conferences, this simply would not have been an option for me without the support of the grant. I learned so much in Miami, and I loved sharing my experiences with my fellow GATESOLers via the newsletter article I wrote when I returned. I have friends and colleagues who have been awarded grants through GATESOL for classroom projects, professional development, TESOL conference attendance, and to support their summer travels to other countries. The impact of these experiences is immeasurable! How might a GATESOL grant further your development or projects this year? What experiences or scholarly work can you share with your colleagues through the GATESOL newsletter or GATESOL in Action journal?

If you are looking for a way to get even more "nourishment" from your GATESOL membership, consider subscribing to one or more Forums that match

Students met in sheltered classrooms with a 15-1 ratio and, also, were enrolled in one or two elective classes within the regular school program. Efforts were made to integrate students into middle and high school culture as well with introductions to pep rallies and other school activities. Students could remain in this sheltered program for a year before moving into regular classrooms. At these sites and the elementary site, administrators and teachers were enthusiastic about the progress made by students and the engagement of the family in the school community.

Conference speakers and sessions focused on the conference theme, Bridges to Success, and included strategies and activities for helping ELLs cross those bridges to success and meet their educational goals. In my program with Georgia Piedmont Technical College (GPTC), our mandate is to prepare adult students for success in the workplace, but many of our students also want to obtain a GED or even continue on with post-secondary education, so sessions that dealt with improving reading and vocabulary skills were of particular interest to me. Presentations by Doug Fisher on close reading and Keith Folse on the challenges of learning English were chock-full of simple and effective strategies for building skills necessary for the workplace but also for academic skills. Other sessions offered specific activities easily adapted for adult ESL classrooms: student-made vocabulary posters, art-inspired discussion, and worksheet design.

While these parts of the conference were definitely interesting and profitable, the opportunity to meet educators from other states—and Georgia!—and learn about their programs was also exciting. One of the presenters I talked with emphasized respecting teacher individuality and capitalizing on teacher strengths and interests rather than trying to follow every new methodology that comes down the road. Students are most benefitted, he proposed, when their teachers are enthusiastic and engaged in their teaching because of who they are rather than who someone else thinks they should be. I thought this was encouraging for all of us who want to be better teachers but are not always comfortable with the latest pedagogical trend.

I also spent time with an ESL K-12 coordinator from a different Arkansas district whose budget and numbers of ELLs would not support some of the ideas we saw in our site visits. She was attending every session she
your area of work or your interests. There are a variety of Forums to choose from, and subscribing is easy. Just go to the GATESOL website and follow the menu link for Forums. You can post a new topic or add your voice to an existing conversation. Another way to take your involvement to the next level is to volunteer to lead an interest section or to submit your nomination for an executive board position this fall. GATESOL is only as strong as its members and volunteers! How will you make the most of your GATESOL membership this year?

Let’s make 2015-16 the best school year ever!

Sincerely,

Julie
Join us for the 2015 GATESOL Conference
Crowne Plaza Ravinia at Perimeter, Atlanta
Teaching and Learning: Hand in Hand

Sustaining Teacher Development through Collaboration

Deborah J. Short, Ph.D

Portraits of Collaboration: Successful Teaching Practices for K-Adult ESOL Education

Andrea Honigsfeld, Ed.D
Maria G. Dove, Ed.D

Submit a Proposal for a Concurrent or a Poster Session
For instructions, please visit our website, gatesol.org
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How much information do you think you would gather about your students if you were a fly on the wall at their house? If you were able to witness first hand your students interacting with their friends and families? Do you think you would gain a different perspective about your students? Those are the types of questions that I wanted to answer and share with my fellow educators about my students.

I was awarded the Project/Professional Development Grant I: PK-12 from the Georgia Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages. This is my third year teaching ESOL in the Troup County School System. One of my goals of this project was to provide my students an opportunity to ‘create’ an autobiography and share it with others. As writing seems to be one of my students weaker domains, I wanted to provide an activity that was engaging and was able to lend itself to the many different types of writing styles and genres while allowing the students the freedom and flexibility to take their writing in any directions that they chose. The project incorporated the linguistic complexity and language usage that my students were lacking. There were numerous teachable moments along the way, mostly in the way of conventions and fluency. The students seem to have generated great ideas, but at times, had difficulty developing their ideas into a writing piece.

Another goal of this project, required the students to become the ‘director’ of their own movie. The students needed to develop a script to be able to narrate the movie. The grant provided the purchase of four Amazon Kindles. The kindles were used to record the movie at the student’s home.

There were a few surprises along the way for the students! The students did not realize how much ‘writing time and planning’ went into developing their autobiography movie. The next phase for the students was to do a ‘dress rehearsal’ with the kindles at school.

As a ‘Fifth Grade Graduation’ gift, I created a DVD for each one of my fifth graders that contains their autobiography as well as their classmates.

Currently the school where I am assigned has one of the highest numbers of English Learners in our school system. I wanted to be able to bridge the gap between what the teachers thought we knew about our students and what actually takes place. I wanted the faculty to observe a life in the day of one of our students to catch a small look into a different culture. This grant also made it possible for the students to have a ‘premier showing’ of their movie to the staff during a faculty meeting. This allowed the staff members a rare opportunity to witness a moment in that student’s home life-a short
rehearsed moment- but a moment that will hopefully connect with the staff members to observe how our students live and what circumstances that they must endure.

In the meantime, while the students were writing, producing, editing, and directing, in no particular order at times, we utilized the many learning tools that I was able to download to the Kindles. Many of the educational apps helped numerous students have fun learning the English language. Letter recognition, letter sounds, sight words, and numerous other fun apps were a huge success for my students. There is no doubt that using the apps on these Kindles will provide an increase in student proficiency levels across the board.

In conclusion, this project was a journey. There were numerous times where the students seemed fatigued and unmotivated to complete the assignment. But as we neared completion of our ‘scripts’ the students became energized in completing this project. I was as excited as they were! Upon completing this project, I will start to implement the project into the lower grades, working my way down from fifth grade to kindergarten. Needless to say, the complexity of this project will be scaled back based on the students and the grade. Hopefully after the completion of this project, I and my fellow educators, will be able to answer the questions that were presented in the opening of this article.

I appreciate the Georgia Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (GATESOL) organization for the generous grant and the continuous support of not only the ESOL educators, but for all the educators who seek resources and support to ensure that all of our students become educationally successful.
ESOL Classroom Literacy Practices: 
Adult English Learners’ Perspectives

Nicole Marie Pettit
Georgia State University

I want my students to understand what they read – not just decode! How should I teach – and what should I teach? How can I support my emergent reader adult English learners in self-identifying as participants in the multiple and diverse literacies of everyday life in our shared communities?

These were a few of the questions that brought me to classroom research. For over 15 years, I had been working in both Minnesota and Georgia with adult refugees and immigrants at all English levels, but I was especially interested in supporting emergent readers. As adult educators know, these English learners (ELs) bring strengths and challenges to the classroom that are both similar to, and different from, their classmates who are fluent readers in another language or languages. For example, we know that fluent readers of languages written in an alphabetic script (e.g., Spanish, Russian) will likely transfer their print knowledge to the endeavor of learning to read in English, and may not need bottom-up, form-focused reading support. On the other hand, adult ELs who are emergent readers benefit from balancing both top-down (e.g., comprehension focused) and bottom-up (e.g., form-focused) approaches to literacy instruction (see Vinogradov and Bigelow, 2010).

However, I wanted to move beyond research findings to ask: What do learners say? Which approaches do our adult emergent reader ELs prefer, specifically? What materials and activities do they feel provide them the best support? What instructional approaches appear to be most beneficial? My interest in listening to learner perspectives was hampered: I don’t speak Burmese, Karen, Arabic, Pashto – or any of the 13 languages that were represented in our class of 22 beginning English learners!

The Georgia-TESOL Project/Professional Development Grant permitted me to overcome this difficulty in two crucial ways. First, I was able to buy digital recording equipment to record and later review classroom activities and learners’ class participation. Second, the grant allowed me to hire interpreters to interview learners in their first languages. Thus, throughout fall and spring semesters 2014-2015, I conducted qualitative data collection, including audio and video-recording classroom activities, photographing class activities and learners’ work and tests, and conducting interpreted group interviews.

Our class engaged in a myriad and diverse literacy activities, such as sustained silent reading, collaborative writing, paired/group reading, digital literacies, and more. For the purposes of space, I report here on the learners’ reported preferred literacy activity – and the one that appeared to spur a great deal of learner growth over the course of the school year: the Language Experience Approach (LEA).

LEA is a generative, multi-step process. First, frequent field trips in the surrounding community were a regular part of class. These were followed by collaboratively brainstorming a list of words and phrases that reflected the experience we had.

Learners at beginning levels were able to participate by simply saying one word, such as, “flowers,” while intermediate learners might say, “see flowers.” Both of these would be recast into a full sentence (e.g., “We saw flowers”) during the next step of the LEA process: writing sentences and arranging them into a story.
Next, learners would copy the story into their books, and draw illustrations that captured their experiences. We also occasionally brought our stories to the computer lab to type and print them.

Drawing on stories that the entire class had experienced together guaranteed that learners comprehended the story overall, even if many of the individual words were new; this contributed to learner confidence. Utilizing the LEA stories as core class texts allowed for a great deal of recycling content and vocabulary, as well as providing fodder for bottom-up literacy instruction and English print conventions. For example, we can pull all of the words in an LEA story that have similar vowel patterns or vowel sounds (or beginning letters, etc.) and ask learners to expand on our list: “What else sounds like this?”

Additionally, copying a story from the board (as well as typing it in a word processing program) required learners to develop knowledge of directionality of print, word boundaries and spacing, punctuation, wrapping text between lines, and much more.

One of the strengths of LEA – and one of the reasons I suggest it was most popular and effective with these learners – is that it connects real-life experiences with many kinds of learner strengths and literacy practices – not only reading and writing, but orality/storytelling literacies, digital literacies, and artistic literacies, as described above. LEA also brought us out of the classroom to learn more about our communities and experience many places learners had not yet visited, such as the public library, a fire station, and the Martin Luther King Jr. historical site.

For teachers and administrators who are interested in utilizing LEA or other learner-generated texts as core materials, I recommend the following free online resources:
• **Making meaning, making change: Participatory curriculum development for adult ESL literacy** by Elsa Auerbach.

• **Adult English language learners with limited literacy** by Martha Bigelow and Robin Schwarz.

• **Using oral language skills to build on the emerging literacy of adult English learners: CAELA Brief** by Patsy Vinogradov and Martha Bigelow.

• **Teaching Adult ELLs Who Are Emergent Readers**, a free online course offered through Literacy Information and Communication System’s ELL-U.

• **“Maestra! The letters speak.”**: Adult ESL students learning to read for the first time by Patsy Vinogradov.

I would like to thank Georgia-TESOL for making this classroom-based research project possible.

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### Georgia TESOL Grants /Awards

Georgia TESOL is very proud to offer numerous grants and awards to its members. Georgia TESOL Grants & Awards total nearly $12,000 each year.

With the exception of the Community Support Grant, for which any non-profit organization benefiting the ELL community is eligible to apply, all grants are exclusively available to current GATESOL members. For more detailed information of specific grants and awards, including descriptions, amounts and deadlines, go to: [www.gatesol.org](http://www.gatesol.org) and view Grants and Awards page.

#### John R. Stowe Cultural Immersion Grant
This grant provides assistance for an immersion experience abroad for an educator who wishes to serve his or her students better by learning more about their culture and language through experiencing the culture firsthand. **Amount:** $2000. **Deadline:** On or before December 30.

#### Beverly Benson Travel Grant
This grant supports a teacher or a teacher trainer/supervisor who wishes to attend the International TESOL Convention. **Amount:** Up to $1500. **Deadline:** On or before September 1.

#### Lindy Lopez Butner Memorial Grant
This grant promotes the professional development of a promising ESOL/ESL teacher who is a current member in good standing of Georgia TESOL, has a worthy plan or goal that will ultimately benefit ESOL/ESL students, but lacks the resources or materials to achieve his or her goal. **Amount:** Up to $1000. **Deadline:** On or before September 1.

#### SETESOL Conference Grant
This grant supports a teacher or a teacher trainer/supervisor who wishes to attend the SETESOL Convention. **Amount:** Up to $2000. **Deadline:** On or before May 15.

#### Peru TESOL Travel Grant
This grant promotes cross-cultural understanding and the sharing of resources between Georgia TESOL and Peru TESOL. **Amount:** $2000. **Deadline:** On or before March 1.

#### Community Support Grant
This grant supports nonprofit community organizations who are working to support the interests of ELL professionals and/or ELL in the state of Georgia. **Amount:** Up to $1000. **Deadline:** On or before Oct. 20.

#### Project Professional Development Grant I: PK 12
This grant supports classroom/research projects and promote the professional development of a promising teacher who has a worthy plan or goal that will ultimately benefit ELL students (PK-12), but lacks the resources or materials to achieve this goal. **Amount:** Up to $1000. **Deadline:** On or before April 15.

#### Project Professional Development Grant II- Adult or Higher Education
This grant supports classroom/research projects and promote the professional development of an ELL teacher who works with students in an adult education program or higher education institution, or an ELL teacher educator has a worthy plan or goal that will benefit ELL students, but lacks the resources or materials to achieve this goal. **Amount:** Up to $1,000. **Deadline:** On or before April 15.