



WITESOL Newsletter

WITESOL Advocacy Update

Fall 2015

From WITESOL President and Advocacy Chair, Lori Menning

Collaboration is the Key

As President of WITESOL, I arranged for Sonia Nazario, Pulitzer Prize winning journalist and author of the book "Enrique's Journey", to be the keynote speaker at our 2015 Conference. Sonia travels the country speaking about immigration and undocumented minors while focusing on determination and perseverance. Since I wanted her advocacy message to be shared with the largest audience possible, I collaborated with the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, the Project Estrella Grant and my district, the School District of New London, for her three day visit. Prior to speaking at the WITESOL Conference, she spoke to University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh students, faculty and community members on campus. Also, she visited

New London High School and spoke to an auditorium of over 500 students. In addition, a special meet and greet with the bilingual students and Culture Club members was followed by a question and answer session in Spanish in my bilingual classroom.

Making connections

Last fall, when Congressman Reid Ribble visited my bilingual classroom he shared he is an avid reader. I felt this was a perfect opportunity to reach out to him with a special invitation to Sonia's presentation. Since the Congressman was scheduled to be in Washington D.C. during that time, his office sent one of his field representatives, Tanner Mastaw, a New London High School alumni, to attend Sonia's presentation at New London High School.

Setting the stage

In preparation for Sonia's visit, I went to Congressman Ribble's

Appleton office and presented a copy of her book to the Congressman and his field representative. After reading the book, I hope this story will help them understand why many young people risk their lives and leave their homes in Central America to come to the U.S. I hope the Congressman will remember when it comes time to vote. Also, this book connects to him in many ways in his current role and as a former business owner who hired many workers from Latin America.

Next steps

I continue to be in contact with the office of Congressman Ribble and my students and I are hoping to schedule a book chat with the Congressman later this year.

Together in advocacy!

- Lori Menning

Inside this issue:

Writing & Art Contest	2
Teacher Tips for Arabics L1	2
Sonia Nazario	2
TESOL Travel Awards	3
Youth and Wisdom	3
Upcoming Elections	3
Tabletop Games for L2s	4

Submit an
article for the
WITESOL
Newsletter!

Submit an article
or photo for the
winter edition of
the WITESOL
Newsletter. Please
email
witesolboard@gmail.com
with your
submission by
January 15th. We
look forward to
hearing from you!

WITESOL Writing and Art Contest

We are excited to offer our annual writing and art contest online this year! We were looking for ways to streamline the process and also help us save money by reducing the cost of postage expenses. The new online contest will allow WITESOL the opportunity to continue offering monetary awards to students of WITESOL

members.

Students can write an essay or create an art project related to this year's theme: The Perfect School.

Students can also think about this guiding question: What is the ideal learning environment? Students are welcome to explore how they

learn best, what they need from their environment in order to learn, what their teachers need to be like, etc. [Learn more about the contest!](#)

Members can submit their students' work starting in December until the contest's deadline of February 15th.

Teaching Tips for Teachers for Arabic L1s

By: Lora M. Beseler
Trempealeau2@gmail.com

Teach English dictionary use. You will be doing your Arabic L1s students a big favor. Not only does it give spelling practice, it expands vocabulary. Additionally, filing systems, phone books, encyclopedias, bibliographies, references, among others, are based on this alphabetic system. Arabic dictionaries bear no resemblance to English dictionaries. Arabic dictionaries are based on the trilateral root system; one must know the root first in order to find a word.

Since there are 26 letters in the English alphabet, this approximates the number of weeks in a semester. One letter per week could be chosen with activities that involve looking up academic words in the dictionary, and then reporting back on definition, parts of speech, sentence writing, and so forth.

Further, spelling progress will impact reading comprehension and fluency.

Enrique's Journey



[Watch Sonia Nazario explain how she met Enrique, the protagonist of "Enrique's Journey".](#)

WITESOL just wrapped up hosting a successful conference at UW-Oshkosh at the end of October. This year's theme was "Cultural Journeys through Language and Learning."

The keynote speaker was award-winning journalist Sonia Nazario. Nazario is best known for her book titled "Enrique's Journey," a Honduran boy's struggle to find his mother in the U.S.

To learn more about Nazario's work and to read about how she advocates for ELLs and their families, visit enriquesjourney.com



Keynote Speaker:
Sonia Nazario



TESOL 2016
International Convention
& English Language Expo
5-8 APRIL 2016 - BALTIMORE, MARYLAND, USA



Did you know that WITESOL annually awards two to three \$1,000 Travel Awards so its members can attend the TESOL International Convention? In 2016, TESOL International will be holding their Convention in Baltimore, MD on April 5-8, 2016. WITESOL also offers seven complimentary TESOL Membership Awards. **Please apply by December 15th.**

<http://witesol.com/contests-and-awards/>

In Praise of Youth and Wisdom

By: Renee Lajcak

lajcak@wisc.edu

“By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; Second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest.” — [Confucius](#)

I'm writing to all the 50-something tired ESL teachers out there on a dark Monday, November night. (Sure, I'm actually talking about my own situation, but maybe some of you feel the same way.) I know, you want to stay up-to-date with the latest tech and new activities, but some days feel like you just can't stuff one more new thing into your brain. But somehow you do it. You heave yourself up and figure out how to use that technology, and you push yourself to try new things in your classroom. Why? Because if you don't, you congeal, calcify, fossilize, petrify... you pick the zombie vocabulary. You need to learn in order to stay alive in your teaching and in your career. You owe it to your students and you owe it to yourself.

I know you see those young teachers with their energy and bright eyes. They are everywhere, and they are multiplying. I share an office with eight other teachers and I have most of them beat by several decades of life and teaching experience. But I'm not climbing up on a high horse because I learn something from those young teachers every single day. They are so fun and full of shiny, new ideas. They can explain new technology in a simple and direct way. They are still full of the energy that I had when I started in this career, and their energy gives mine a much-needed kick start.

I hope that I have something to give back to them too. Occasionally, they ask for advice and I try to come up with a bit of sage wisdom gleaned from teaching thousands of students. And sometimes I seem to accomplish that. But more importantly, their questions force me to reflect and consider what I've experienced and learned, and this is an exquisitely valuable thing.

Upcoming WITESOL Board Elections

In December, WITESOL members will have a chance to vote on some open board positions within the WITESOL organization. There is an opening for secretary, treasurer, and three members-at-large. In early December, members will receive an email sharing information about the candidates. Members will also have the opportunity to vote in this year's online election.



‘Pretty Sneaky, Sis!’: Employing Tabletop Games with L2 Students

by: Alex Hatheway and Conan Kmiecik

alexander.hatheway@uwrf.edu conan.kmiecik@uwrf.edu

Background

We are living in a tabletop game¹ renaissance. As of 2011, German board game sensation *The Settlers of Catan* had sold over 25 million units (Keyes, The Atlantic), but it’s not alone. Games like *Ticket to Ride*, *Pandemic* and *King of Tokyo* are making regular appearances at gatherings of the young and old alike. Walk into any game store and you will be surrounded by shelves and shelves of games with beautiful artwork and exciting themes. In an age where we live in front of screens and play in virtual environments, the appeal of these games is pretty easy to understand. Tabletop games provide us with much missed face-to-face interaction and the satisfaction of touching real objects with texture and weight. Additionally, games can lower affective filters, build classroom rapport, and facilitate authentic language use. As university ESL teachers (and tabletop game enthusiasts!), we are always on the lookout for new activities to use in ESL classes. In this article we discuss which games worked for us and which games could work with some modification.

Games that Can Be Used Out of the Box

So, how does one use tabletop games in the English as a second language classroom? Sometimes all you need is a great game. Several games we tried are usable right out of the box. One game that needs little to no adaptation is *The Resistance* by Indie Boards and Cards. In *The Resistance*, players take the role of either the brave resistance fighters working to bring down a corrupt, totalitarian government or spies for said government. The spies know who the other spies are, but the resistance don’t know who is who. It’s up to the resistance to complete three successful missions and prevent the spies from sabotaging them. *The Resistance* requires deduction, persuasion, deception, and accusation -- all of which require heavy use of language. Despite the game’s language component, *The Resistance* doesn’t punish players who are at lower levels of proficiency; no specialized vocabulary -- other than the words *spy* or *resistance* -- are needed to play. The best part is anywhere from 5 to 10 players can play the game. Furthermore, in multinational classrooms, the game discourages players from using their L1 -- using a language other players don’t understand makes one look like a spy. In our experience using the game with English learners, we found that students quickly bought into the theme and lost themselves in the game. It didn’t just get the quiet students talking -- it got them shouting, “You’re a spy!”

Completely different in tone, but just as effective for getting students to talk is *The Ungame*. In *The Ungame*, players draw cards containing thought provoking questions that encourage players to open up about themselves. “What is your favorite musical memory?” a card might ask. The players then share any music-related memory they care to, and everyone gets to know one another a little better. As players answer questions, they advance along the board -- actually, we didn’t even use the board for this game. The questions were stimulating enough on their own. A teacher could simply keep the cards available for a warm up activity.

Another great game for the ESL classroom is *Wits and Wagers*. A round of *Wits and Wagers* begins with a trivia question -- the answer to which is always a numerical value (i.e. How tall is Mount Everest?

¹ We use *tabletop game* in this article to mean a board game, card game, dice game or any similar game.

How deep is the Mariana Trench? How many number 1 hits did the Beatles have?). The questions are generally obscure enough not to grant too much of an advantage to students with specific cultural or linguistic knowledge. Once the question is asked, the players will write their guesses on a small piece of white board. When the guesses are revealed, the players will arrange them from lowest to highest. The players must then place (imaginary) bets on the answer they think is closest to the correct answer. It is during this stage that *Wits and Wagers* shows its value in the ESL class. If the players are organized into teams, then players must use English to convince one another of the closest answer. The result is a trivia game that students of all English levels and knowledge backgrounds can enjoy.

Games with Potential (But Proceed with Caution)

The aforementioned games would be a hit in almost any intermediate or higher language classroom. However, we also looked at a few games that were near misses -- games that either needed some modification in order to be useful in the classroom or games that might be a hit in some classrooms but not others. *Gloom* falls into the latter category. *Gloom* is a stylish and inventive card game in which players control a family of Victorian gothic types upon whom they must inflict all sorts of miseries to the apparent delight of the afflicted. Basically, like *The Addams Family*, the characters in *Gloom* seems to enjoy having horrible things that happen to them. The best part about this game from a language teaching perspective is that the players are encouraged to tell stories to illustrate every mishap that befalls their ghoulish clan. For example, if a player plays the *hypothermia* card on the twins, Lester and Eliza, that player might tell the following story:

Poor Lester and Eliza were playing with their pet death adder when it slithered into the bog at edge of the lawn surrounding their family's decrepit estate. They spent all day looking for the creature in the bog. When night fell, they realized they were quite lost, and, eventually, they froze to death.

Although the storytelling aspect, makes *Gloom* an attractive choice for the English classroom, it might not have the broad appeal of other games. While the macabre artwork reminiscent of Edward Gorey may be a strength, it could also be a weakness. Students without the matching pop-culture schemata (*Addams Family* reruns, *Nightmare Before Christmas* lunch boxes), might not see what's so funny or exciting about the theme. Other students might just be repulsed. Furthermore, the game is only for four players, so a teacher would need multiple copies to play with even a small class.

Another game that is an almost-but-not-quite fit for the ESL class is *Pub Trivia*. *Pub Trivia* is exactly what it sounds like: a Wednesday night pub quiz. The name of course makes it suitable only for students of legal drinking age, but even if your students are age appropriate, *Pub Trivia* still needs a few modifications before it is ESL class ready. *Pub Trivia* questions might require knowledge that is too culturally or linguistically specific for English learners. What we liked about the game was the format of its questions. There are questions that ask for names or dates. Other questions have multiple part answers while still other questions will ask students to draw an item from memory. Still, teachers who use *Pub Trivia* in their classroom should choose the questions carefully or even make up their own in order to ensure that students will be able to answer them.

The final two games in our near miss category are *Never Have I Ever* and *Would You Rather...?*. Both are great for similar reasons, and both have the same problems. *Never Have I Ever* has students asking each other if they have ever ridden a motorcycle or laughed so hard milk came out of their nose. Its use in

the grammar classroom is pretty obvious -- it is great for teaching the present perfect tense -- but it is also great for getting students to open up and share a few laughs. *Would You Rather...?* is based on a similar premise but instead has students asking each other if they would rather be a great white shark or a pterodactyl. Both games are full of funny and thought-provoking questions that get students talking, but the teacher must be careful before using these games. Some of the questions might be incredibly inappropriate for class, so make sure you buy the right edition or go through the question cards carefully.

Conclusion

The ESL/EFL teacher looking for an activity to create natural conversation would do well to visit the local game store. The majority of these new tabletop games are designed to add life to a party by encouraging healthy competition and social interaction. Why not use them to add life to your classroom? If you peruse the game store shelves, you are bound to find a game that would work in your classroom either out of the box or with some slight modifications.

WITESOL

**Wisconsin Teachers of
English to Speakers of
Other Languages**

witesol.com

witesolboard@gmail.com



WITESOL made it easier to renew your membership with our new online form. [Sign up or renew today!](#)

WITESOL is the professional organization for Wisconsin Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages. As an affiliate of TESOL International, it represents and provides professional development and other opportunities to educators of English Language Learners and bilingual students of all levels and ages around the state of Wisconsin.

Connect with WITESOL Via Social Media



[WITESOL
Facebook Page](#)



[@WITESOL](#)