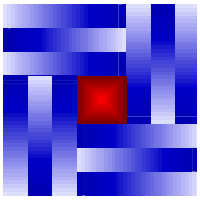
# ESOL Starter Kit

**Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center**

**October 2002**



*This product was paid for under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of 1998; however, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily represent the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and no official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education should be inferred. This document was designed and created by the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center, Oliver Hall Education Building, 1015 W. Main St., P.O. Box 842020, Richmond, VA 23284-2020.*

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After reading and/using the ESOL Starter Kit, you are encouraged to evaluate it carefully and submit suggestions for improvement by completing and sending us the evaluation form found on the last page of this Kit. You may, also, call in your feeback, using the toll free number listed above.

## Acknowledgments

The ESOL Starter Kit was originally developed in 1998 by the following Resource Center Associates:

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# INTRODUCTION

Whether you are starting to teach English to a few students or are beginning a large program, the task of teaching English can seem overwhelming at first. Taken one step at a time, it can be a manageable and rewarding experience. We hope this Kit will help you get started.

Section A of the Kit is designed to offer some ideas for testing, registering and placing students in the correct class according to their specific needs and goals. There is a sample registration form, a sample placement test, and a reference list of available commercial tests. Also included are sample needs assessments so that you can determine what it is that your students want to learn. The final part of Section A gives a brief description of various program models.

In Section B of the Kit you will find several lists or resources—from professional associations to community resources. This part also includes a list of some of the many Internet sites that you may find valuable.

The next section (C) of the Kit includes useful information about how adults learn, descriptions of various types of language instruction, and some tips for effective teaching.

Integrating the four basic language skills—listening, speaking, reading and writing—is the focus of Section D. Some sample lesson plan forms are included. This section also offers suggestions for realia that can be useful in the adult ESOL* class.

Because all ESOL classes are multi-level in some way, some ideas are included on how to deal with the multi-level class. Section E, also, deals with helping students with special needs, using volunteers in the classroom, and evaluating your teaching.

Section F of the Kit offers an overview on curriculum development, along with a reference list of curricula already developed.

Two new sections G and H, ESOL and Technology and EL/Civics, respectively, have been added to the revised edition (2002) of the Starter Kit. In the last few years these areas have become the center of much instructional focus in both adult education and ESOL.

The materials in the binder can be copied as a whole or in parts.

When you use the Kit, please take the time to fill out an evaluation form at the back of the Kit and return it with your feedback.

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*ESL (English as a Second Language)
ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)
Both terms are used in the profession of teaching English to non-native speakers. ESOL, however, has become the term of choice, since it implies that many people already speak a second or even a third language before embarking on the challenge of studying English. Throughout this Starter Kit you will see both terms.

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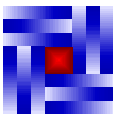
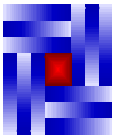


# SECTION A

## GETTING STARTED: WHERE DO I BEGIN?

1. Cultural Considerations
2. Registration
3. Assessment
4. Language Proficiency Levels
5. Learner Needs and Goals
6. Designing a Plan



## 1. Cultural Considerations

Part of the enjoyment of teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) to adults (and children) is getting to know more about other people's cultures. It is always fun to have students discuss their homeland traditions and holidays, and to wear costumes and share food from their countries.

But culture is more than dress and food – it is non-verbal communication styles, beliefs, values, customs, family structures, and much, much more.

An ESOL teacher cannot begin to know everything about every country in the world. However, a few basic and practical points can make the learning experience more comfortable for both the students and the teacher.

The following articles address tips for communicating with nonnative speakers of English and dealing with crosscultural misunderstandings. A list of resources is also included. While this information provides guidelines and 'food for thought,' the best way to get to know about a student's culture is by getting to know the student.

# Communicating with Nonnative Speakers of English

*by Laura Schanes Romstedt*

Mr. Park, from Korea, walked up to the cashier and asked in halting English where to find men's socks. The cashier, while tallying up the day's receipts, gave the man detailed directions. "Go through women's shoes until you reach the escalator. Take the escalator down one floor and turn right past shirts and suits and you'll see ties and socks in the far left corner. Don't turn left when you get off the escalator because if you do, you'll hit the gift shop, and then you'll know you've gone the wrong way, won't you." Mr. Park said nothing. The cashier asked, " Do you understand?" Mr. Park smiled, nodded, and slowly walked away. Did effective communication happen here? How do you know?

An essential part of our mission as caring professionals is to communicate effectively with others in order to get something accomplished. This could entail meeting with a parent to discuss how his or her child is doing in school; to give out information about a service that may be helpful; to answer questions or concerns the parent may be having; or just to have a casual conversation. These encounters can sometimes be stressful for both the native speaker and the nonnative speaker of English. Here are some points to keep in mind when communicating with those for whom English is a second language. While these suggestions are meant to focus on communication with nonnative speakers of English, one can easily see how some of these tips could be helpful when communicating with anyone, foreign or native born.

**Two-Way Street**

First and foremost, a good attitude is the cornerstone of good communication. The expression that communication is a "two way street" is very true. It is the responsibility of all parties concerned (native and nonnative) to want this interchange to be successful for it to be successful. It is not so much what we say as how we say it. We attempt to speak more often with someone when we know they are open and willing to talk to us.

**Eye Contact**

In the American culture it is not uncommon for us to do something while we are talking - putting papers into a briefcase, tidying up a desk, looking through files. When trying to talk to someone from another culture, it is essential to "keep an eye" on that person (even if they are not looking at you), in order to watch for signs of understanding, confusion, or miscommunication. Watch for the dazed look (also known as the "glassy-eyed stare") that each of us has exhibited at one time or another when we are confused or don't understand something.

**Gestures**

Be aware that gestures do not mean the same all over the world. Something which is perfectly acceptable here may be offensive in another country. The nonnative speaker of English may not know which gesture is acceptable here. For example, the A-OK gesture is offensive to many Hispanics. This does not mean that we should stop using this gesture, or any other gesture, for fear of offending someone. However, if after using a gesture, you notice that the other person looks surprised, confused, or angry, that is a good indication that there might be a problem with that gesture, and that an explanation may be in order.

**Allowing Time for Response**

Give the other person with whom you are speaking extra time to respond – pause time. Pause time is the amount of time it takes for one person to respond orally to another person. Everyone in the world has a different pause time. Some people are very quick to respond, while others seem to take their time. How many times have we "jumped the gun" and answered for someone who did not respond in what we felt was an appropriate time? Keep in mind that when a person learning English is trying to carry on a conversation in English, his brain is going through a very complicated process. It first receives the information from the other

person and translates the English into his first language. The brain then comes up with the response in the first language and has to translate it into English. After all these steps, the nonnative speaker finally has to actually say the words out loud. All this processing and translating and verbalizing takes time. It can seem like an eternity waiting an extra few seconds for the person to respond, but in most cases, the nonnative speaker will respond. He or she may not give the response you expect, but at least you will have some sense of how much he or she understands.

**Literal Interpretation**

Many people learning a second language have difficulty following context clues, that is, following a conversation and remembering what was said before and its relation to what is being said now. The same holds true with the written word. They take each word or sentence literally. They also have difficulty distinguishing between important (key) words and nonessential words. In both oral and written communication, use simple sentences in logical order, avoiding unnecessary information. Give no more than two steps of directions at a time. It is easier for the other person to process the information.

It can also be helpful to use nouns to replace pronouns. Many people learning English have great difficulty distinguishing among the different pronouns, (he, her, ours, them, etc.). For example, instead of saying, "He said to give it to him," it would be clearer to say, "Mr. Jones said to give the paper to Tom."

**Idioms**

Avoid using idioms or expressions ("I need it yesterday") unless you are sure the person you are speaking with clearly understands what you are talking about. Idioms are the most difficult part of the language to learn because in many cases the actual words have no relation to the meaning, and we use them all the time. Idioms dealing with sports ("He's out in left field") or animals ("I'm happy as a clam") can be potential causes of communication breakdown because the nonnative speaker may focus all his attention trying to decipher the idiom ("Why does he think he's a clam?") instead of concentrating on the rest of the conversation. Rewrite or rephrase idioms into English that literally says what it means. (Say "He's very busy doing a lot of different things," instead of "He's juggling a full schedule.")

Explain and emphasize words that are important to the meaning of the conversation. If it is important for that person to know that tomorrow's meeting has been cancelled, say it one way and, if necessary repeat it, using different words. ("There is no school tomorrow. School is closed tomorrow.")

**Show When You Tell**

Keep in mind that there are all types of learners. Some learn best by reading, some with pictures, some by doing, and some by hearing information. Provide examples, charts, pictures, or diagrams to support what you are saying. Demonstrate using real objects to show what you would like done. (Show the person where the phone is, or hold up a calendar and point to the day of the next appointment.) Write down the information you want to give the other person. They may be proficient in reading the language, or they can take it home and translate it themselves or have someone else help them.

If necessary, follow-up the conversation by asking the other person clarification questions starting with who, what, where, when, how, or why. ("When is your next appointment?" Who are you going to see in the office?") Avoid questions with negatives. ("You do understand, don't you?") This can be confusing, as the nonnative speakers of English may not know where a yes or no answer is appropriate. Some of us worry that we may sound rude asking these follow-up questions. Demonstrating a positive attitude and asking the questions tactfully can help things go more smoothly.



*(Laura S. Romstedt works for the Office of Adult and Community Education, Fairfax County Public Schools.)*

What about when we don't understand what the other person is saying? Repeating back what we think we heard can help. And we can use those same clarification questions to make sure we are clear on what information has been given to us. ("You said you are coming on Tuesday, right?") Asking others to slow down, repeat the information, or show us what they want gives us another chance to understand what we just heard.

Sometimes it is difficult to have the right attitude, and to be patient, especially when it's the end of the work day and we are ready to go home. While these practical steps may take more time at first, they will save time in the long run if they help both parties feel more comfortable and confident about communicating effectively. Successful communication is a large part of what our job is all about.

# Dealing with Crosscultural Misunderstanding

*by Laura Schanes Romstedt*

When people from differing cultural backgrounds interact, it is natural to experience discomfort and even conflict. This occurs because people from other cultures behave in ways that seem unpredictable and even threatening from our own cultural viewpoint. Keep in mind the following tips:

- Try to look at a situation from the other person's cultural point of view. The nonnative speaker may be doing what he or she feels is appropriate because that is the way he or she has learned to do it.

- Every country has different customs about what is polite or impolite behavior. While we usually get the waiter's attention in a restaurant by "catching his eye," in another culture the appropriate behavior would be to bang a hand on the table.

- Consider whether the conflict is due to personality differences or cultural differences. Is that person **deliberately** acting in a manner we might consider rude, or does he **not know** how we get the waiter's attention in this country?

- Remember that fluency in English does not mean fluency in the culture. Many people know the language very well but are still learning about the culture (that in our culture we form a line when waiting to pay at the grocery store, and that we value our own "personal" space while in those lines).

- Try to be patient. Perhaps this is the most difficult part about communicating with a nonnative speaker of English, particularly when we have so much to do in a very short amount of time. It **does** take time to communicate effectively, but it will be worth it if both parties are, in the end, able to understand each other.

- When at all possible, address situations of miscommunication or conflict as they happen. When people feel offended or hurt, they carry those feelings with them for a long time. If someone appears to have become angry based on what we said, it is best to talk about it at that moment.

- Ask for help. Contact someone experienced in working with nonnative speakers of English.

*(Laura S. Romstedt works for the Office of Adult and Community Education, Fairfax County Public Schools.)*

## Communication and Culture Resources

***American Ways : A Guide for Foreigners in the United States,*** Gary Althen, Intercultural Press, 1988.

***The American Ways : An Introduction to American Culture,*** Maryanne Kearny Datesman, Jo Ann Crandall, Edward N. Kearny, 2nd Edition, Longman, 1996.

***Beyond Language : Cross-Cultural Communication,*** Deena R. Levine, Mara B., Ph.D. Adelman, 2nd Edition, Longman, 2002.

***Communicating With Asia : Understanding People and Customs,*** Harry Irwin, Allen & Unwin 1996.

***Cross-Cultural Communication for New Americans (The Working Culture, Book 1),*** David Hemphill, Barbara Pfaffenberger, Barbara Hockman, Prentice Hall, 1989.

***Cultural Considerations in Adult Literacy Education ERIC Digest,*** George Spanos, National Clearinghouse on Literacy Education, Center for Applied Linguistics, EDO-LE-91-01, April 1991.

***Cultural Encounters in the U.S.A. : Cross-Cultural Dialogues and Mini-Dramas,*** Andrew Murphy, National Textbook Company Trade, 1994.

***The Culture Puzzle : Cross-Cultural Communication for English as a Second Language,*** Deena R. Levine, Jim Baxter, Piper McNulty, Prentice Hall, 1987.

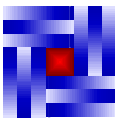
***Do's and Taboos Around the World,*** Roger E. Axtell (Editor), 4th Edition, John Wiley & Sons, 2000.

***Face to Face: the Cross-Cultural Workbook,*** Virginia Vogel Zanger, 2nd Edition , Heinle & Heinle, 1993.

***Good Neighbors: Communicating with the Mexicans (The Interact Series),*** John C. Condon, 2nd Edition, Intercultural Press, 1997.

***The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collison of Two Cultures,*** Anne Fadiman, Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1997.

***Understanding Arabs: A Guide for Westerners (The Interact Series),*** Margaret K. Nydell, 3rd Revised Edition Intercultural Press, 2002.



## 2. Registration

A registration form for new students can be very helpful in determining a learner's needs. It should provide the teacher with information about the student's age, years of schooling, any previous education in English, work experience, etc. The ability or inability of the student to read and fill out the form tells the teacher something about his or her level of English proficiency.

Students may need assistance reading, understanding, and filling out the form. The following is a sample of a basic registration form. Teachers should add any information pertinent to their particular location.

# *REGISTRATION FORM*

**Today's Date:** / /_____ **Date of arrival in the U.S.A.:** / /____
Month Day Year Month Day Year

**NAME:**

_____
Last First Middle

**ADDRESS:**

_____(#_____)__
House # Street Name Apartment

_____ __( )_____
City State Zip Code Telephone Number

**DATE of BIRTH:** _____/ _ /_____ **AGE:** _____ **SEX: (M) Male** ____ **(F) Female** _____
Month Day Year

**NATIVE COUNTRY:** _____ **NATIVE LANGUAGE:**_____

**In an EMERGENCY, contact: NAME** _____ **Phone # (** )_____-_____

**Years of EDUCATION in Native Country: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16+**

**Student ID Number ( SOCIAL SECURITY #) :**

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | |

**Did you study English before: NO: __ YES: __ If YES, how long?** _____ **Where?**_____

**Do you work? (1) Full-time**_____ **(2) Part-time**____ **(3) NO:** _____

**Occupation in Native county:**_____

**Do you have children in school: Yes:** ____ **No:** _____ **If yes, how many?** _____
**Do you recieve public assistance? Yes**____ **No:** _____ **Are you handicapped? Yes** ___ **No**___

| **Comments:** | |
|---|---|
| | |

| **NEW STUDENT** | **CONTINUING STUDENT** | **Time:**_____ |
|---|---|---|
| **Test Date:** _____/ /_____ | **Current Date:**____/___/___ | **Site/Class:**_____ |
| **Oral:** _____ **Written:**_____/_____ | **Level:**_____ | **Start Date:**____/_____/_____ |
| **Level:** _____ | **Teacher:**_____ | |
| **Coord:** _____ | **New Level:**_____ | |

**Revised: June 25, 1998**
**Adapted from REEP Registration Form, Arlington, VA**

## 3. Assessing Your ESL Learners

*by Cheryl L. Fuentes*

Assessing the progress and skills of your ESL learners is a continuous process, starting from the moment they arrive in your office or classroom and until sometimes even after they leave. Programs or classes should consider the following phases of assessment:

### Intake

The registration form completed during the ***intake process*** will assist you in assessing some of the needs and skills of your learners. Review the form to gain a better understanding of your new student. Perhaps the student had difficulty writing the correct information on the form—what implications does that have on his/her literacy skills? How many years of education has the student completed? What was/is the student's job? Think about how this information will assist you in determining how to best meet the needs of your student.

### Initial Assessment/Placement

An ***initial assessment, or placement***, should take place to determine the student's level of English proficiency. Ideally, the initial assessment would involve all 4 skill areas (e.g. listening, speaking, reading, writing) to give you a general sense of the student's abilities. Depending on your program design, you may weigh more heavily the results in one skill area (e.g. if the focus of the program is writing, the writing skill assessment may determine whether the student is a beginner or intermediate). Students should be encouraged to complete as much of the test as possible; at this point there should not be a "pass" or "fail" marking system. Sample proficiency levels are described in Section A, Part 4, "Language Proficiency Levels."

Perhaps your interaction and conversation with the student during the intake process will assist you in making an initial assessment of the student's abilities in these skill areas. In other cases, and again depending on your program size and design, you may prefer to administer a commercially-available assessment instrument, or test. The B.E.S.T. (Basic English Skills Test) is widely used in adult ESL programs for assessing listening and speaking skills. The CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System) test is also widely-used for assessing basic lifeskills of adults, including listening and reading for ESL learners. Other tests are also available—or you may design your own test to meet your own needs. Keep in mind the purposes of the test: to determine what skills and abilities the students already possess and to develop a plan of action for meeting his or her needs.

### On-Going Assessment

Once the student is in the program or class, ***on-going assessment*** is critical to ensure that learners know where they are making progress and in what areas they still need improvement. On-going assessment may be formal (e.g. a written test) or informal (e.g. teacher observation, checklists, etc.). In addition, it is important to make sure that the assessment tools and techniques that you use are reflective of your instruction. The most effective assessment systems will also include a way for learners to self-assess their progress.

### Final Assessment

A ***final assessment*** should take place at the end of the class or program. The final assessment should again include both an evaluation by the teacher, as well as a student self-assessment. The final assessment may include testing, writing samples, portfolio review, or teacher observations. The final assessment typically indicates which level the student should be placed into for the next class.

It is critical to find a method of assessment that works for your program, for the person(s) administering the test, and for prospective students. The following pages include sample tests developed by ESL programs, a list of nationally recognized ESL tests, and an article which describes various types of assessment. For more information on assessing low-level adults ESL learners in particular, refer to page C-11.

# RECOMMENDED ESL TESTS FOR ADULTS

| | LISTENING/SPEAKING | READING | WRITING |
|---|---|---|---|
| LITERACY LEVEL | BEST ORAL INTERVIEW<br>ESLOA<br>NYS PLACE | BEST LITERACY | NATIVE LANGUAGE WRITING SAMPLE<br><br>DICTATION |
| BEGINNING | BEST ORAL INTERVIEW<br>ESLOA<br>NYS PLACE | ATEPL<br>BEST LITERACY<br>CELSA | WRITING SAMPLE<br>Use ESL Composition Profile to score |
| INTERMEDIATE | BEST ORAL INTERVIEW<br>ESLOA<br>NYS PLACE | ATEPL<br>BEST LITERACY<br>CELSA | |
| ADVANCED | ESLOA<br>NYS PLACE | CELSA<br>ATEPL | |

## ADAPTED TEST OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY LEVEL (ATEPL)

The ATEPL (adapted 88 item TEPL) assesses reading comprehension and grammar usage. There are two sections of the test, 50 reading questions in a cloze format and 25 structure questions in sentence context. Testing time is 45 minutes, with 10-15 minutes needed for giving instructions. Test items are sequenced from easy to difficult. Scoring can be done in less than one minute per test. There is a .93 correlation with CELSA 1. Students can be placed in seven instructional levels -low beginning to high advanced. Schools wanting to use the ATEPL must purchase a yearly site license.

Ways to use: Placement
Achievement

Order form: Association of Classroom Teacher Testers
1187 Coast Village Road
Montecito, CA 93108-2794 Suite 1 #378
(805) 899-1291
FAX: (805) 899-1290

## BASIC ENGLISH SKILLS TEST (BEST)

The BEST test has two sections. The oral interview is available in a long (20 minutes) and a short (five to seven minutes) version. Both must be administered individually, but the literacy skills section may be administered individually or to groups. Verbal and written responses are assigned numerical values which are added together for raw scores. Test scores are correlated to the Mainstream English Language Training (MELT) ESL proficiency descriptions which are used by the Illinois State Board of Education-Adult Education and Literacy Section. The Literacy Skills Test is consumable.

Ways to use: Placement
Diagnostic
Achievement

Order from: Center for Applied Linguistics
4646 40th Street NW
Washington, DC 20016-1859
(202) 362-0700

## ESL COMPOSITION PROFILE

The profile provides guidelines for rating ESL writing in five categories: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. Each category contains numerical scores within descriptive ranges from excellent to very poor i.e. Content: Excellent - 30-27; Very Poor - 16-13. The numbers for each category are then added together for a final score. The profile can be used to rate student writing at any level and is very useful for demonstrating progress.

Ways to use: Placement
Diagnostic
Achievement

Refer to: Testing ESL Composition: A Practical Approach.
Holly Jacobs. Newbury House, 1981.

*Note: Newbury House materials are now available through Heinle & Heinle Publishers. Call (800) 237-0053 or (617) 451-1940 for information.

## THE NYS PLACE TEST

New York State's Placement Test for English as a Second Language Adult Students tests listening and speaking ability. The test has three sections: Oral Warm-up, Basic English Literacy Screening and Oral Assessment with Pictures. Students responses are rated on a scale of 0-2. The scores are tallied and students are assigned to one of four instructional levels. The test manual includes a curriculum which identifies grammatical structures and topics for each of the four instructional levels.

Ways to use: Placement

Order from: NYSPlace (New York State Placement Test for Adult ESL Students)
City School District of Albany, Albany Educational TV
Albany, New York 12203
(518) 462-7292 x30

## COMBINED ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS ASSESSMENT (CELSA)

This test measures reading comprehension and grammatical proficiency. There are two forms of the 45 minute test. Each form has 75 items. Raw scores and percentile ranks are used to place students into seven levels, low beginning (literate) to advanced plus. The test can be administered individually or to groups. A testing manual is available. (CELSA has been approved for "federal ability to benefit" by the U.S. federal government. Schools have the option of purchasing test sets or site licenses.

Ways to use: Placement
Diagnostic
Achievement

Order from: Association of Classroom Teacher Testers
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**Life Skills Survey Achievement/Pre-Post Tests:** These tests assess reading and listening comprehension and are 'designed to measure a learner's ability to apply basic skills in a functional life skills context.' The listening tests include an audio tape. The tests measure four levels of proficiency: Level A, B, C, and D.

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# Adult ESL Learner Assessment: Purposes and Tools

by Burt, Miriam; Keenan, Fran
ERIC Digest: ED386962 Sep 95

Learner assessment is conducted in adult basic education (ABE) and adult English as a Second Language (ESL) educational programs for many reasons—to place learners in appropriate instructional levels, to measure their ongoing progress, to qualify them to enroll in academic or job training programs, to verify program effectiveness, and to demonstrate learner gains in order to justify continued funding for a program. Because of this multiplicity of objectives, learner assessment involves using a variety of instruments and procedures to gather data on a regular basis to ensure that programs are "identifying learners' needs, documenting the learners' progress toward meeting their own goals, and ascertaining the extent to which the project objectives are being met" (Holt,1994, p. 6).

This digest looks at learner assessment in adult ESL programs. It describes commercially available tests and alternative assessment tools, discusses key issues in assessment, and highlights some of the differences between assessment and evaluation.

## COMMERCIALLY AVAILABLE TESTS

In adult basic education, commercially available instruments such as the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and the Adult Basic Learning Examination (ABLE) predominate as assessment tools because they have construct validity and scoring reliability, are easy to administer to groups, require minimal training on the part of the teacher, and are often stipulated by funding sources (Solorzano, 1994; Wrigley, 1992). ESL tests most commonly used in adult education programs are the Basic English Skills Test (BEST) and the CASAS ESL Appraisal (Sticht, 1990).

The BEST, originally developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics in 1982 to test newly arrived Southeast Asian refugees, assesses English literacy (reading and writing) skills and listening and speaking skills. Although this test measures language and literacy skills at the lowest levels (no speaking is necessary for some items as learners respond to pictures by pointing), it requires some training on the part of the tester. Also, the oral segment is lengthy and must be administered individually (Sticht, 1990).

The Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) of California has developed competencies, training manuals, and assessment tools for ABE and ESL programs. The CASAS ESL Appraisal is multiple choice and includes reading and listening items. It is easy to administer because it is given to groups, but does not test oral skills (Sticht, 1990).

Other tests used for ESL are the NYSPLACE Test, published by New York State, which is designed for placement and includes a basic English literacy screening and an oral assessment; the Basic Inventory of Natural Language (BINL) which provides a grammatical analysis of spoken language; the Henderson-Moriarty ESL Placement (HELP) test which was designed to measure the literacy skills (in the native language and in English) and the oral English proficiency of Southeast Asian refugee adults; and Literacy Volunteers of America's ESL Oral Assessment (ESLOA) which assesses a learner's ability to speak and understand English.

## LIMITATIONS OF COMMERCIALLY AVAILABLE TESTS

The use of commercially available tests with adult learners is problematic because these tools may not adequately assess individual learner strengths and weaknesses especially at the lowest level of literacy skills. Such tests do not necessarily measure what has been learned in class, nor address learner goals (Lytle & Wolf,

1989; Wrigley, 1992).

Some testing issues are unique to ESL learners. It is not always clear whether ESL learners have trouble with selected test items because of difficulties with reading, with the vocabulary, or with the cultural notions underlying the test items (Wrigley & Guth, 1992). Another problem may be that some low-literate ESL learners are unfamiliar with classroom conventions such as test taking. Henderson and Moriarty, in their introduction to the HELP test, advise that ESL programs should evaluate whether learners possess the functional skills necessary for writing (such as holding a pencil), are familiar with classroom behaviors (such as responding to teacher questions), and are able to keep up with the pace of learning in beginning level classes (Wrigley and Guth, 1992).

Some would argue that the tests themselves are not the problem, but rather their inappropriate use, for example, administering a commercially available adult "literacy" test (assesses reading and writing skills) to measure English language "proficiency" (listening and speaking ability). Funding stipulations may specify inappropriate instruments (Solorzano, 1994) or even tests developed for native speakers (e.g., TABE, ABLE). Wilde (1994) suggests that programs maximize the benefits of commercially available, norm-referenced, and diagnostic tests by: (1) choosing tests that match the demographic and educational backgrounds of the learners; (2) interpreting scores carefully; (3) ensuring that test objectives match the program objectives and curricular content; and (4) using additional instruments to measure learner achievement.

## ALTERNATIVES TO COMMERCIALLY AVAILABLE TESTS

Due in part to the drawbacks of the tests described above, many adult (and K-12) educators promote the use of alternative assessment tools that incorporate learner goals and relate more closely to instruction (Lytle & Wolfe, 1989). Alternative assessment (also known as classroom-based, authentic, or congruent assessment) includes such tools as surveys, interviews, checklists, observation measures, teacher-developed tests, learner self-assessment, portfolios and other performance samples, and performance-based tests (Balliro, 1993; Genesee, 1994; Isserlis, 1992; Wrigley, 1992).

Alternative assessment allows for flexibility in gathering information about learners and measures what has been taught in class. **"Learner portfolios,"** collections of individual work, are common examples of alternative assessment. Portfolios can include such items as reports on books read, notes from learner/teacher interviews, learners' reflections on their progress, writing samples, data from performance-based assessments, and scores on commercially available tests (Fingeret, 1993; Wrigley, 1992). From **"learner interviews,"** administrators and instructors get information to help with placement decisions and to determine an individual's progress. In one survey of adult teachers, 80% reported using oral interviews to assess what students needed and what they were learning (Davis and Yap, 1992). From program-developed **"performance-based tests,"** instructors, administrators, and the learners themselves get information on how learners use English and basic skills regularly. These tests, in which items (such as reading a chart or locating information on a schedule) are put in actual contexts the learners might encounter (Alamprese & Kay, 1993; Holt, 1994), are common in workplace programs. Authentic materials such as job schedules, pay stubs, and union contracts provide the context in which literacy skills are assessed.

Alternative assessment procedures, however, are not a panacea. Maintaining portfolios is time consuming for both learners and teachers. The cultural expectations and educational backgrounds of ESL learners might make them especially resistant to the use of participatory and other alternative assessments (Wrigley & Guth, 1992). Furthermore, funders often require "hard data," and it is difficult to quantify outcomes without using commercially available tests. Finally, data from alternative assessment instruments may not meet eligibility

requirements for job training programs, or higher level classes, or certification (Balliro, 1993; Lytle & Wolfe, 1989).

Because of these issues, ESL programs often use a combination of commercially available and program-developed assessment instruments to assess literacy and language proficiency (Guth & Wrigley, 1992; Wrigley, 1992).

## LEARNER ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAM EVALUATION

Although learner progress, as measured both by commercially available and alternative assessment instruments, is an indicator of program effectiveness, it is not the only factor in evaluating ABE and adult ESL programs. Other quantifiable indicators include learner retention, learner promotion to higher levels of instruction, and learner transition to jobs or to other types of programs (e.g., moving from an adult ESL program to a vocational program, or to a for-credit ESL or academic program). Less quantifiable learner outcomes include heightened self-esteem and increased participation in community, school, and church events (Alamprese & Kay, 1993).

Other measures of adult education program effectiveness depend to a large extent on program goals. In family literacy programs, increased parental participation in children's learning, parents reading more frequently to their children, and the presence of more books in the home might indicate success (Holt, 1994). Workplace program outcomes might include promotion to higher level jobs, increased participation in work teams, and improved worker attitude that shows up in better job attendance and in a willingness to learn new skills (Alamprese & Kay, 1993).

## CONCLUSION

Assessment is problematic for adult ESL educators searching for tools that will quantify learner gains and program success to funders, demonstrate improvement in English proficiency and literacy skills to learners, and clarify for the educators themselves what has been learned and what has not. Dissatisfaction with commercially available tools has been widespread, and many teachers have felt left out of the process of determining how to assess learner gains in a way that helps teaching and learning. Current practice and theory seem to recommend using a combination of commercially available and program-developed alternative assessment instruments. Further research in this area both by teachers and researchers is warranted.

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**RESOURCES**

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**Issues in Accountability and Assessment for Adult ESL Instruction**

by Carol Van Duzer
National Center for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE)
ERIC Digest February 2002

Throughout the 1990s, legislation increasingly required programs receiving federal funding to be more accountable for what they do. For adult education, these requirements have intensified the debate among practitioners, researchers, and policy makers as to what constitutes success and how to measure it. At the same time, the number of English language learners enrolled in adult education programs has been growing, particularly in areas of the country that have not previously seen many immigrants (Pugsley, 2001). New programs are being established to meet the demand for English as a second language (ESL) instruction, and existing programs are expanding.

This Q&A describes the legislative background of current accountability requirements for ESL programs, the issues involved in testing level gain, and critical questions whose answers can lead the field forward.

**What does legislation require?**

The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (Title II of the Workforce Investment Act [WIA] of 1998) requires each state to negotiate target levels of performance with the U.S. Department of Education (ED) for three core indicators:

- demonstrated improvements in skill levels in reading, writing, and speaking the English language, numeracy, problem solving, English language acquisition, and other literacy skills;
- placement in, retention in, or completion of postsecondary education, training, unsubsidized employment, or career advancement; and
- receipt of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent.

ED established the National Reporting System for Adult Education (NRS) to define how states are required to report their data. NRS identifies 12 functioning level descriptors, 6 for Adult Basic Education and 6 for English as a Second Language. The ESL level descriptors describe what a learner knows and can do in three areas: (a) speaking and listening, (b) reading and writing, and (c) functional and workplace skills (U.S. Department of Education, 1999-2001). These level descriptors define English language proficiency across six levels, from ESL Literacy to High Advanced.

Title II of the WIA also lists 12 criteria for states to consider when funding adult education and literacy activities. Among these criteria are establishing performance measures for learner outcomes, determining past effectiveness in meeting or exceeding these performance measures, and maintaining a high-quality information management system for reporting learner outcomes and monitoring program performance against the established measures. For measuring level gain, the NRS implementation document states that a standardized assessment procedure (e.g., a test or a performance assessment) is to be used.

### How are states meeting these requirements?

To meet these criteria, each state has set its own performance standards in consultation with ED, indicating the percentage of learners that should progress from level to level in funded programs or across the state as a whole. A state can set different standards for different service providers or for different levels of proficiency. For example, the percentage of learners expected to move from ESL Literacy to Beginning ESL could be lower than the percentage expected to move from Beginning ESL to Low Intermediate. This recognizes that a learner who enters a program with no literacy skills may require a great deal of instruction before showing level gain. Each state is evaluated by ED according to the state's own performance standards. A few states (e.g., California) have instituted performance-based contracts by which programs receive money only for the learners who make certain gains.

States have also designated specific assessment tools or processes that programs may use to show level gain. These tools and processes vary among the states. Most states have chosen a standardized test (e.g., California: Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System [CASAS], Texas: Basic English Skills Test [BEST], and New York: New York State Placement Test [NYSPlace]); several give choices among a list of approved tests (e.g., Arkansas: BEST or CASAS); and a few allow a standardized test for initial-level determination and then a competency checklist or uniform portfolio for exit-level determination (e.g., Florida and Ohio). For contact information for the BEST, CASAS, and NYSPlace, see the *Adult ESL Tests* section of this document.

### What are the issues in testing level gain?

**NRS level descriptors**

Programs are required to report the percentage of learners that move from level to level during the funding year. However, there is no research to support how long it takes to advance one NRS level. Because it takes several years to learn a language well (Thomas & Collier, 1997), such information is crucial in high-stakes assessment.

The time it takes to show level gain on a proficiency scale is dependent on both program and learner factors. *Program factors* include intensity of the classes (how long and how many times per week); training and experience of the instructors; adequacy of facilities (e.g., comfortable, adequate lighting); and resources available to both instructors and learners. *Learner factors* include educational background, degree of literacy in native language, age, experience with trauma, and opportunities to use the language outside of Programs are required to report the percentage of learners that move from level to level during the funding year. However, there is no research to support how long it takes to advance one NRS level. Because it takes several years to learn a language well (Thomas & Collier, 1997), such information is crucial in high-stakes assessment. The time it takes to show level gain on a proficiency scale is dependent on both program and learner factors. *Program factors* include intensity of the classes (how long and how many times per week); training and experience of the instructors; adequacy of facilities (e.g., comfortable, adequate lighting); and resources available to both instructors and learners. *Learner factors* include educational background, degree of literacy in native language, age, experience with trauma, and opportunities to use the language outside of instructional time. Stakeholders need to know under what conditions (with which combinations of learner and program factors) NRS level gains are achievable.

**Standardized testing**

One way to test language development is through the use of standardized tests, which are developed according to explicit specifications. Test items are chosen for their ability to discriminate among levels, and administration procedures are consistent and uniform. Pencil-and-paper standardized tests are often used because they are easy to administer to groups, require minimal training for the test administrator, and have documentation of reliability (consistency of results over time) and validity (measuring what the test says it measures) (Holt & Van Duzer, 2000).

Despite the advantages, standardized tests have limitations. Their results will have meaning to learners and teachers only if the test content is related to the goals and content of the instruction (Van Duzer & Berdan, 1999). Adult education programs are often tailored to take advantage of the few hours (typically 4-8 hours per week) that adult learners are available to study. Instruction may focus on a limited number of learner goals (e.g., finding a better job or helping children with their homework). If the items in a standardized test reflect the actual curriculum, then the test may accurately assess achievement of the learners. However, if the items do not reflect what is covered in the classroom, the test may not adequately assess what learners know and can do. Given the focus on real-life, practical content in adult ESL instruction, using a test that assesses everyday vocabulary and tasks (e.g., BEST or CASAS) can yield satisfactory results.

There is concern, however, that standardized tests may not be able to capture the incremental changes in learning that occur over short periods of instructional time. Test-administration manuals usually recommend the minimum number of hours of instruction that should occur between pre- and post-testing, yet the learning that takes place within that time frame is dependent on the program and learner factors discussed previously. In the effort to make sure that learners are tested and counted before they leave, program staff may be post-testing before adequate instruction has been given. In such cases, learners may not show enough progress to advance a level unless they pre-tested near the high end of the score ranges for a particular NRS level.

**Performance Assessment**

Performance assessments require learners to use prior knowledge and recent learning to accomplish tasks that demonstrate what they know and can do. There is a direct link between instruction and assessment. Examples of performance assessment tasks include *oral or written reports* (e.g., on how to become a citizen); *projects* (e.g., researching, producing, and distributing a booklet on recreational opportunities available in the community); and *exhibitions or demonstrations* (e.g., a poster depicting the steps to becoming a U.S. citizen). A variety of performance assessments provide a more complete picture of a learner's abilities than can be gathered from performance on a pencil-and-paper standardized test.

For adult ESL, performance assessment reflects current thought about second language acquisition: Learners acquire language as they use it in social interactions to accomplish purposeful tasks (e.g., finding information or applying for a job). The performance may be assessed simply by documenting the successful completion of the task or by the use of rubrics designed to assess various dimensions of carrying out the task (e.g., rating oral presentation skills on a scale of 1-5). Both instructors and learners can be involved in the development of evaluation guidelines and in the evaluation procedure itself (Van Duzer & Berdan, 1999).

Although performance assessments provide valuable information to learners, instructors, and other program staff, their use for accountability purposes is currently limited. These types of assessment are time consuming to administer and score. To produce the reliable, quantifiable data required for high stakes assessment, performance assessments would need to be standardized. That is, for each of the NRS functioning levels, tasks would need to be developed (and agreed upon) that would represent level completion; scoring rubrics and guidelines for evaluating performance would need to be in place; and administrators and evaluators would need to be trained.

**What attempts at standardizing performance assessment are being undertaken?**

A few projects are attempting to develop performance assessments that would be acceptable for the NRS.

- Ohio is developing a uniform portfolio system of performance assessment that is being validated by Ohio State University (Gillette, 2001).
- Colorado developed a certificate system based on performance assessments that was discarded in favor of a standardized test for NRS reporting. However, the Colorado Department of Education is working with CASAS to standardize and validate one level of the Colorado Certificate of Accomplishment so that it meets the rigors of high-stakes assessment (K.
- The National Institute for Literacy's (NIFL) Equipped for the Future (EFF) project staff is working with programs in several states to develop a continuum of performance for the EFF adult literacy content standards so that performance assessment tasks can be constructed (Stein, 2001).
- ED's office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) is supporting two performance assessment projects: (a) The Test of Emerging Literacy (TEL) is being developed by American Institutes for Research (AIR) with additional support from Arizona, Massachusetts, and Washington, and (b) the BEST Oral Interview is being revised by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) in order to assess the full range of NRS functioning levels. (Two versions of the Interview, one print and one computer adaptive, will be available Fall 2002.)
- OVAE and NIFL are supporting the National Academy of Sciences' review of standards for alternative performance assessment (National Academies Board on Testing and Assessment, 2001).

For the time being, however, performance assessments remain difficult and costly to produce for high-stakes reporting (Wrigley, 2001).

**What are the critical questions to be answered?**

The issues discussed in this Q&A point to several critical questions that need to be examined to move the field of adult education forward in solving the complexities of defining learner progress and how to measure it.

**1. What should be counted as success, and how should it be measured?** What learners, instructors, and program staff count as success may differ from what is measured by state-mandated assessment procedures. Level gain is just one possible outcome of instruction. Equally important to learner success may be an increase in literacy practices (e.g., reading a greater variety of print materials, reading to children); achievement of a personal goal (e.g., passing the citizenship test, receiving a job promotion); or an increase in confidence and self-esteem. States are currently able to count these outcomes in their own evaluation plans if they so choose. However, a change in the legislation would be required for the outcomes to be allowable under the provisions of the WIA.

Stakeholders should work together to identify what combination of assessments (e.g., standardized, performance, logs of increased practices, goal attainment, observations of increased confidence) will yield useful information for designing, modifying, and improving programs. If accountability continues to rest mainly on the results of standardized testing, then there is a need for additional language-based instruments that measure more than one skill (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar). Information about legislative requirements, learner goals and needs, and assessment specifications (e.g., what is purported to be measured, reliability study results) should be clear to each stakeholder. If a legislative change is warranted, then stakeholders should work with ED and legislators to have it enacted.

**2. How well does the NRS scale facilitate the reporting of learner progress?** The NRS looks at functional level gain as one of three core indicators by which programs can measure their success. However, no data are available that identify how long it takes to make a level gain and under what conditions (program type, intensity and length of instruction, resources and support services available). Adult education services are provided by a wide variety of institutions (e.g., local education agencies, community colleges, libraries, community-based and volunteer organizations, businesses, and unions) under varying conditions. The complex lives of the learners can leave them with little time for educational pursuits. The interrelationship among the time and conditions it takes to make a level gain, the assessment procedure chosen to measure that gain, and the resources available to assess it need to be examined.

**3. What is the cost in time, staffing, and funds to effectively assess and document learning outcomes?** Adult education programs generally have limited operating funds. The implementation of standardized assessments, whether in a small program or a large one, requires extra staffing time, often beyond the limits of the funding received. In programs with large numbers of learners with low literacy skills, it is a tremendous challenge just to ensure that test forms are properly filled out (e.g., name and identification number) and answers are marked in appropriate places. Additional costs may be incurred as programs train staff or hire additional staff to develop, administer, or score assessments in a way that assures reliable and timely results.

**4. What changes in program design and staff development are needed to ensure that assessment tools are reliably used?** Even though standardized tests and some performance assessments have guidelines for administering and scoring, test administrators may not be following them. As mentioned above, some programs and states are post-testing too soon after pre-testing because they are concerned that learners may leave the program before they are post-tested. However, learners may not show progress if they have not had adequate instruction time between test administrations. To ensure consistent and reliable assessment, administration procedures need to be carefully followed and adequate resources need to be allocated for training.

**5. How do local, state, and national policies affect assessment tools and practices and what policies need to be practices and what policies need to be created?** At the national level, the WIA and the NRS have set criteria that states must meet in order to receive federal funding. States have leeway, however, to set their own performance measures and select their own assessment procedures. Not all program staff may be aware of these policies. Their attitudes towards being required to use certain assessments may affect the results. What impact does such a policy have on programs? How does it differ from what is happening in other states where, to receive funding, programs are required only to achieve or exceed a certain percentage of learners making level gain? Are there differences in results among states requiring certain assessment tools versus those states that allow programs to choose?

## Conclusion

The United States has made progress over the past decade in creating a cohesive system of adult education through legislation such as the Workforce Investment Act and frameworks such as the National Reporting System for Adult Education. Finding answers to the questions presented here will contribute to the evolving system. At the same time, the political environment that presses for accountability creates tension with the enormous amount of time it takes to build such a system. As program staff in both new and established programs struggle with accountability issues, they need to advocate for sound assessment policies at the local, state, and national levels-and the resources to implement them.

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**Adult ESL Tests**

BEST (Basic English Skills Test)
Center for Applied Linguistics
4646 40th Street NW, Washington, DC 20016-1859
202-362-0700

http://www.cal.org/BEST/
CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System)
8910 Clairemont Mesa Boulevard, San Diego, CA 92123
619-292-2900

http://www.casas.org
NYSPlace (New York State Placement Test for Adult ESL Students)
City School District of Albany, Albany Educational TV
27 Western Avenue, Albany, NY 12203
518-462-7292 x30

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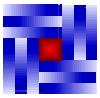


## 4. Language Proficiency Levels

A language proficiency level refers to the level at which a student functions in English —in other words, how much English he or she knows. Determining the language level of the student assists programs in measuring the student's progress and noting achievement of benchmark levels, as well as demonstrating to other stakeholders, such as funders, the benefits of instruction. If you do not know where the student begins, then it is difficult to know if he or she has made any progress! But, don't despair. Many programs simply place students into one of three levels: beginning, intermediate, or advanced. Sample level descriptions which are adaptable to various programs are included.

The Student Performance Levels (SPLs) developed through the Mainstream English Language Training (MELT) program describe seven language proficiency levels ranging from beginner to "close to a native speaker." The U.S. Department of Education, Division of Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL), Office of Vocational and Adult Education, also, has published ESL entry-level descriptions in functional skills, which are tied to the Student Proficiency Levels (SPL) and the CASAS test. These descriptors are part of the National Reporting System (NRS), an outcome-based reporting system for state-administered, federally-funded adult education programs and are very useful in pinpointing learners' levels of competency in speaking, listening, reading, writing and in life/workplace skills, at the same time highlighting what a learner should be able to do at the end of a course. These descriptors can be viewed at http://www.air.org/nrs/implement.pdf (pages 17-18). Many adult ESL programs, nevertheless, develop their own level descriptions correlated to general proficiency levels such as CASAS, DAEL, or SPLs.

As you develop a program or a plan for meeting the needs of your learner(s), consider how these descriptions of what students can do with English will assist you in choosing resources, designing a plan and/or lessons, monitoring the student's progress, and measuring the student's skills at the end of the course or program.

# DAEL English as a Second Language Proficiency Levels

**Beginning Literacy**

- *Functional skills.* The individual functions minimally or not at all in English and can communicate only through gestures or a few isolated words. The individual may lack literacy in the native language and has had little or no formal schooling.
- *Reading and writing.* The individual cannot read or write or can read or write only isolated words. There may be little or no alphabet recognition.
- *Speaking and listening.* The individual cannot speak or understand English, or can understand only isolated words or phrases.
- *Test benchmark.* 165-180 CASAS; SPL 0-1. *(For more information on Student Performance Levels [SPL] and The Mainstream English Language Training Project [MELT] prepared by Allene Crognet of the Center for Applied Linguistics, please contact the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center, 1-800-237-0178 or vdesk@vcu.edu)*

**Beginning ESL**

- *Functional skills.* The individual functions with difficulty in situations related to immediate needs and in limited social situations; has some simple oral communication abilities using simple learned and often repeated phrases.
- *Reading and writing.* The individual has a limited understanding of print only through frequent re-reading; can copy words and phrases and write short sentences.
- *Speaking and listening.* The individual can understand frequently used words in context and very simple phrases spoken slowly and with some repetition; survival needs can be communicated simply; and there is some understanding of simple questions.
- *Test benchmark.* 181-200 CASAS; SPL 2-4.

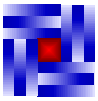
**Intermediate ESL**

- *Functional skills.* The individual can meet basic survival and social needs; can follow some simple oral and written instruction; and has some ability to understand on the telephone.
- *Reading and writing.* The individual can read simple material on familiar subjects, but has difficulty with authentic materials; can write simple paragraphs on survival topics and personal issues with some error.
- *Speaking and listening.* The individual can understand simple learned phrases and new phrases containing familiar vocabulary; can converse on familiar topics beyond survival needs; can clarify speech through rewording and asking questions. The individual uses and understands basic grammar.
- *Test benchmark.* 201-220 CASAS; SPL 5-6.

**Advanced ESL**

- *Functional skills.* The individual can understand general conversations, participate effectively in familiar situations, satisfy routine survival and social needs and follow oral and written instructions. Individuals also can understand conversation containing some unfamiliar vocabulary on many everyday subjects, but may need repetition, rewording or slower speech.
- *Reading and writing.* The individual can read materials on abstract topics and descriptions and narrations of factual material. The individual can write descriptions and short essays and can complete complex forms and applications. Individuals have a general ability to use English effectively to meet most routine social and work situations.
- *Speaking and listening.* The individual can converse with no or minimal difficulty in conversation; can communicate over the telephone on familiar subjects and has basic control of grammar; understands descriptive and spoken narrative and can comprehend abstract concepts in familiar contexts.
- *Test benchmark.* 221 and above CASAS; SPL 7-10.

Taken from: *Annual Performance and Financial Reports, State Administered Adult Education Program,* Division of Adult Education and Literacy, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education, pages 3-4, 1996



## 5. Learner Needs and Goals

ESL learners have many needs, and perhaps the most important part of program planning is to work with the new learner to discover his or her specific and individual needs. It may seem obvious that the student wants and needs to learn English. However, in designing instruction to meet a student's needs, it may be necessary to inquire further by conducting a needs assessment.

The ***needs assessment*** may include some of the following questions:

- Does the student need to speak English at work or with his or her children? Where will the learner use English?
- Does the student live in an area with others who speak the same native language and can assist with translating?
- Does the student need to communicate in English at the supermarket, doctor's office, etc.?
- To what extent does the learner want or need to read and write in English?
- How much time can the learner study everyday? week? month?
- Is the learner able and/or willing to pay for instruction? If so, how much?

During intake/registration, the needs assessment may be conducted informally through conversation, in writing (such as completing a questionnaire or including these questions on the registration form), or with visual aids to facilitate communication (e.g. pictures of a doctor's office or work setting). Likewise, the needs assessment may be in English or the student's native language, if staff are available. The information gathered from these questionnaires can help both the teacher and the student decide where to begin and how to proceed to help the student achieve his or her goals.

The information on the following pages will help you determine your students' needs and goals.

# Needs Assessment for Adult ESL Learners

Kathleen Santopietro Weddel, Colorado Department of Education
Carol Van Duzer, National Center for ESL Literacy Education
ERIC Digest, May 1997

Assessment of literacy needs from the learner's perspective is an important part of an instructional program. Learners come to adult English as a second language (ESL) literacy programs for diverse reasons. Although they may say they just want to "learn English," they frequently have very specific learning goals and needs: for example, to be able to read to their children, to get a job, or to become a citizen. If their needs are not met, they are more likely to drop out than to voice their dissatisfaction (Grant & Shank, 1993). The needs assessment process can be used as the basis for developing curricula and classroom practice that are responsive to these needs.

Although learner needs assessment encompasses both what learners know and can do (learner proficiencies) and what they want to learn and be able to do, this digest focuses on ways to determine what learners want or believe they need to learn. Many of the activities described can also include or lead to assessment of proficiencies, and many of the sources cited include both types of assessment. (See Burt & Keenan, 1995, for a discussion of assessment of what learners know.)

**WHAT IS NEEDS ASSESSMENT?**

The word "assess" comes from the Latin term "assidere," which means to "sit beside." Process-minded and participatory-oriented adult educators "sit beside" learners to learn about their proficiencies and backgrounds, educational goals, and expected outcomes, immersing themselves in the lives and views of their students (Auerbach, 1994).

A needs assessment for use with adult learners of English is a tool that examines, from the perspective of the learner, what kinds of English, native language, and literacy skills the learner already believes he or she has; the literacy contexts in which the learner lives and works; what the learner wants and needs to know to function in those contexts; what the learner expects to gain from the instructional program; and what might need to be done in the native language or with the aid of an interpreter. The needs assessment focuses and builds on learners' accomplishments and abilities rather than on deficits, allowing learners to articulate and display what they already know and can do (Auerbach, 1994; Holt, 1994).

Needs assessment is a continual process and takes place throughout the instructional program (Burnaby, 1989; Savage, 1993), thus influencing student placement, materials selection, curriculum design, and teaching approaches (Wrigley & Guth, 1992). As Burnaby (1989) noted, "The curriculum content and learning experiences to take place in class should be negotiated between learners, teacher, and coordinator at the beginning of the project and renegotiated regularly during the project" (p. 20). At the beginning of the program, needs assessment might be used to determine appropriate program types and course content; during the program, it assures that learner and program goals are being met and allows for necessary program changes; at the end of the program, it can be used for assessing progress and planning future directions for the learners and the program.

**WHY IS NEEDS ASSESSMENT IMPORTANT?**

A needs assessment serves a number of purposes:

- It aids administrators, teachers, and tutors with learner placement and in developing materials, curricula, skills assessments, teaching approaches, and teacher training.
- It assures a flexible, responsive curriculum rather than a fixed, linear curriculum determined ahead of time by instructors.
- It provides information to the instructor and and learner about what the learner brings to the course (if done

at the beginning), what has been accomplished (if done during the course), and what the learner wants and needs to know next.

Factors that contribute to learner attrition in adult literacy programs include inappropriate placement and instructional materials and approaches that are not relevant to learners' needs and lives (Brod, 1995). When learners know that educators understand and want to address their needs and interests, they are motivated to continue in a program and to learn.

## ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Needs assessments with ESL learners, as well as with those in adult basic education programs, can take a variety of forms, including survey questionnaires on which learners check areas of interest or need, open-ended interviews, or informal observations of performance. In order for needs assessment to be effective, tools and activities should be appropriate for the particular learner or groups of learners. For example, reading texts in English might be translated into the learners' native languages, read aloud by the teacher or an aide (in English or the native language), or represented pictorially.

Types of needs assessment tools and activities include:
*Survey questionnaires.* Many types of questionnaires have been designed to determine learners' literacy needs. Frequently they consist of a list of topics, skills, or language and literacy uses. The learners indicate what they already know or want to know by checking in the appropriate column or box, or they may be asked to use a scale to rank the importance of each item. For beginning learners who do not read English, pictures depicting different literacy contexts (such as using a telephone, buying groceries, driving a car, and using transportation) can be shown, and learners can mark the contexts that apply to them. For example, using transportation could be represented by pictures of a bus, a subway, and a taxi. The list of questionnaire items can be prepared ahead of time by the teacher or generated by the students themselves through class discussion.

*Learner-compiled inventories of language and literacy use.* A more open-ended way to get the same information that surveys offer is to have learners keep lists of ways they use language and literacy and to update them periodically (McGrail & Schwartz, 1993).

*Learner interviews.* Interviews with learners, either one-on-one or in small groups, in their native language or in English, can provide valuable information about what learners know, what their interests are, and the ways they use or hope to use literacy.

*Review of reading materials.* An instructor can spread out a range of reading materials on the table (e.g., newspapers, magazines, children's books, comics, and greeting cards, and ask learners which they would like to read and whether they would like to work in class on any of them. A similar activity can be done with different types of writing.

*Class discussions.* Showing pictures of adults in various contexts, the teacher can ask, "What literacy skills does this person want to develop?" and have learners generate a list. The teacher then asks, "Why do you want to develop literacy skills?" Learners might be more willing to express their desires if they move from the impersonal to the personal in this way (Auerbach, 1994).

*Personal or dialogue journals.* Learners' journals-where they write freely about their activities, experiences, and plans-can be a rich source of information about their literacy needs (Peyton, 1993).

*Timelines.* Learners can prepare their own personal timelines, in writing or pictorially, that indicate major events in their lives as well as future goals. Discussion can then focus on how progress towards those goals can be met through the class (Santopietro, 1991).

## NEEDS ASSESSMENT IN ONE ADULT ESL PROGRAM

The Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP) in Arlington, Virginia. periodically conducts a program-wide needs assessment to determine the interests and goals of ESL learners in the community. The director and program coordinators collaborate with community agencies, schools, and employers to identify ways in which the REEP program can prepare learners for the economic, civic, and family opportunitiies available in the community. This information is then used for program planning purposes, such as developing courses, curricula, and materials, and preparing needs assessment tools. Learner interviews and a placement test assessing general language proficiency are used to place learners in an instructional level. Once they are in the classroom, learners participate in a continual needs assessment process to plan what they want to learn and how they want to learn it.

It enables learners to get to know one another through the needs assessment process as they acknowledge shared concerns and begin to build a community in the classroom (Van Duzer, 1995). For several days, some class time may be spent discussing where they use English, what they do with it, what problems they have encountered, and why they feel they need to improve their language skills and knowledge. Through this process, both the learners and the teacher become aware of the goals and needs represented in the class. A variety of level-appropriate techniques, like those mentioned above, are used to come to a concensus on the class instructional plan and to develop individual learning plans. Learners select from both program-established curricular units and from their identified needs. The needs assessment process serves as both a learning and information-gathering process as learners use critical thinking, negotiation, and problem-solving skills to reach this plan.

Once the class instructional plan is selected, ways are discussed to meet individual learner needs apart from the whole class such as through small in-class focus groups, working with a volunteer, time in the program's computer learning lab, assistance obtaining self-study materials, or referral to other programs. The class plan is revisited each time a unit is completed to remind the learners where they have been and where they are going and to enable the teacher to make changes or adjustments to content or instruction as new needs are uncovered.

## CONCLUSION

Needs assessment can take many forms and can be carried out at different times during the instructional process. Whatever the focus and format, the basic purpose is to determine what learners want and need to learn. When curriculum content, materials, and teaching approaches match learners' perceived and actual needs, learner motivation and success are enhanced.

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## What You Need To Know About Your Students

- Age
- Number of years of schooling in native country
- High school diploma, college degree
- Marital status
- Children
- Employment in native country
- Goals: career, educational, personal
- Previous ESL instruction
- Other languages spoken
- Other

## Suggested Ways of Gathering Student Information

- Student registration forms
- Get-acquainted activities
- Student writing
- Asking questions
- Other

Source: Illinois Adult Learning Resource Center
Des Plaines, IL.

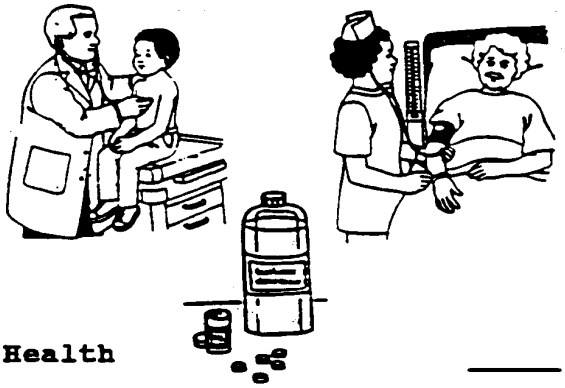
# Colorado Certificate of Accomplishment
# English as a Second Language
# Adult Learner Needs Assessment

**Student Name** _____ **Date** _____

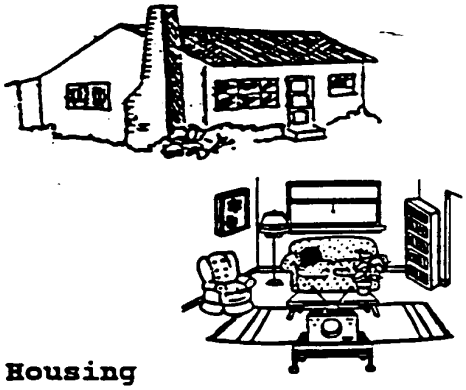
**Instructor** _____ **Program** _____

**Instructors demonstrate completion of the assessment.**
**Student checks top 4 choices.**

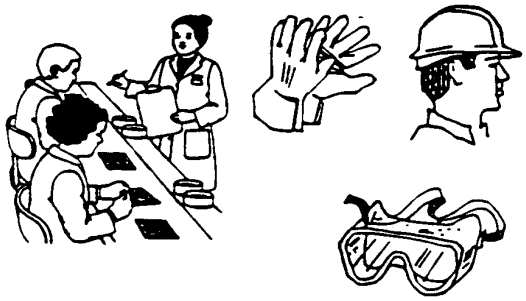
**I need English for: (Check 4)**



**Health** _____

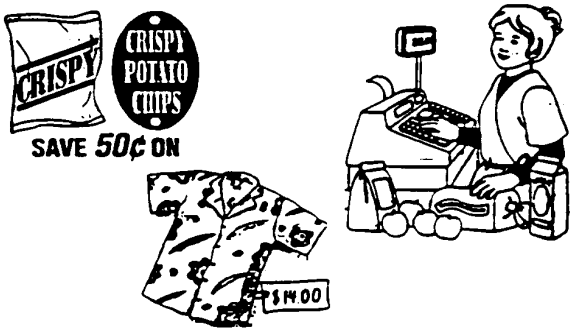


**Housing** _____

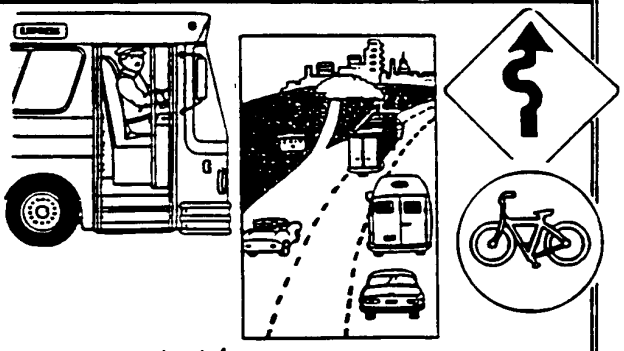


**Employment/On The Job** _____


**Employment/Finding Job** _____




**Shopping** _____



**Transportation** _____

Colorado Certificate of Accomplishment
English as a Second Language
Adult Learner Needs Assessment

**ESL NEEDS ASSESSMENT**
**(If necessary, assist students to complete the assessment)**

| **Do you speak English here?** | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| -at work | ___ | ___ |
| -on the bus/train | ___ | ___ |
| -with friends | ___ | ___ |
| -with neighbors | ___ | ___ |
| -at the doctor's | ___ | ___ |
| -on the telephone | ___ | ___ |
| -in stores | ___ | ___ |
| -at your children's school | ___ | ___ |

| **Do you want to speak better English** | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| -at work | ___ | ___ |
| -on the bus/train | ___ | ___ |
| -with friends | ___ | ___ |
| -with neighbors | ___ | ___ |
| -at the doctor's | ___ | ___ |
| -on the telephone | ___ | ___ |
| -in stores | ___ | ___ |
| -at your children's school | ___ | ___ |

Other places where you speak English
_____

---

| **Can you read or write these in English?** | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| -checks | ___ | ___ |
| -bills | ___ | ___ |
| -ads in newspaper | ___ | ___ |
| -catalogues | ___ | ___ |
| -work notices | ___ | ___ |
| -report cards/school notes | ___ | ___ |
| -forms | ___ | ___ |
| -job applications | ___ | ___ |

| **Do you want to read or write in English?** | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| -checks | ___ | ___ |
| -bills | ___ | ___ |
| -ads in newspapers | ___ | ___ |
| -catalogues | ___ | ___ |
| -work notices | ___ | ___ |
| -report cards/school notes | ___ | ___ |
| -forms | ___ | ___ |
| -job applications | ___ | ___ |

Other things you read or write in English _____

Student name _____ Date _____

Instructor name _____ Program_____

GENERAL GOALS

My goals are (check all that apply)

_____ get a job

_____ get a better job

_____ reading

_____ writing

_____ get a high school diploma

_____ get a GED

_____ speaking

_____ other: _____

HOT TOPICS

First, I want to learn English for the following reasons (Check the 3 most important)

_____ finding a job

_____ on the job

_____ housing

_____ health

_____ community (bank, post office, library)

_____ shopping for food and clothes

_____ transportation

_____ other _____

I have problems with (check all that apply)

_____ pronunciation

_____ grammar

_____ reading

_____ other: _____

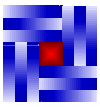
_____ writing

_____ American culture

_____ conversation

**SPECIFIC GOALS** (Check the appropriate column)

| | Already Know | Want to Learn | Not Important |
|---|---|---|---|
| report an emergency | | | |
| write personal information | | | |
| read signs (road, stores, job etc.) | | | |
| use bank (fill out forms) | | | |
| use post office (fill out forms) | | | |
| use American money | | | |
| read newspaper ads (sales, jobs, housing etc.) | | | |
| write letters and notes | | | |
| fill out job application | | | |
| read letter from child's school | | | |
| shop for food | | | |
| ask about job openings | | | |
| report problems on the job | | | |
| talk to supervisor at work | | | |
| read medicine labels | | | |
| talk to a doctor | | | |
| make doctor's appointment | | | |
| fill out insurance forms | | | |
| tell about housing problem | | | |
| talk to landlord | | | |
| read bills | | | |
| use bus | | | |
| follow directions | | | |
| read a map | | | |
| other: _____ | | | |



## 6. Designing a Program Plan

*by Cheryl Fuentes*

Once you have learned about the needs of your learner, you can begin to explore a variety of program models for meeting his/her needs. As a program planner, you have the flexibility to determine how to best meet these needs. You may be able to offer only one specific model, given program resources, or a combination of program models. This section contains a brief description of program options, sample student profiles, and articles discussing program development and methods for attracting and keeping ESL learners.

**Individual Tutors:** One-to-one tutoring programs may use volunteers or paid staff as tutors. Typically, the tutor and student arrange a mutually convenient time to meet at a public place (school, cafe, library, etc.) or privately at a home. They may meet for as little as 30 minutes per week or up to 10 hours per week. Individual tutors can easily design lessons to meet specific needs of the learner.

**Small Groups:** A small group setting is an expansion of the individual tutor model—one teacher or tutor (paid or volunteer) meets with a small group (3-5) learners at a regularly scheduled time.

**Class:** If you have more than 5-10 learners, you may consider offering a class in order to divide learners by their English levels, e.g. beginning and intermediate classes. The class may be taught by a volunteer or paid teacher. Classes may be open-entry (new students may begin and/or end at any time) or closed-entry (learners begin and end on specific dates).

**Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI):** Access to technology can be a wonderful asset to new program planners. A variety of software programs exist for ESL learners, especially intermediate and advanced learners. Computer stations can be equipped and accessed individually, or integrated into small group and class instruction. A computer lab may allow for new students to begin learning very soon after registration if it is open entry.

**Family Literacy:** A family literacy class may include parents and children in activities, or it may take on an intergenerational nature by including grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc. An ESL family literacy class may include the following components: child care and activities for children, ESL class for parents and/or other adult family members, and parent and child interaction time.

**Workplace ESL:** A workplace ESL class may be held at a worksite or a school. Workplace ESL classes teach employment-related language employees need in their jobs in order to be able to communicate better in English at work. Employers may support enrollment in a workplace ESL class by compensating employees or providing benefits for attending and/or completing the class, providing space for the class, and/or providing work-release time to attend class.

**English for Academic Purposes:** English for Academic Purposes (EAP) refers to ESL classes designed to prepare a student for further academic study. Classes may include learning strategies, test taking skills, and other academic preparation tasks. Classes are often intensive, meeting several hours each day, several days per week.

**Collaborating with your Community:** Another option for meeting the needs of learners is to collaborate with other community agencies. Working together, two or more agencies may build upon the strengths of each organization without 'reinventing the wheel' and duplicating services. Collaborating agencies may include libraries, private schools, businesses, K-12 school programs, the human services department, or health department.

## Real-Life Examples

Here are some examples of individuals who may enter your program. Think about what each student may want and need to learn. Suggestions for topics of instruction have been provided for you.

**1. MAI**
Mai is 26 years old and has two children, aged 7 and 3. She is married and has lived in the United States for 3 months. Mai is a beginning level student. She is interested in becoming more involved in her children's lives. What might her needs and goals be?

**Suggestions:**
- basic US survival (housing, transportation, basic vocabulary)
- visiting the doctor
- talking with children's teacher

**2. JUAN**
Juan is 19 years old and single. He works in a furniture factory. He has lived in the U.S. for two years, and he went to school for nine years in his native country. He is an intermediate level student.

**Suggestions:**
- continuing education
- adult high school
- workplace vocabulary
- workplace issues (safety, giving and receiving directions, etc.)
- reading and understanding paycheck, benefits, etc.
- promotability

**3. SOPHIA**
Sophia is 21 years old and completed high school in her native country. She wants to be a journalist. She is an advanced level student.

**Suggestions:**
- English for academic purposes
- test taking skills
- geography, literature, grammar, writing
- social, political, universal issues for discussion

**4. MR. KIM**
Mr. Kim is 47 years old, married, with three children, all teenagers. He works as a custodian. He was a successful businessman in his native country. He has been in the U.S. for 18 months. He is a low intermediate student.

**Suggestions:**
- continuing education
- job training
- mentor programs
- general ESL instruction
- writing classes

# Outreach and Retention in Adult ESL Literacy Programs

by Shirley Brod

ED383241 May 95. ERIC Digest

Adults learning English as a second language (ESL) come from different cultures and countries, vary in their educational backgrounds, and have diverse reasons for learning English (Valentine, 1990). While reports of overcrowded classrooms and long waiting lists for classes might indicate that intensive outreach and retention efforts are not necessary (Chisman, Wrigley, & Ewen, 1993), many successful programs work hard to enhance outreach and ensure retention. This digest discusses outreach methods; it examines learners' reasons for enrolling in ESL classes and for leaving the classes; and it suggests ways to improve retention.

## *OUTREACH*

A variety of methods exist to attract learners to adult ESL programs. Learners, the media, program partners, and bilingual support staff can publicize and promote the program.

## *LEARNERS*

Because satisfied, successful learners who enroll and then re-enroll for subsequent classes are the best advertisement for a program, established programs begin recruitment by talking to learners who are signing up for services to find out who they are, how they learned about the program, and why they have chosen this program. If the enrollees are returnees, they are asked why they are re-enrolling.

Adult learners can post flyers in their apartment complexes, neighborhood markets, churches, and community centers. They can represent their programs in free or low-cost booths at county fairs, engage in competitions for the number of learners that one learner can refer to the program, and give testimonials that the program can use in advertising. These learner promotion efforts can have a huge impact on enrollment. Eighty to eighty-five percent of the learners in the Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP) in Virginia say their enrollment is due to word of mouth (personal communication, S. Grant, March 1995).

## *PROGRAM PARTNERS*

Multiple partners in workplace programs, including businesses, unions, chambers of commerce, and professional organizations, can collaborate with the educational entity to offer a coherent program. Often companies have budgets to publicize programs and pay for receptions to celebrate learner progress. Regular graduation ceremonies, to which former learners, family members, and friends are invited, can serve to honor the participant and heighten the profile of the program in the community or at the workplace. Representatives from community organizations and related service agencies as well as members of the press can also be invited to these ceremonies.

## *THE MEDIA*

Radio and cable television stations can advertise the program in English and in the native language when possible.

## *BILINGUAL SUPPORT STAFF*

Support staff who can talk about the program and answer questions in the native language of the prospective learners can provide accurate information and put learners who speak little or no English at ease.

## *WHY LEARNERS ENROLL IN ADULT ESL CLASSES*

Why do learners enroll in ESL classes? A federally-funded study of adult ESL learners in Iowa (Valentine, 1990) found seven reasons for their participation in ESL classes including improving oneself and one's personal effectiveness in U.S. society, being better able to help one's children with their schoolwork and to speak

to their teachers, improving one's employability by being able to get a better job or to enter job training, functioning better with everyday uses of the language such as shopping and using the telephone, experiencing the success of knowing that one can learn the language, improving reading and writing skills in English, and being able to help people in one's native country.

### *WHY ADULT LEARNERS LEAVE PROGRAMS*

The curricula of most programs address at least some of the goals listed above. What keeps learners from staying in these programs? Why do a third of all adult ESL learners leave their programs by the end of the second month (Development Associates, 1994)? Bean, Partanen, Wright, and Aaronson's study of attrition in urban literacy programs (Brod, 1990) categorizes personal and program factors that mitigate against retention.

1. PERSONAL FACTORS include low self-esteem coupled with lack of demonstrable progress; daily pressures from work and home problems of schedule, childcare, and transportation; lack of support of the native culture and family culture for education; and the age of the learner.

2. PROGRAM FACTORS include lack of appropriate materials for low-level learners; lack of opportunity to achieve success; lack of flexibility in class scheduling; classes so multilevel that those with no literacy skills are mixed with those quite literate (or those with very high oral skills are mixed with those with very low oral skills); lack of peer support and reinforcement; and instructional materials that are not relevant to learners' needs and lives.

### *ENSURING RETENTION FROM THE START*

What should programs do to ensure that adult ESL learners persist long enough to meet their educational goals? Attrition often begins at enrollment. Intake that is slow, cumbersome, and impersonal, and that may include an intimidating test, can discourage learners before they begin (Brod, 1990). All staff at the learning site—testers, registrars, office personnel, teachers—need to facilitate smooth and speedy enrollment, underscore learners' abilities, and show them what the program can do for them (Silver, 1986). Bilingual intake can accurately assess learners' wants and needs, uncover impediments to attendance (e.g., transportation or childcare), and make registrants comfortable and ready to return to the learning site for classes.

### *SETTING REALISTIC GOALS AND REPORTING PROGRESS*

Adults learn best and remain in programs longest when they participate in establishing their own educational goals (Brod, 1990). Learners with minimal English speaking ability are not likely to graduate into credit ESL or be ready to take GED classes in a few short weeks or even months. However, learners may be able to use the telephone to set up an appointment with the dentist, or may be able to ask directions to the restroom in a shopping mall (and understand the response). Programs that, at the outset, require the learner and the teacher to discuss realistic learner goals and to develop a time line for attaining these goals will be more successful in retaining learners.

After setting goals with the learner, programs need to provide regular feedback on progress so that the learner continues to perceive goal attainment as possible. Competency checklists can be used to show learners their progress. Colorado's competency-based program provides a competency verification process leading to certificates of achievement at three levels of ESL. Another indicator of progress is the awarding of certificates. For many learners, even if significant academic progress has not occurred, receiving certificates for regular attendance can bolster self-esteem. Providing an audience for this recognition through ceremonies and potluck dinners with families and friends in attendance supports learners and makes the adult education program visible to the community. In any circumstance, measuring and reporting the outcomes of learning should be done in ways that are relevant and meaningful to the individual learner.

### *USING VARIED APPROACHES TO INSTRUCTION*

Adult literacy programs may utilize competency-based instruction, whole language, language experience, learner writing and publishing, and Freirean or participatory approaches (Crandall & Peyton, 1993). These approaches often include peer counseling, cooperative learning, and problem-solving activities that draw upon the support of peers to foster the socialization so important to adult learners. Programs that use a variety of strategies and techniques to address the differing learning styles, previous educational experience, and multiple skill levels present in most adult ESL classes will have a greater chance of meeting the educational needs and expectations of the individual learners within the class (Shank & Terrill, in press).

Service providers face the challenges of identifying and communicating with potential learners, becoming educated about their cultures, anticipating and providing for their individual needs, and developing appropriate courses for them (Vandalov, 1994). A program receiving an influx of soldiers who had been drivers and mechanics in Iraq might include driver education as part of its basic curriculum. Similarly, a program with immigrant women from Central America might choose to include a family literacy component where participants can learn material relevant to their lives.

### *COLLABORATING TO PROVIDE SERVICES*

For learners in adult basic education, adult secondary education, and ESL programs, research indicates that long-term persisters are likely to be those who use support services (Development Associates, 1994). Educational programs that collaborate with or refer learners to agencies that help with transportation, childcare, healthcare, employment, and tuition make attending class more realistic for adult learners. And, in workplace programs, company management and the direct supervisor can actively encourage attendance by participating in outreach efforts, scheduling workers so they can attend the classes, and reinforcing content learned in the classes (Arlington County, 1990).

However, even with a multitude of support services, a variety of approaches and activities, and frequent benchmarks for success, it is difficult for any one program to meet all the educational needs of every learner. Formalized collaboration across programs and agencies may be needed. To support this collaboration among adult ESL service providers, the U.S. Department of Education awarded grants to three projects (in Massachusetts, Texas, and Virginia) to develop replicable models for transitioning ESL adults from one service provider to another. The Virginia project created a unified system in which the adult education provider coordinated curricula and services with a community-based organization, a vocational institute, and an institution of higher education. Together they provided a wide range of educational services to learners from native language literacy, to basic survival skills, to preparation for vocational or academic study (Mansoor & Grant, 1993).

## CONCLUSION

Programs employ multiple strategies to enhance outreach and ensure retention. Active collaboration among service providers, programmatic attention to the educational needs of each learner, and involvement of learners at every stage of the process are necessary in attracting learners to programs and in guaranteeing that these learners will continue to study until they have met their educational goals.

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# Adult Literacy Education: Emerging Directions in Program Development

by Susan Imel

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*The one-size-fits-all programming for (adult literacy students) that has predominated in the past should not and indeed cannot be in the future if practitioners are to be responsive to learners' needs. Rather, practitioners must meaningfully assist adults in learning to read not the word but their world.* (Sissel 1996)

"Why don't more adults take advantage of available opportunities to improve their basic skills?" is one of the more perplexing questions confronting the field of adult basic and literacy education. Only 8 percent of eligible adults participate in funded literacy programs and, of those who do, most (74 percent) leave during the first year (Quigley 1997). "What other area of education could live with such figures?" asks Quigley (ibid., p. 8).

A large number of adults with low literacy simply choose not to participate in available programs, and they are sometimes referred to as nonparticipants or resisters. The reasons these adults do not see literacy education as a viable alternative are complex but recent research has focused on the connection to previous school experiences (Velazquez 1996). Many adults equate literacy education with school, and, even though they have positive attitudes about learning and education, they choose not to participate in adult basic and literacy education programs (Quigley 1997; Velazquez 1996; Ziegahn 1992).

Since most adult literacy education programs still resemble school (Quigley 1997; Velazquez 1996), adult literacy educators must begin to change how programs are structured and delivered if they are going to attract nonparticipants. Fortunately, a growing number of practitioners, researchers, and policy makers in the field of adult literacy education are dissatisfied with the status quo and are proposing changes based on research and practice. This Digest presents emerging perspectives about adult literacy program development. First, it reviews current ideas about the relationship between learners and program development and then presents recommendations for program development based on the literature.

## PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT: LISTENING TO LEARNERS' VOICES

How can literacy programs become less like school and more appealing to adults, especially to nonparticipants? Two areas that hold potential for answering this question are discussed here. The first is connected to program content and the second revolves around greater consideration of the differences among students.

## BEYOND READING AND WRITING

Literacy education must be conceptualized as more than reading and writing (Auerbach et al. 1996). According to Fingeret (1992), "our understanding of literacy has changed from a focus on individual skills separated from meaningful content ... to see (ing) that literacy is connected to the social, historical, political, cultural, and personal situations in which people use their skills" (p.3). It is true that the desire to read and write motivates many adults to enroll in literacy education, but Ziegahn (1992) found that the nonparticipants in adult literacy strongly associated reading and writing (literacy) with schooling. Furthermore, they saw their own learning as separate from reading and writing.

Many adult literacy students understand that literacy is more than development of individual skills. When more than 1,500 adult literacy students responded to a question about the kind of skills and knowledge they need, their responses were categorized into the following purposes:

- Literacy for access and orientation—to have access to information and orient themselves in the world.
- Literacy as voice—to give voice to their ideas and opinions and to have the confidence that their voice

will be heard and taken into account.

- Literacy as a vehicle for independent action—to solve problems and make decisions on their own, acting independently as a parent, citizen and worker, for the good of their families, their communities, and their nation.

- Literacy as bridge to the future—to be able to keep on learning in order to keep up with a rapidly changing world. (Stein 1995, pp. 4, 10)

In reflecting on the responses from adult learners, Stein suggests that their words "have the power to radically change the approach to adult literacy instruction"... because adults see reading and writing not as goals in and of themselves, but "as a necessary starting point for engagement in the world" (p.24).

When literacy educators base their programs on the assumption that literacy is only about developing discrete skills such as reading and writing, they are delivering a message that equates literacy with schooling (Ziegahn 1992). They are also presenting literacy education as having very narrow goals and purposes that are inappropriate for the expressed needs of the broad spectrum of current and potential adult learners.

## THE REALITIES OF LEARNERS' LIVES

Closely related to the recognition that literacy is more than the development of discrete skills is the growing recognition that programs must be structured in ways that address the diverse groups of learners and that reflect the contexts in which people use their skills (Fingeret 1992). Within literacy education, a great deal of attention has been focused on individualizing instruction to meet individual needs. Although there is nothing inherently wrong with this notion, preoccupation with serving individuals can suppress issues of gender, race, and class, issues that reproduce the realities of the lives of many adult literacy students (Campbell 1992). Many nonparticipants associate literacy educators' lack of attention to the broader contexts in which they live their lives with schooling. To them, school is simply a place that transmits the values of the mainstream society and they find it irrelevant.

How such issues intersect with and affect literacy education is a complex subject. Among other things, it affects how literacy educators view adults with low literacy skills. For example, are they seen as victims who have exercised little control over the circumstances of their lives or as individuals whose low literacy is just one of the negative outcomes of their gender, race, class, and culture (ibid.)? It also affects decisions about program development and implementation. Programs that are structured around these realities are much different from those which are not.

A growing number of adult literacy educators are advocating for understanding learners both as individuals and as members of their cultural groups or communities (Sissel 1996). Even in groups of learners that share a common characteristic such as sex, educators must be aware that "differences of race, culture, and class may contribute to differences in...goals" (Cuban and Hayes 1996, p. 10). Literacy programs that attract and retain learners are sensitive to the individual and cultural/community differences in learners' lives and address them in the planning and implementation stages of program development.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Adult literacy education is a complex undertaking. The ways adults think about their learning as well as their perceptions of the skills and knowledge they need are intertwined with their lives both as individuals and as members of communities and cultural groups. Since most nonparticipants "have never stopped valuing an education" (Quigley 1997, p. 198), adult literacy educators must become more sensitive to what they want. Some recommendations for how this can be accomplished include the following:

- Involve adults in program planning and implementation. The need to consult adults is a theme that is

woven throughout the literature (e.g., Auerbach et al. 1996; Fingeret 1992; Sissel 1996; Velazquez 1996). Adult literacy educators frequently give lip service to the importance of learner involvement, but they do not always follow through. In the instance of nonparticipants, their actions speak louder than their words. They must listen to what these adults say about their previous educational experiences and their current learning goals and use this information in program development.

- Develop an understanding of learners' experiences and communities. Because work with adult learners begins by respecting their culture, their knowledge, and their experiences (Auerbach et al. 1996), adult literacy educators must seek to understand learners' individual and community contexts. Talking to current and potential adult learners and other members of the community can provide helpful in sights. However, literacy educators must not depend just on community members but also seek to educate themselves through films, fiction, autobiography, and poetry (Hayes 1994). Only by under standing the experiences and communities of the adults they wish to serve can adult literacy educators develop viable programs.

- Hire program staff who share the culture and life experiences of the learners. Ideally, these staff should be teachers. In the event that hiring teachers who reflect the learners' community is not feasible, then other program staff should be recruited from the community. All staff should receive training that familiarizes them with the social and cultural contexts of the learners (Auerbach et al. 1996; Peterson 1996; Velazquez 1996).

- Be clear about philosophy and purpose. Quigley (1997) suggests that programs not try to be "all things to all people." Teachers and staff need to be clear about their working philosophy and purpose and share them with potential students. Students with dissimilar goals can be referred to other pro grams. Programs may also be able to match students with teachers who share similar goals. For example, some teachers are philosophically oriented toward preparing students for work, and they can be matched with those students whose goal is to get a job. Quigley (ibid.) describes one small (three teachers) program that tried the "matching" approach, and, as a result, experienced a 36 per cent increase in its retention rate over the previous 3 years.

If adult literacy educators are to be successful in attracting and retaining more adults in their programs, they must change how they think about their programs (Quigley 1997). The schooling model that predominates must be exchanged for one that is based on adults' perceptions of their goals and purposes and that addresses the realities of their lives.

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# ESL Instruction in Adult Education: Findings from a National Evaluation

by Nicholas B. Fitzgerald
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In 1994, the U.S. Department of Education completed a national evaluation of federally-supported adult education programs. The purpose of the study was to determine the effectiveness of current programs in reducing deficits in literacy skills, English language proficiency, and secondary school completion. The evaluation was carried out by Development Associates between 1990 and 1994 as the National Evaluation of Adult Education Programs (NEAEP), using data from program year April 1991 to April 1992. The study's findings were published in a series of four reports describing the adult education service delivery system, the characteristics of adult education clients, the patterns and predictors of program attendance, and estimates of program impacts and costs. This digest summarizes findings of the NEAEP that are pertinent to English as a second language (ESL) literacy education, including a profile of the ESL population served by adult education, the nature of ESL program participation, the impact of ESL instruction, and estimates of both current and future demand for ESL services. The separate NEAEP reports are listed at the end of this digest.

**The Adult Education Act**

National policy on adult literacy education is articulated in the Adult Education Act (AEA) and in the National Literacy Act, which amended the AEA in 1990. The intent of the act is to help out-of-school adults (a) acquire the literacy and in the case of ESL adults‹the language skills needed to function effectively in society, (b) benefit from job training and retraining in order to obtain and retain employment, and (c) continue their education to at least the level of high school completion.

The AEA provides a public funding vehicle to support adult literacy efforts for adult basic education (ABE), adult secondary education (ASE), and ESL instruction through federal grants to state education agencies. Funds are targeted to persons 16 and older who do not have a high school diploma or its equivalent and who are not currently enrolled in school, or who have a diploma but lack English language (speaking, listening, reading, or writing) skills. The target population for ABE programs is native speakers who read at less than an eighth grade level; for ASE programs it is those who read above the eighth grade level. The target population for ESL programs is learners who speak a language other than English as their first language and who need to improve English oral/aural skills (listening and speaking), as well as literacy skills (reading and writing proficiency).

**A Profile of ESL Clients in Adult Education**

The current adult ESL learner population is primarily Hispanic (69%) and Asian (19%), with the vast majority (85%) living in major metropolitan areas and residing primarily (72%) in the western region of the United States. Adult education clients in ESL programs are overwhelmingly (98%) foreign born, with most (72%) speaking Spanish in the home. While almost all ESL clients (92%) reported that they read well or very well in their native language, few (13%) reported that they could speak English well at the time of enrollment, and most (73%) were initially placed at the beginning level of ESL instruction. Forty-eight percent of the ESL

clients were employed at the time of enrollment in adult education, and 33% were not in the labor force. Eleven percent had been public assistance recipients during the preceding year. ESL clients were generally more educated than their ABE/ASE counterparts upon program entry, judging from prior school attainment. For example, half of the ESL clients had completed at least high school compared to only 17% of the ABE/ASE group.

**The Nature of ESL Program Participation**

Approximately two of every three adult education programs provide ESL services although ESL is the prominent component in only 21% of the programs. Most of these programs offer ESL through the public school systems. ESL components of adult education programs tend to have larger enrollments than ABE and ASE and they tend to have larger classes: The median class size for ESL is 20; it is 12 for ABE and 15 for ASE. Furthermore, NEAEP results indicate that ESL participants acquire three to four times more instruction than ABE and ASE students (a median of 113 hours of instruction compared to 35 and 28 hours respectively) before leaving programs.

Certain program factors are strongly related to high levels of ESL attendance (persistence):

- Learners who use support services provided by their programs (such as counseling, transportation,and childcare) persist longer than those who do not use these services;
- Learners who attend day classes only to tend to persist longer than those who study at night; and
- Learners who participate in computer-assisted learning labs or whose instruction includes independent study persist longer than those whose instruction is only classroom-based.

**The Impact of ESL Instruction**

The AEA is intended to help adults by improving their basic education skills, enhancing their employability, and encouraging continued education.

In self-reports solicited six months after program exit, ESL clients indicated that participation in adult education had helped a majority (60%) of them to improve their basic English skills. Standardized achievement test results an average gain of 5 scale score points on the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) reading test after 120 hours of instruction also provided objective evidence that ESL instruction had helped to improve the reading skills of adults learning English as a second language. At program entry, the English language ability of most ESL learners was only suitable for entry-level employment; at program exit, their English literacy skills had developed to a degree that was sufficient for participating in job training or for holding a job requiring the comprehension of simple English text information. The ESL program factors that contributed directly to these English literacy gains included cost per seat hour and total hours of instruction. That is, basic English literacy skills improved with increasing amounts of ESL instruction and with increasing financial investment in ESL programs.

The six-month follow-up results also indicate that 35% of the ESL clients benefitted in some way from adult education in terms of enhanced employability. For example, the 6% net increase in employment six months after program exit was primarily related to ESL participation. In addition, among those who remained employed from intake through the six-month follow-up, ESL clients benefitted more from program participation than did ABE/ASE clients in terms of improving their job performance and in obtaining a better job than the one they held prior to enrolling in adult education.

Finally, ESL clients showed interest in continuing their education. Almost a quarter (24%) of the ESL clients who lacked a high school diploma had resumed their education within six months of leaving adult education, most of them having reenrolled in English language instruction courses.

**Demand for ESL Services**

While the ESL target population is much smaller than the ASE target population, there is considerable evidence, especially in states that have high concentrations of immigrants (ie. California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, and New York) that ESL services are in the greatest demand among those seeking adult education. For example, ESL learners constituted the majority (51%) of adult education clients receiving instructional services during the 1992 program year; this represents a 268% increase over the 12 years since the last national study of adult education in 1980. In addition, ESL students received a majority (76%) of the hours of instruction. Examining the participation rate per thousand shows that targeted adults are three to four times more likely to participate in adult education if they are members of the ESL target population than if they belong to either the ABE or ASE groups respectively. Another indicator of demand consists of the number of clients on waiting lists maintained by adult education programs. These data reveal that, in general, there are more ESL students waiting to be served than can be accommodated by existing program capacity and that the average ESL waiting list is considerably longer than those of ABE and ASE programs. In short, ESL clients have the highest rates of participation in adult education, and the demand for ESL instruction tends to exceed the capacity of the adult education service delivery system.

**Conclusion**

The ESL population has grown tremendously in the United States over the last 15 years, and is projected to increase at a rate faster than that estimated for either the ABE or ASE populations. ESL students are highly motivated to participate in adult education, they participate in adult literacy instruction much longer than their ABE and ASE counterparts, and they experience considerable benefits from adult education in terms of improved basic English literacy skills and enhanced employability. Unfortunately, the current adult education system is unable to keep up with the high demand for ESL services in spite of the important results being achieved by ESL literacy education. Given the importance of ESL and the diversity of the ESL clients' educational and cultural backgrounds, research studies are needed on topics such as instructional approaches and assessment strategies that are successful with adult ESL learners at every level.

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# Adult Literacy Education: Emerging Directions in Program Development

by Susan Imel

ERIC Digest: ED402475. 1996.

*The one-size-fits-all programming for (adult literacy students) that has predominated in the past should not and indeed cannot be in the future if practitioners are to be responsive to learners' needs. Rather, practitioners must meaningfully assist adults in learning to read not the word but their world.* (Sissel 1996)

"Why don't more adults take advantage of available opportunities to improve their basic skills?" is one of the more perplexing questions confronting the field of adult basic and literacy education. Only 8 percent of eligible adults participate in funded literacy programs and, of those who do, most (74 percent) leave during the first year (Quigley 1997). "What other area of education could live with such figures?" asks Quigley (ibid., p. 8).

A large number of adults with low literacy simply choose not to participate in available programs, and they are sometimes referred to as nonparticipants or resisters. The reasons these adults do not see literacy education as a viable alternative are complex but recent research has focused on the connection to previous school experiences (Velazquez 1996). Many adults equate literacy education with school, and, even though they have positive attitudes about learning and education, they choose not to participate in adult basic and literacy education programs (Quigley 1997; Velazquez 1996; Ziegahn 1992).

Since most adult literacy education programs still resemble school (Quigley 1997; Velazquez 1996), adult literacy educators must begin to change how programs are structured and delivered if they are going to attract nonparticipants. Fortunately, a growing number of practitioners, researchers, and policy makers in the field of adult literacy education are dissatisfied with the status quo and are proposing changes based on research and practice. This Digest presents emerging perspectives about adult literacy program development. First, it reviews current ideas about the relationship between learners and program development and then presents recommendations for program development based on the literature.

## PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT: LISTENING TO LEARNERS' VOICES

How can literacy programs become less like school and more appealing to adults, especially to nonparticipants? Two areas that hold potential for answering this question are discussed here. The first is connected to program content and the second revolves around greater consideration of the differences among students.

## BEYOND READING AND WRITING

Literacy education must be conceptualized as more than reading and writing (Auerbach et al. 1996). According to Fingeret (1992), "our understanding of literacy has changed from a focus on individual skills separated from meaningful content ... to see (ing) that literacy is connected to the social, historical, political, cultural, and personal situations in which people use their skills" (p.3). It is true that the desire to read and write motivates many adults to enroll in literacy education, but Ziegahn (1992) found that the nonparticipants in adult literacy strongly associated reading and writing (literacy) with schooling. Furthermore, they saw their own learning as separate from reading and writing.

Many adult literacy students understand that literacy is more than development of individual skills. When more than 1,500 adult literacy students responded to a question about the kind of skills and knowledge they need, their responses were categorized into the following purposes:

- Literacy for access and orientation—to have access to information and orient themselves in the world.
- Literacy as voice—to give voice to their ideas and opinions and to have the confidence that their voice

will be heard and taken into account.

- Literacy as a vehicle for independent action—to solve problems and make decisions on their own, acting independently as a parent, citizen and worker, for the good of their families, their communities, and their nation.

- Literacy as bridge to the future—to be able to keep on learning in order to keep up with a rapidly changing world. (Stein 1995, pp. 4, 10)

In reflecting on the responses from adult learners, Stein suggests that their words "have the power to radically change the approach to adult literacy instruction"... because adults see reading and writing not as goals in and of themselves, but "as a necessary starting point for engagement in the world" (p.24).

When literacy educators base their programs on the assumption that literacy is only about developing discrete skills such as reading and writing, they are delivering a message that equates literacy with schooling (Ziegahn 1992). They are also presenting literacy education as having very narrow goals and purposes that are inappropriate for the expressed needs of the broad spectrum of current and potential adult learners.

## THE REALITIES OF LEARNERS' LIVES

Closely related to the recognition that literacy is more than the development of discrete skills is the growing recognition that programs must be structured in ways that address the diverse groups of learners and that reflect the contexts in which people use their skills (Fingeret 1992). Within literacy education, a great deal of attention has been focused on individualizing instruction to meet individual needs. Although there is nothing inherently wrong with this notion, preoccupation with serving individuals can suppress issues of gender, race, and class, issues that reproduce the realities of the lives of many adult literacy students (Campbell 1992). Many nonparticipants associate literacy educators' lack of attention to the broader contexts in which they live their lives with schooling. To them, school is simply a place that transmits the values of the mainstream society and they find it irrelevant.

How such issues intersect with and affect literacy education is a complex subject. Among other things, it affects how literacy educators view adults with low literacy skills. For example, are they seen as victims who have exercised little control over the circumstances of their lives or as individuals whose low literacy is just one of the negative outcomes of their gender, race, class, and culture (ibid.)? It also affects decisions about program development and implementation. Programs that are structured around these realities are much different from those which are not.

A growing number of adult literacy educators are advocating for understanding learners both as individuals and as members of their cultural groups or communities (Sissel 1996). Even in groups of learners that share a common characteristic such as sex, educators must be aware that "differences of race, culture, and class may contribute to differences in...goals" (Cuban and Hayes 1996, p. 10). Literacy programs that attract and retain learners are sensitive to the individual and cultural/community differences in learners' lives and address them in the planning and implementation stages of program development.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Adult literacy education is a complex undertaking. The ways adults think about their learning as well as their perceptions of the skills and knowledge they need are intertwined with their lives both as individuals and as members of communities and cultural groups. Since most nonparticipants "have never stopped valuing an education" (Quigley 1997, p. 198), adult literacy educators must become more sensitive to what they want. Some recommendations for how this can be accomplished include the following:

- Involve adults in program planning and implementation. The need to consult adults is a theme that is

woven throughout the literature (e.g., Auerbach et al. 1996; Fingeret 1992; Sissel 1996; Velazquez 1996). Adult literacy educators frequently give lip service to the importance of learner involvement, but they do not always follow through. In the instance of nonparticipants, their actions speak louder than their words. They must listen to what these adults say about their previous educational experiences and their current learning goals and use this information in program development.

- Develop an understanding of learners' experiences and communities. Because work with adult learners begins by respecting their culture, their knowledge, and their experiences (Auerbach et al. 1996), adult literacy educators must seek to understand learners' individual and community contexts. Talking to current and potential adult learners and other members of the community can provide helpful in sights. However, literacy educators must not depend just on community members but also seek to educate themselves through films, fiction, autobiography, and poetry (Hayes 1994). Only by under standing the experiences and communities of the adults they wish to serve can adult literacy educators develop viable programs.

- Hire program staff who share the culture and life experiences of the learners. Ideally, these staff should be teachers. In the event that hiring teachers who reflect the learners' community is not feasible, then other program staff should be recruited from the community. All staff should receive training that familiarizes them with the social and cultural contexts of the learners (Auerbach et al. 1996; Peterson 1996; Velazquez 1996).

- Be clear about philosophy and purpose. Quigley (1997) suggests that programs not try to be "all things to all people." Teachers and staff need to be clear about their working philosophy and purpose and share them with potential students. Students with dissimilar goals can be referred to other pro grams. Programs may also be able to match students with teachers who share similar goals. For example, some teachers are philosophically oriented toward preparing students for work, and they can be matched with those students whose goal is to get a job. Quigley (ibid.) describes one small (three teachers) program that tried the "matching" approach, and, as a result, experienced a 36 per cent increase in its retention rate over the previous 3 years.

If adult literacy educators are to be successful in attracting and retaining more adults in their programs, they must change how they think about their programs (Quigley 1997). The schooling model that predominates must be exchanged for one that is based on adults' perceptions of their goals and purposes and that addresses the realities of their lives.

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# ESL Instruction in Adult Education: Findings from a National Evaluation

by Nicholas B. Fitzgerald
Development Associates, Inc.

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In 1994, the U.S. Department of Education completed a national evaluation of federally-supported adult education programs. The purpose of the study was to determine the effectiveness of current programs in reducing deficits in literacy skills, English language proficiency, and secondary school completion. The evaluation was carried out by Development Associates between 1990 and 1994 as the National Evaluation of Adult Education Programs (NEAEP), using data from program year April 1991 to April 1992. The study's findings were published in a series of four reports describing the adult education service delivery system, the characteristics of adult education clients, the patterns and predictors of program attendance, and estimates of program impacts and costs. This digest summarizes findings of the NEAEP that are pertinent to English as a second language (ESL) literacy education, including a profile of the ESL population served by adult education, the nature of ESL program participation, the impact of ESL instruction, and estimates of both current and future demand for ESL services. The separate NEAEP reports are listed at the end of this digest.

**The Adult Education Act**

National policy on adult literacy education is articulated in the Adult Education Act (AEA) and in the National Literacy Act, which amended the AEA in 1990. The intent of the act is to help out-of-school adults (a) acquire the literacy and in the case of ESL adults‹the language skills needed to function effectively in society, (b) benefit from job training and retraining in order to obtain and retain employment, and (c) continue their education to at least the level of high school completion.

The AEA provides a public funding vehicle to support adult literacy efforts for adult basic education (ABE), adult secondary education (ASE), and ESL instruction through federal grants to state education agencies. Funds are targeted to persons 16 and older who do not have a high school diploma or its equivalent and who are not currently enrolled in school, or who have a diploma but lack English language (speaking, listening, reading, or writing) skills. The target population for ABE programs is native speakers who read at less than an eighth grade level; for ASE programs it is those who read above the eighth grade level. The target population for ESL programs is learners who speak a language other than English as their first language and who need to improve English oral/aural skills (listening and speaking), as well as literacy skills (reading and writing proficiency).

**A Profile of ESL Clients in Adult Education**

The current adult ESL learner population is primarily Hispanic (69%) and Asian (19%), with the vast majority (85%) living in major metropolitan areas and residing primarily (72%) in the western region of the United States. Adult education clients in ESL programs are overwhelmingly (98%) foreign born, with most (72%) speaking Spanish in the home. While almost all ESL clients (92%) reported that they read well or very well in their native language, few (13%) reported that they could speak English well at the time of enrollment, and most (73%) were initially placed at the beginning level of ESL instruction. Forty-eight percent of the ESL

clients were employed at the time of enrollment in adult education, and 33% were not in the labor force. Eleven percent had been public assistance recipients during the preceding year. ESL clients were generally more educated than their ABE/ASE counterparts upon program entry, judging from prior school attainment. For example, half of the ESL clients had completed at least high school compared to only 17% of the ABE/ASE group.

**The Nature of ESL Program Participation**

Approximately two of every three adult education programs provide ESL services although ESL is the prominent component in only 21% of the programs. Most of these programs offer ESL through the public school systems. ESL components of adult education programs tend to have larger enrollments than ABE and ASE and they tend to have larger classes: The median class size for ESL is 20; it is 12 for ABE and 15 for ASE. Furthermore, NEAEP results indicate that ESL participants acquire three to four times more instruction than ABE and ASE students (a median of 113 hours of instruction compared to 35 and 28 hours respectively) before leaving programs.

Certain program factors are strongly related to high levels of ESL attendance (persistence):

- Learners who use support services provided by their programs (such as counseling, transportation,and childcare) persist longer than those who do not use these services;
- Learners who attend day classes only to tend to persist longer than those who study at night; and
- Learners who participate in computer-assisted learning labs or whose instruction includes independent study persist longer than those whose instruction is only classroom-based.

**The Impact of ESL Instruction**

The AEA is intended to help adults by improving their basic education skills, enhancing their employability, and encouraging continued education.

In self-reports solicited six months after program exit, ESL clients indicated that participation in adult education had helped a majority (60%) of them to improve their basic English skills. Standardized achievement test results an average gain of 5 scale score points on the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) reading test after 120 hours of instruction also provided objective evidence that ESL instruction had helped to improve the reading skills of adults learning English as a second language. At program entry, the English language ability of most ESL learners was only suitable for entry-level employment; at program exit, their English literacy skills had developed to a degree that was sufficient for participating in job training or for holding a job requiring the comprehension of simple English text information. The ESL program factors that contributed directly to these English literacy gains included cost per seat hour and total hours of instruction. That is, basic English literacy skills improved with increasing amounts of ESL instruction and with increasing financial investment in ESL programs.

The six-month follow-up results also indicate that 35% of the ESL clients benefitted in some way from adult education in terms of enhanced employability. For example, the 6% net increase in employment six months after program exit was primarily related to ESL participation. In addition, among those who remained employed from intake through the six-month follow-up, ESL clients benefitted more from program participation than did ABE/ASE clients in terms of improving their job performance and in obtaining a better job than the one they held prior to enrolling in adult education.

Finally, ESL clients showed interest in continuing their education. Almost a quarter (24%) of the ESL clients who lacked a high school diploma had resumed their education within six months of leaving adult education, most of them having reenrolled in English language instruction courses.

**Demand for ESL Services**

While the ESL target population is much smaller than the ASE target population, there is considerable evidence, especially in states that have high concentrations of immigrants (ie. California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, and New York) that ESL services are in the greatest demand among those seeking adult education. For example, ESL learners constituted the majority (51%) of adult education clients receiving instructional services during the 1992 program year; this represents a 268% increase over the 12 years since the last national study of adult education in 1980. In addition, ESL students received a majority (76%) of the hours of instruction. Examining the participation rate per thousand shows that targeted adults are three to four times more likely to participate in adult education if they are members of the ESL target population than if they belong to either the ABE or ASE groups respectively. Another indicator of demand consists of the number of clients on waiting lists maintained by adult education programs. These data reveal that, in general, there are more ESL students waiting to be served than can be accommodated by existing program capacity and that the average ESL waiting list is considerably longer than those of ABE and ASE programs. In short, ESL clients have the highest rates of participation in adult education, and the demand for ESL instruction tends to exceed the capacity of the adult education service delivery system.

**Conclusion**

The ESL population has grown tremendously in the United States over the last 15 years, and is projected to increase at a rate faster than that estimated for either the ABE or ASE populations. ESL students are highly motivated to participate in adult education, they participate in adult literacy instruction much longer than their ABE and ASE counterparts, and they experience considerable benefits from adult education in terms of improved basic English literacy skills and enhanced employability. Unfortunately, the current adult education system is unable to keep up with the high demand for ESL services in spite of the important results being achieved by ESL literacy education. Given the importance of ESL and the diversity of the ESL clients' educational and cultural backgrounds, research studies are needed on topics such as instructional approaches and assessment strategies that are successful with adult ESL learners at every level.

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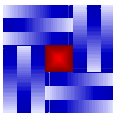


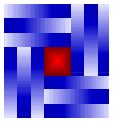
# SECTION B

## ACCESSING RESOURCES: WHERE DO I FIND IT?

1. Community Resources
2. Professional Associations for ESOL Teachers
3. Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center
4. Internet Sites of Interest
5. ESL Periodicals
6. Publishers of ESL Materials

*Many resources are available to both new and experienced ESL teachers and tutors, from individual people to organizations and from print to audiovisual to electronic materials. They include resources for your own professional development and support as a teacher and resources for accessing materials to use with students.*

*This section includes a lot of lists. The lists are not necessarily all-inclusive of resources in that category, but they do provide an assortment of places to start.*



## 1. Community Resources

**CAREERS**
- Virginia Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation (804) 367-8569
- Virginia Employment Commission (804) 786-4359
- Career Information Hotline (800) 542-5870
- Virginia Division of Apprenticeship Training (804) 786-2382
- Department of Conservation and Recreation - Employment Opportunities in Park, Recreation and Conservation Fields (804) 786-5492 (need to call Human Resources for Employment (804) 786-4556 or fax (804) 371-0315)

**CONSUMER SERVICES**
- Virginia Department of Consumer Affairs (804) 786-2667
- Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (804) 786-2373

**CRISIS INTERVENTION**
- Local social services and comprehensive substance abuse and mental health, http://www.dss.state.va.us/

**EDUCATION**
- Virginia Department of Public Affairs of Virginia Department of Education (804) 225-2020
- ERIC (800) 538-3742 - Pamphlet - "Access Eric", http://www.cal.org/ncle/DIGESTS/
- Virginia Cooperative Extension - Call local office
- Virginia Department of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (800) 552-7917
- Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (800) 622-2155, http://www.dss.state.va.us

**FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**
- Virginia Department of Social Services (804) 692-1900, http://www.dss.state.va.us/
- Virginia Statewide Information and Referral System (800) 230-6977
- Food Stamps and Fuel Assistance (800) 552-3431
- Child Support Enforcement (800) 468-8894

**GOVERNMENT SERVICES**
- Virginia Council on Human Rights (804) 225-2292
- Equal Employment Opportunity Hotline (800) 533-1414
- Virginia Missing Children Info. Clearinghouse (800) 822-4453

**HOUSING**
- Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (804) 371-7100

**IMMIGRATION**
- Look under "Justice Department" in U.S. Government listings
- National Immigration Law Center (213) 639-3900
- Booklet "Guide to Immigration and Naturalization Service"
  Write to Eastern Regional Office, Office of Congressional and Public Affairs and Eastern Forms Center, 70 Dimball Ave., S. Burlington, VT 05403

**LEGAL AID ASSISTANCE/LEGAL SERVICES**
- Virginia Legal Aid Society (800) 552-7676
- Virginia Lawyer Referral Service (800) 552-7977

**MEDICAL**
- Lions International for Vision and Hearing Screening
- Virginia Department of Health (804) 786-3561 or Local Health Department
- Call local Social Services Office
- Virginia Department of Health Professions - Hotline for Complaints against Health Professionals (800) 533-1560

**MENTAL HEALTH**
- Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services, Office of Legislation and Public Relations (804) 786-9048
- Asian Community Mental Health Services (510) 451-6729
  Pamphlet - "Drugs Are All Around Us…Help Your Child Avoid Them"
- March of Dimes - Information on pregnancy and birth defects (888)-MODIMES (663-4637)

**MILITARY DEPENDENT INFORMATION**
- American Red Cross International Social Services - Contact local Red Cross Chapter
- Call local Red Cross Chapter - Ask for Pamphlet - "Services for Members of the United States Armed Forces"
- Contact local Family Services Office of nearest Military Installation

**PROTECTIVE SERVICES**
- Division of State Labor Law Administration (Minimum wage, child labor, etc.) (804) 786-2387
- Department of Labor and Industry (804) 371-0442

**RECREATION**
- Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreational Facilities in Virginia
  (804) 786-1712

**SENIOR CITIZEN SERVICES**
- Virginia Department of Aging (804) 662-9333
- State Long-Term Care Ombudsman (800) 644-2804

**TRANSLATION**
- New York Association for New Americans
  17 Battery Place, New York, NY 10004-1102
  Many bilingual materials

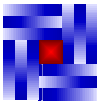
**TRANSPORTATION**

- Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles 1-866-368-5463 or http://www.dmvnow.com
- American Automobile Association (AAA), 1-888-368-5463 http://www.aaamidatlantic.com/
- Virginia Department of Transportation (Highway Helpline (800) 367-ROAD)
- Call local Transit System, also ask for Special Services for riders needing assistance

Most of this important information was found on two Internet sites :

http://www.myvirginia.org

http://www.dss.state.va.us



## 2. Professional Associations for ESL Teachers

*The following is a list of ESL organizations in the state of Virginia:*

**TESOL -Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages**
**1600 Cameron Street Suite 300**
**Alexandria, VA 22314**
**Phone: 703-836-0774**
**Web Page: http://www.tesol.edu**
**e-mail: tesol@tesol.edu**

TESOL is the professional organization for teachers of English to speakers of other languages.

**VATESOL - Virginia Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages**

VATESOL is the Virginia state affiliate of TESOL. The officers of this organization change annually, and there are annual meetings. To find out current contact information for this affiliate, contact TESOL at the above address.

**WATESOL - Washington, DC, Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages**
**P.O. Box 25502**
**Washington DC 20032**

WATESOL is the Washington, D.C., area affiliate of TESOL. WATESOL also has local officers and meetings that serves ESOL teachers in Northern Virginia, Washington, D.C., and parts of Maryland.

**VESA - Virginia ESL Supervisors Association**

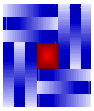
VESA may be contacted through your local school system. They have an annual conference.

For more ESL associations and resource centers for ESL see *The ESL Teacher's Book of Lists* by Jacqueline E. Kress. West Nyack, NY: Center for Applied Research in Education, 1993.

**VAACE - Virginia Association for Adult and Continuing Education**

The officers of this organization change annually, and there are annual meetings. To find out current contact information for this affiliate, contact

**Brenda Mitchell, Membership Co-chair**
**Williamsburg/James City Schools**
**3925 Midlands Road**
**Williamsburg, VA 23188**
**Tel. (757) 220-5324**
**http://www.aelweb.vcu.edu/vaace.htm**



## 3. Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center

**1015 West Main Street**
**P.O. Box 842020**
**Richmond, VA 23284-2020**
**(800) 237-0178**

If you work with adult learners, the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center has the information, materials, and professional development you need. Our resources are close at hand through the World Wide Web at http://www.aelweb.vcu.edu/, our toll-free information lines, and by our quick-turn-around mail service. Our mission is to give you the tools to build a better future through adult education and literacy.

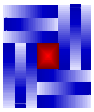
As a special service to you VALRC has an ESOL Specialist on staff to assist you with your questions and needs. Please feel free to contact Nancy Faux at the above toll-free number or at nfaux@vcu.edu.

The Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center, in addition, supports Virginia's adult education and literacy efforts through:

- **Professional Development** workshops, seminars, and meetings
- **Professional Development Plans** for practitioners to investigate their own questions as a way to improve practice and develop new knowledge in the field
- **The Literacy Support Center** for training and support services for community-based literacy organizations
- **Progress**, Virginia's adult education and literacy newsletter, published quarterly
- A **Library and Clearinghouse** to collect, publish, and disseminate print and multimedia materials
- An easy-to-use **Website** that features our calendar, our searchable library and directory databases, and a world of resources and information
- An **Information Desk** for adult education and literacy practitioners, adult learners, and the general public
- An **Instructional Systems Support Unit** to provide assistance and training in Workplace Essential Skills, GED, and other state initiatives for both practitioners and adult learners
- **The Project Software Website** to identify and evaluate software programs that are effective and that enhance learning.

### How to Reach Us

The Resource Center is open from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday, year round. Leave a message after office hours by dialing the extension of the individual you need which is provided in the voice mail message.



## 4. Internet Sites of Interest

*For a complete listing of excellent resources on the Internet, please look at our website where we have our favorite links. For your convenience we have listed a few to get you started.*

**Center for Applied Linguistics**
**http://www.cal.org**
Better known as "CAL," this site sponsors on-line chats with ESL experts on a variety of topics. It also provides articles on bilingual education, refugee concerns, and reviews of new teaching materials.

**CNN Newsroom and Worldview for ESL**
**http://lc.byuh.edu/CNN_N/CNN-N.html**
Real reports aired on CNN are formatted as cloze exercises on this Web page. Students may fill in answers and obtain immediate results. Most of these exercises are suitable for students who are working at an intermediate to advanced level.

**Dave's ESL Cafe**
**http://www.eslcafe.com**
Arguable one of the most user friendly sites online, Dave's ESL Cafe offers a chat room for students and teachers, a graffiti wall for students, and a message exchange board. The Cafe also includes pages on phrasal verbs, current slang, idioms, and quizzes on a variety of topics. For teachers there are idea pages, job boards, a bookstore, and links to other ESL Web sites.

**The ESL Loop**
**http://www.linguistic-funland.com/esloop**
The ESL Loop is a list of sites relevant to English language teaching and learning on the World Wide Web.

**ESL/EFL Lessons, Games, Songs**
**http://www.eslgames.com/**
While the makers of this site are intent upon having you purchase their book, they nevertheless offer a few worthwhile ideas on how to incorporate music, songs and games into the classroom.

**English Grammar Links for ESL Students**
**http://www.gl.umbc.edu/~kpokoy1/grammar1.htm**
This site provides links to other grammar reference sites, exercises and quizzes. It also offers a teacher's section.

**Internet TESL Journal**
**http://iteslj.org/**
The Internet TESL Journal is a user-friendly site for teachers. This electronic journal includes scholarly articles and research papers in the area of ESL/EFL. There are lists of teacher tips, ideas on teaching techniques, sample lessons, lesson plans, handouts, project ideas, and links to other ESL sites.

**NCLE**
**http://www.cal.org/ncle**
The National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education features ERIC Digests online. These materials cover a wide range of topics on ESL literacy education.

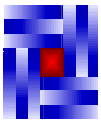
**TESOL**
**http://www.tesol.edu**
The "Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages" Website serves as the membership page for this ESL professional organization. Also included on the site are convention lists, a calendar of upcoming professional training seminars, and access to information about state and federal laws that affect ESL teachers and students.

**TOEFL**
**http://www.toefl.org/**
The *Test of English as a Foreign Language* is used worldwide in order to evaluate the English proficiency of non-native speakers. The written test will soon be replaced by an online exam. This site provides information about ordering the test, who should take it, and how these students can prepare for it.

**Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center**
**http://www.vcu.edu/aelweb/**
This site offers access to a large ESL lending library and clearinghouse that is maintained for adult education practitioners in the state of Virginia. There are links to ESL sites as well as a calendar of special events, training, seminars, and workshops held both in-state and nationally.

**Comenius**

**English Language Center**
**http://www.comenius.com**
This page features weekly idioms for students, a section entitled "Fluency through Fables", and language links designed to improve listening and writing skills.



# 5. ESL Periodicals

## PRINT PUBLICATIONS FOR INSTRUCTORS

**Hands-On English**
This publication provides games for the teacher to use in class, writing activities, an on-going idea file, a "Hints and Tips" section, and grant information. Often, the magazine includes a crossword puzzle that can be copied and adapted for multi-level classes. Six issues yearly.

Address: *Hands-On English*
P.O. Box 256
Crete, NE 68333
Web site: http://www.handsonenglish.com

**Adult Learning**
This publication is focused on the broader issues faced by teachers of adult students. It provides insight to working with adult learners but does not specifically deal with ESL issues. Six issues yearly.

Address: *Adult Learning*
1200 19th Street, NW
Suite 300
Washington DC 20036

**Language Teaching**
This journal, edited by Janet Hooper, is an international abstract for language teachers and those interested in applied linguistics. Four issues yearly.

**English Today**
This magazine focuses on those who speak English, the diversity of the language, and the development of a sense of unity in teaching a wide variety of topics. English Today provides accessible cutting-edge reports on all aspects of the language, including style, usage, dictionaries, literary language, Plain English, the Internet and language teaching, in terms of British, American and the world's many other 'Englishes'.
Four issues yearly.

Address for both: *Cambridge University Press*
110 Midland Avenue
Port Chester, NY 10573-4930
(800) 872-7243
FAX (914) 937-4712
Web site: http://www.cup.org

## PRINT PUBLICATIONS FOR STUDENTS

**English Digest Magazine**
The *English Digest* is a colorful magazine designed for adult and young adult ESL learners with a vocabulary base of 600-1,000 words. Articles dealing with popular culture, medical and legal advice, and sports are all included, as well as a teacher's guide.

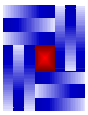
**Voices**
This periodical publishes the writing of students who are learning English for the first time. The submissions are arranged according to topic, and often a photo of the author is included.

Address for both: *Delta Systems Co., Inc.*
1400 Miller Parkway
McHenry, IL 60050-7030
(800) 323-8270
Website: http://www.delta-systems.com

## ELECTRONIC PUBLICATIONS

**The Internet TESL Journal**
http://iteslj.org
This journal contains teaching techniques, projects, links, research papers and articles.

**The Language Teacher Online**
http://www.jalt-publications.org/tlt/ or www.jalt.org
Games for the ESL classroom, reviews of materials, and opinions and features columns are featured.



## 6. Publishers of ESL Materials

**Addison Wesley Longman**
10 Bank Street Suite 900
White Plains, NY 10606-1951
ESL Help Desk: 1-800-266-8855

**Alta ESL**
14 Adrian Court
Burlingame, CA 94010
1-800-ALTA/ESL
Fax: 1-800-ALTA/FAX
e-mail: altaesl@aol.com

**Delta Systems Co., Inc.**
1400 Miller Parkway
McHenry, IL 60050-7030
1-800-909-9901
http://www.delta-systems.com

**Educational Activities, Inc.**
P.O. Box 392
Freeport, NY 11520
1-800-645-3739
Fax: 516-623-9282
e-mail: learn@edat.com

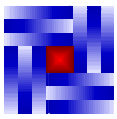
**Glencoe/McGraw-Hill**
Southeastern Region
3100 Breckinridge Blvd.
Bldg. 700 Suite 705
Duluth, GA 30096
1-800-334-7344
http://www.glencoe.com

**New Readers Press**
Department F97
P.O. Box 888
Syracuse, NY 13210-0888
1-800-448-8878

**Pearson Education**
Longman
Prentice Hall Regents
Scott Foresman
Addison Wesley
12805 Nathan Court
Herndon, VA 20170
1-888-877-7824, VM #9215
(Sheila Peterson)
http://www.longman.com

**Pro Lingua Associates**
15 Elm Street
Brattleboro, VT 05301
1-800-366-4775
Fax: 802-257-5117
e-mail: prolingu@sover.net

For a list of more publishers, see *The ESL Teacher's Book of Lists* or look at Delta Systems Co., Inc. which is a general clearinghouse for all publishers.



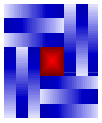
# SECTION C

## TEACHING ADULTS: WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

1. Understanding the Adult Learner

2. Teaching Effectively

3. Using Different Approaches to Language Teaching



# 1. Understanding the Adult ESOL Learner

Getting to know your ESOL learners should be one of your top priorities. Here are a few characteristics to keep in mind.

**Adult learners may**:

- ***Represent a wide range of educational backgrounds***. They may have from little to no formal education in their native language, to completion of university and advanced degrees in their native language. In addition, they may or may not have some previous education in English and/or in the United States.

- ***Be goal-oriented and highly motivated***. They have come to you for a specific reason. Their goal(s) may be long or short term. They should be involved in sharing and setting their goals.

- ***Bring different skills, interests, backgrounds, and life experiences to the learning situation***. They have rich life experiences, and the instructor should capitalize on this diversity.

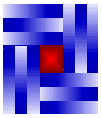
- ***Want or need immediate application.*** Adult learners need to apply what they are learning. The tasks must be practical, have a clear purpose, and directly relate to their everyday lives.

- ***Have different learning styles***. Adult learners often relate to their previous education. Some may learn by doing, others by listening, speaking, reading, or writing. Many students learn better when there are visuals (pictures) or realia (real things, such as articles of clothing) to use.

- ***Be very busy***. They may work more than one job in addition to going to school and taking care of their family. They may be tired and have difficulty staying on task for long periods of time.

- ***May have different levels of proficiency.*** Student levels may differ in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in both their first and second languages.

- ***Have a poor self concept***. Many people do not see themselves as learners. Some do not think they can learn or that they know how to learn



## 2. Teaching Effectively

Every teacher wants to know the formula for becoming a successful instructor. There is no one set formula; however, there are some tried-and-true methods that ensure the teacher is on the right track to helping students learn. The following pages include tips for getting started, as well as ideas for keeping students interested and engaged. When in doubt, ask a more experienced teacher what has worked for him or her, or consult Section B of this kit for a list of organizations to contact for more information.

### TIPS FOR SUCCESS IN THE CLASSROOM

1. Greet each student as he or she enters the classroom. Make use of name tags for students and for yourself. A name is important in every culture, and using a student's name (and having them use yours) is an important concept to be learned.

2. Provide a comfortable, safe, risk-free learning environment. Show you are interested in and care about your students.

3. Find out about your students: what countries they come from, first language, years of schooling, if they are presently employed, etc.

4. Find out students' ability in reading, writing, listening and speaking. You can do this through conversation or simple activities. This goes on continually in the classroom.

5. Find out students' needs and wants, and plan your lessons accordingly.

6. Take advantage of 'teachable moments,' for example, a concern addressed by a student, or a late-breaking news story. Teach to the students and talk about what needs to be discussed at that moment.

7. Plan activities that have a real purpose. Let students know *what* they are going to be doing and *why* they are doing it.

8. Make sure activities directly relate to students' lives. Students will not stay in class unless they can see a direct connection to their lives.

9. Vary activities to accommodate different learning styles (visual, aural, oral, kinesthetic), as well as different levels of student comprehension and ability.

10. Simplify what you teach. Make sure your students understand one point before moving on to the next.

11. Give students time to respond (pause time). It takes time to 'translate' from English to a native language and come up with a response in English.

12. Always model an activity with another student (at least once and maybe more) before assigning it to the class. This will give students practice and allow you the opportunity to observe whether the students understand their role.

13. Try to use pair or small group work in every class. Vary the pairs and groups so that the students are not always working with people from their own language and ability.



*Adapted from Fairfax County Public Schools Adult ESL Instructor Handbook; used with permission*

# Beginning to Work with Adult English Language Learners: Some Considerations

by MaryAnn Cunningham Florez and Miriam Burt
National Center for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE)
ERIC Digests, October 2001

In many parts of the United States, the number of nonnative adult learners seeking English language instruction is growing. States such as North Carolina, Arkansas, Georgia, Tennessee, Nebraska, and Iowa, not historically associated with immigrant influxes, have been experiencing increased growth rates with these populations in the last decade (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). In 1998, 47% of the participants in federally funded adult education programs were there to learn English as a second language (ESL) (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 1999). As immigrant populations seek English language instruction, the need for teachers to serve them is drawing people into the adult ESL teaching field. Some of these teachers have training and experience working with adults learning English. However, many are working with these learners for the first time.

What do teachers who are beginning to work with adult English language learners need to know? This Q&A discusses recommendations in four areas: application of principles of adult learning in ESL contexts, second language acquisition, culture and working with multicultural groups, and instructional approaches that support language development in adults. It is not intended to be comprehensive. Rather, it gives teachers an overview of important points, suggests basic strategies to use, and provides resources to consult for further information.

## How do the principles of adult learning apply to adult English language learners?

Malcolm Knowles' (1973) principles of andragogy, the art and science of facilitating adult learning, are still seminal to many of today's theories about learning and instruction for adults.

- Adults are self-directed in their learning.
- Adults have reservoirs of experience that serve as resources as they learn.
- Adults are practical, problem-solving-oriented learners.
- Adults want their learning to be immediately applicable to their lives.
- Adults want to know why something needs to be learned.

In general, this picture of the practical, purposeful, self-directed learner is representative of adults, whether they are native or nonnative English speakers. All adult learners need adult-appropriate content, materials, and activities that speak to their needs and interests and allow them to demonstrate their knowledge and abilities.

So what is different for English language learners? Obviously, they need help with the language as they learn content. Teachers working with English language learners also need to think about how Knowles' adult learner characteristics are filtered through culture, language, and experience. For example, it is not uncommon to find nonnative learners who may be hesitant to take charge of their own learning. Their educational experiences in their countries may have taught them that the teacher is the unquestioned expert. They may be resistant to a learner-centered classroom where they are expected to develop goals and work in groups with other learners (Shank & Terrill, 1995).

Nonnative learners also may resist the lifeskill-oriented instruction that is common in many adult ESL programs. Coming from cultures where learning is a high-status, academic endeavor, they may expect a more academically oriented environment (Hardman, 1999). Because of this, teachers should explain to learners why they are learning what they are learning in this new way. Similarly, because many English language learners may have studied English grammar and are familiar with the terms describing language components, instructors should be prepared, when appropriate, to answer learners' questions about sentence structure and vocabulary.

## What do instructors need to know about second language acquisition (SLA)?

Theories about how languages are learned can be complex. However, having some understanding of how people acquire and use languages can be useful to the teachers of adult English language learners.

Second language acquisition theories address cognitive issues (how the brain processes information in general and language in particular), affective issues (how emotions factor into second language processing and learning), and linguistic issues (how learners interact with and internalize new language systems). The following are some suggestions that instructors can use in the classroom. They are drawn from theories of second language acquisition generally accepted as relevant for most second language learners (summarized from Brown, 2001; Lightbown, 2000; Krashen, 1981).

- ***Meaningful interaction and natural communication in the target language are necessary for successful language acquisition.***
  Learners need to use the language, not simply talk about it. Give learners opportunities and purposes for communication that reflect or relate to their lives (e.g., role-playing a doctor/patient exchange or creating a chart with information on local medical services). Use authentic materials in activities whenever possible (e.g., listening for details in a recorded telephone message or reading classified ads from the local newspaper).

- ***Effective language use involves an automatic processing of language.***
  To become proficient, learners need to move from a concentrated focus on grammar, forms, and structures to using language as a tool to accomplish communication tasks. Think about the purpose of each lesson (e.g., is it important that the learner produce a specific grammar point or communicate an idea?) and interject error correction to serve those purposes. For example, if the activity is an oral substitution drill practicing the correct use of irregular past tense forms, it is appropriate to correct the verb form being used. However, if the focus of the lesson is making small talk on the job-a communication that involves use of irregular past tense verbs-correction may simply consist of a repetition of the correct form by the teacher (e.g., "I go to a movie last Saturday" is corrected by, "Oh, you went to a movie. What movie did you see?").

- ***Language learners can monitor their speech for correctness when they have time to focus their attention on form and know the language rules involved.***
  Give learners sufficient time for activities, to communicate, and to monitor their performance. Integrate lessons on grammar, structures, and language rules that are relevant to the communication task at hand (e.g., present lessons on imperatives when discussing giving directions) so that learners become familiar with correct structures. Focus activity objectives so that learners are not asked to process and monitor too many points at one time (e.g., asking learners to use new vocabulary and correctly use present and present progressive verb forms in an unfamiliar dialogue format can be overwhelming).

- ***Second language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to language that is at and slightly above their level of comprehension.***
  In the materials you use and in your own speech, expose learners to language that is both at and slightly above what they can comfortably understand. Offer a balance of easier reading and listening activities with more challenging ones. Provide pictures, gestures, and prompts when learners are asked to use more complex language.

- ***People have affective filters (created by a variety of factors such as motivation, self-confidence, or anxiety) that can support or disrupt acquisition of a second language.***
  Create a classroom environment in which learners feel comfortable using and taking risks with English. Use activities that ask learners to work together or share information to build a sense of familiarity and community. Make sure the physical environment is as comfortable as possible. Avoid constant error correction and include activities that focus on overall ability to communicate meaning. Recycle topics or activities that motivate learners.

- ***There are "interlanguage" periods during which learners make systematic errors that are a natural part of language learning.***
  These may be similar to those of a child learning a first language (e.g., adding ed to signify all past tense verbs) or similar to patterns in a learner's native language (e.g., Spanish speakers placing adjectives after nouns, such as shirt blue). If errors appear to be normal and developmental, provide feedback and modeling of correct structures to support learners as they move through these steps. If an error persists, consider more structured practice on the point.

- ***There is a silent period during which learners are absorbing the new language prior to producing it.***
  The length of this period may vary for each learner. Allow learners time to adjust to the new language and begin to internalize its sounds and patterns. Use activities that allow them to demonstrate comprehension without having to produce language (e.g., say new vocabulary and ask learners to hold up picture cards that illustrate each word).

- ***Second language acquisition theories are based on research that investigates specific questions with specific populations in defined circumstances.***
  Some theories may be accepted as applicable across populations and contexts; the broad application of others may be debatable. Evaluate how a theory may or may not relate to adult English language learners in general and to learners in your class specifically. Use second language acquisition theories to help make decisions about balancing different language learning activities; observe and respond to learner progress; and set realistic expectations of what learners can accomplish.

## What do instructors need to know about culture and working with multicultural groups?

Culture and language are closely related. Learning a new language involves learning about (but not necessarily wholeheartedly embracing) new ways of thinking, feeling, and expressing. This process can put tremendous pressure on an adult who has a well-developed sense of self in the native language and culture. Because immigrants are, to varying degrees and not always consciously, re-configuring their views of themselves in relation to a new social context, they may at times be ambivalent, confused, or even hostile to the process of adapting to a new culture (Ullman, 1997). This includes language learning. Teachers can help ease this process in a variety of ways:

- Become acquainted with learners' cultures to better understand their perspectives and expectations both inside and outside the classroom (e.g., traditional literacy practices, gender roles, teacher and learner roles, historic interactions with other cultural groups, rhetorical patterns, religious beliefs and customs). Avoid generalizing and stereotyping learners. Acknowledge and respect differences. When discussing cultural differences and traditions in class, focus on descriptions rather than judgments.

- Learners may not be willing or able to participate in activities that involve discussion of taboo subjects, revelation of personal information, or reliving of painful experiences. For example, a refugee who lost family in a war may be very uncomfortable when a teacher asks learners to bring in pictures of their families for an activity. Be aware of the possible implications of activities or topics and offer learners options through which they can respond neutrally, such as bringing a photo of a family from a magazine instead of a personal photo.

- Remember that culture can play a role in all facets of language, including response time. Many English language learners will come from cultures where silence is not uncomfortable. When this factor is coupled with the reality of a slower processing time for listening comprehension in a second language, it suggests that waiting after asking a question (possibly as long as 10 seconds) before repeating or restating the question is advisable.

## What instructional approaches support second language development in adults?

Adult English language learners come to ESL classes to master a tool that will help them satisfy other needs, wants, and goals. Therefore, they need to learn about the English language, to practice it, and to use it.

A variety of instructional approaches and techniques support language learning and language use (see Crandall & Peyton, 1993). Teachers need to examine these options and decide which approaches are most appropriate for them, their learners, and their settings. The following is a summary of general strategies to use with learners:

***Get to know your students and their needs.*** English language learners' abilities, experiences, and expectations can affect learning. Get to know their backgrounds and goals as well as proficiency levels and skill needs.

***Use visuals to support your instruction.*** English language learners need context in their learning process. Using gestures, expressions, pictures, and realia makes words and concepts concrete and connections more obvious and memorable. Encourage learners to do the same as they try to communicate meaning.

***Model tasks before asking your learners to do them.*** Learners need to become familiar with vocabulary, conversational patterns, grammar structures, and even activity formats before producing them. Demonstrate a task before asking learners to respond.

***Foster a safe classroom environment.*** Like many adult learners, some English language learners have had negative educational experiences. Many will be unfamiliar with classroom activities and with expectations common in the United States. Include time for activities that allow learners to get to know one another.

***Watch both your teacher talk and your writing.*** Teacher talk refers to the directions, explanations, and general comments and conversations that a teacher may engage in within the classroom. Keep teacher talk simple and clear; use pictures, gestures, demonstrations, and facial expressions to reinforce messages whenever possible. Use print letters, with space between letters and words, and do not overload the chalkboard with too much or disorganized text.

Although it is important for the teacher to understand the structure of the English language, it may not always be appropriate to provide complex explanations of vocabulary and grammar rules, especially to beginning-level learners. In other words, don't feel you have to explain everything at all times. At times it is enough for learners to know the response needed.

***Use scaffolding techniques to support tasks.*** Build sequencing, structure, and support in learning activities. Ask learners to fill in words in a skeletal dialogue and then create a dialogue of a similar situation, or supply key vocabulary before asking learners to complete a form. Recycle vocabulary, structures, and concepts in the course of instruction. Build redundancy into the curriculum to help learners practice using learned vocabulary or skills in new situations or for different purposes.

***Bring authentic materials to the classroom***. Use materials like newspapers, signs, sale flyers, telephone books, and brochures in the classroom. These help learners connect what they are learning to the real world and familiarize them with the formats and information in such publications. However, do prepare learners beforehand (e.g., pre-teach vocabulary) and carefully structure lessons (e.g., select relevant, manageable chunks of the authentic material) to make this work.

***Don't overload learners.*** Strike a balance in each activity between elements that are familiar and mastered and those that are new. Asking learners to use both new vocabulary and a new grammatical struc ture in a role-playing activity where they have to develop original dialogue may be too much for them to do successfully.

***Balance variety and routine in your activities.*** Patterns and routines provide familiarity and security and support learners as they tackle new items. But English language learners, like all learners, have a variety of preferences for processing and learning information. They also can get bored. Give learners opportunities to experience and demonstrate their mastery of language in different ways. Challenge them with activities that speak to their lives, concerns, and goals as adults.

***Celebrate success.*** Progress for language learners can be slow and incremental. Learners need to know that they are moving forward. Make sure expectations are realistic; create opportunities for success; set short-term as well as long-term goals; and help learners recognize and acknowledge their own progress.

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## Additional Resources

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# How Do Students Best Learn a Second Language?

by Tom Bello
Fairfax County Public Schools, Adult ESL

Include oral, aural, visual, and kinesthetic use. (Ask your students how ***they*** best learn English.)

**Ideas:**

Talking to American friends
Total immersion
TV/Videos
Movies
Radio
Phone use (including listening to recordings like the weather, leaving messages....)
Practice (including homework)
Role Playing
Newspaper (including following current events)
Magazines
Reading stories with morals
Field trips
Living with American families
Having jobs or volunteering
Mingling
Grammar/idiom/vocabulary games
Repetition
Having literacy in their first language
By 'doing'
Music/songs
Having relevant lessons
Speaking (inside and outside the classroom)
Listening (including tapes, 'real' speech)
Reading (books, magazines, newspapers)
Writing (letters, journals, reports)
Pictures, props
Pair work
Group work
TPR (Total Physical Response) - (*opening the door, putting something on the shelf*)
'Real-world' activities (*going shopping, ordering in a restaurant*)
Preparing a learning plan
Solving real problems (traffic ticket)
Experiencing American culture
Thinking in English, studying
Learning grammar
Learning vocabulary (using words in sentences, using dictionary, watching TV with closed captions, reading, asking the meaning of words)

# Teaching Low-Level Adult ESL Learners.

by Grace Massey Holt

ED379965 Jan 95. ERIC Digest

Prior to the late 1970's, instructional methods and materials for adults learning English as a second language (ESL) assumed the presence of literacy in a first language (Wrigley & Guth, 1992). After 1975 the United States experienced an influx of refugees from Southeast Asia. Many had minimal or no experience in reading and writing in their native languages and, as the learners joined ESL classes, educators saw that existing methods and materials were not appropriate for these learners. Ten years later, during the implementation of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), educators were again faced with teaching adult learners who have little or no schooling in their native countries.

What has the field learned about offering instruction to literacy level (low or beginning) adult ESL learners? This digest provides information on how to identify and assess the instructional needs of adults learning to become literate in a second language; it discusses general techniques that facilitate instruction for these learners; it provides a sample procedure for combining some of these techniques; and it describes classroom materials appropriate for low-level adult ESL learners.

## LOW-LEVEL LEARNERS

There are several categories of adult ESL learners who can benefit from the approaches and techniques used in instruction for low-level learners (Crystal, 1982; California Department of Education, 1992; Savage, 1993). These categories include the following:

1. learners who are nonliterate and have had little or no prior schooling in their native language;

2. learners, such as speakers of Chinese, Arabic, or Khmer, who may not be familiar with the Roman alphabet;

3. learners who may have learning disabilities; and

4. learners who are literate in their native language but who may want (for various reasons such as age, health, family situation) to participate in a slower-paced class and who would benefit from classroom activities that characterize a literacy class.

## ASSESSING THE NEEDS OF LOW-LEVEL LEARNERS

Assessing the needs of learners who may not speak even minimal English and may not read or write in any language can be difficult. Holt (1994), Crystal (1982), and Bell (1988) offer suggestions, recommending a variety of ways to assess learners orally, through reading and writing, and through classroom observation.

### Assessing Orally

Educators who speak the native language of the adult learners should ask them about their educational backgrounds. Persons with three or fewer years of formal education will probably be nonliterate.

### Assessing Through Reading

Reading readiness tasks can be used for literacy screening. For example, learners can be asked to complete the following tasks. (The literacy skills being assessed appear in parentheses.)

1. Complete an alphabet cloze (for example, A B ...D ...F G H ... J), supplying the missing letters. (familiarity with Roman alphabet)

2. Copy a sentence. (speed and ease in forming words)

3. Read two simple sentences. (basic sight vocabulary in context)

4. Point to letters corresponding to the sounds made by the teacher. (simple consonant sounds not easily confused)

5. Read several unfamiliar or nonsense words. (blending sounds)

A learner who can recognize basic sight words or use a knowledge of phonics to approximate the sounds of unfamiliar words probably does not need basic literacy instruction.

**Assessing Through Writing**

The completion of a simple application form on which learners are asked to fill in basic information such as name, address, phone number, date, social security number, birth date, birthplace, age, and gender is a quick way to determine reading and writing ability, especially when a large number of learners have to be assessed in a short period of time. Someone who has difficulty filling out the form could probably benefit from basic literacy instruction.

A writing sample in the learner's first language is useful in determining the literacy level of the learner in his or her native language.

A writing sample in English, done at intake, can be used to compare later writing samples and to monitor the progress of each learner's writing.

**Assessing Through Classroom Observation**

Informal assessment through classroom observation can continue to assist the teacher in determining an individual learner's needs. Attention should be paid to how learners hold their pencils (awkwardly? too tightly?) and their books (upside down?), how they move their eyes (Do the eyes move to follow words?), how quickly they write (Do they hesitate? take time? labor over each letter?), and how they interact in large and small groups (Do they offer to help each other? Are they comfortable in groups?).

## TECHNIQUES FOR WORKING WITH ADULTS

Knowles and other educators maintain that adult education is most effective when it is "experience centered, related to learners' real needs, and directed by learners themselves" (Auerbach, 1992, p. 14). Bell and Burnaby (1984), Holt (1988), Holt and Gaer (1993), and Wrigley and Guth (1992) list techniques that involve beginning level learners as active participants in selecting topics, language, and materials.

1. Build on the experiences and language of learners. Invite them to discuss their experiences and provide activities that will allow them to generate language they have already developed.

2. Use learners as resources. Ask them to share their knowledge and expertise with others in the class.

3. Sequence activities in an order that moves from less challenging to more challenging, such as progressing from listening to speaking, reading, and writing skills. Move from language experience activities to picture-word connections to all-print exercises.

4. Build redundancy into curriculum content, providing repetition of topics. This will help overcome problems related to irregular attendance common in adult classes.

5. Combine enabling skills (visual discrimination of letters and words, auditory discrimination of sounds and words, spacing between letters and words, letter-sound correspondences, blending letters to sound out words, sight vocabulary) with language experience and whole language approaches.

6. Combine life-skill reading competencies (reading medicine labels, writing notes to the children's teachers, filling out forms) with phonics, word recognition, word order, spacing words in a sentence, reading words in context, and reading comprehension.

7. Use cooperative learning activities that encourage interaction by providing learners with situations in which they must negotiate language with partners or group members to complete a task (See Bell, 1988).

8. Include a variety of techniques to appeal to diverse learning styles. For example, merge holistic reading approaches such as language experience with discrete approaches such as phonics.

## AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO LITERACY INSTRUCTION

The language experience approach (LEA)—which uses learner experiences as lesson content—is a way to introduce multiple activities that appeal to learners' diverse backgrounds and preferred learning styles while offering instruction in language that is both comprehensible and interesting (Taylor, 1992). The following is an example of a modified LEA lesson that could be used with low-level learners.

1. A shared experience, such as a field trip, a common situation, or a meaningful picture is a stimulus for class discussion.

2. Learners volunteer sentences about the experience and the teacher writes the sentences on the chalkboard.

3. The teacher reads each sentence aloud, running her finger under words as each is pronounced, verifying that she has written what the student has said.

4. When the story is completed, the teacher reads it aloud.

5. Learners are encouraged to join in a second and third reading of the story.

6. A number of activities can follow at this point:

   A. Learners copy the story;

   B. Learners underline all the parts they can read;

   C. Learners circle specific words (e.g., words that begin with a designated sound, common sight words such as "the");

   D. Choral cloze: The teacher erases some words, reads the story, and asks learners to supply the missing words;

   E. Writing cloze: The teacher types the story, leaving out every fifth word. During the next class the teacher passes out the cloze and asks learners to fill in the missing words;

   F. Scrambled sentences: The teacher types the story. During the next class the teacher distributes

copies of the story to the class. Each learner cuts the story into strips so that there is one sentence on each strip of paper. Learners scramble the sentences and rearrange them in the proper sequence;

G. Scrambled words: More advanced learners can cut sentences into words, scramble the words, and rearrange them in order.

## SELECTING APPROPRIATE CLASSROOM MATERIALS

Using concrete but age-appropriate materials with adult learners enhances instruction by providing a context for language and literacy development. A basic kit of materials might consist of the following objects, games, and materials.

1. Realia: clocks, food items, calendars, plastic fruits and vegetables, maps, household objects, real and play money, food containers, abacus, manual for learning to drive, and classroom objects;

2. Flash cards: pictures, words, and signs;

3. Pictures or photographs: personal, magazine, and others;

4. Tape recorder and cassette tapes, including music for imagery and relaxation;

5. Overhead projector, transparencies, and pens; video player and videos;

6. Pocket chart for numbers, letters, and pictures;

7. Alphabet sets;

8. Camera for language experience stories—to create biographies and autobiographies;

9. Games such as bingo and concentration: commercial or teacher-made;

10. Colored index cards to teach word order in sentences, to show when speakers change in dialogue, to illustrate question/answer format, and to use as cues for a concentration game;

11. Cuisenaire rods to teach word order in sentences, to use as manipulatives in dyad activities, and to teach adjectives;

12. Colored chalk to teach word order, to differentiate between speakers in a dialogue, and to illustrate question and answer format;

13. Poster, butcher, and construction paper;

14. Felt-tipped pens, colored pencils, and crayons;

15. Scissors, glue, and masking tape; and

16. Children's literature: for learning techniques for reading or telling stories to children (See Smallwood, 1992, for ideas on using children's literature with adults.).

## CONCLUSION

Providing instruction to adults acquiring ESL literacy is a challenge. When approaches, techniques, and materials are suitable for adults, are related to their real needs, and promote involvement in their own learning, there is a greater chance of success.

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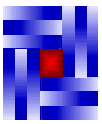

## 3. Using Different Approaches to Language Teaching

The following articles outline and briefly explain a variety of methods used to teach a language. The methods chosen are determined by the students' needs, goals, and learning styles. For example, a beginner may have an immediate need for communicating basic needs of everyday life. For that student, a communicative approach may be the most helpful. A student who speaks well but has difficulty reading and writing may need a different approach. It is most common for the ESL teacher to use an eclectic approach in order to meet the needs of all students.

# STRUCTURAL LANGUAGE TEACHING and COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

| | STRUCTURAL | COMMUNICATIVE |
|---|---|---|
| **DEFINITION** | • A traditional approach that considers grammatical structures and vocabulary items to be the primary focus of language instruction. | • A topical/functional approach that considers meaningful communication to be the primary focus of language instructions. |
| **CHARACTERISTICS** | • teacher centered<br>• grammar based<br>• abundant drill/translation practice<br>• controlled, predictable learning | • student centered<br>• communication based<br>• abundant student ⟷ student interaction (pairs, small groups, whole class)<br>• variable rate acquisition |
| **OUTCOMES** | • <u>knowledge about</u> the target language<br>• ability to complete drills/ translations; ability to respond to structured questions in classroom (linguistic competence)<br>• limited but readily measurable language learning | • <u>oral proficiency</u> in the target language<br>• ability to communicate in real-life situations (communicative competence)<br>• flexible acquisition rates varying with student interest and aptitude |
| **METHODS** | • Grammar Translation Method<br>• Audio-Lingual Method<br>(Note: See pg. C-18) | • Communicative Approach<br>• Total Physical Response (TPR)<br>• Direct Method |

NOTE: Most learners benefit from an eclectic approach, i.e., a combination of structural and communicative approaches.

Source: Illinois Adult Learning Resource Center

# LANGUAGE TEACHING

## Methods & Approaches

<table>
<tr><th>STRUCTURAL</th><th>COMMUNICATIVE</th></tr>
<tr><td>Grammar Translation Method<br>Focus:<br><br>• memorization of grammar rules and vocabulary<br><br>• reading and writing skills<br><br>• literature in the target language<br><br>Goal: to learn grammar rules and vocabulary; to be able to read in the target language</td><td>Communicative Approach<br>Focus:<br><br>• oral communication as primary skill<br><br>• conversational ability more important than correct grammar<br><br>• small group and pair activities<br><br>Goal: to become communicatively competent; to be able to use the language appropriately</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Audio-Lingual Method<br>Focus:<br><br>• repeated language patterns<br><br>• grammar learned through sentence substitutions and dialogues<br><br>• controlled spoken language<br><br>Goal: to overlearn the target language in order to use it automatically</td><td>Total Physical Response Approach<br>Focus:<br><br>• listening comprehension as primary skill<br><br>• physically active learning situations<br><br>• language learning games<br><br>Goal: to provide a low-stress means to communicative language learning</td></tr>
<tr><td>Direct Method<br>Focus:<br><br>• speaking and listening as primary skills<br><br>• use of actions and visual aids to clarify meaning (allows no translation)<br><br>• no formal instruction of grammar<br><br>Goal: to communicate and think in the target language</td></tr>
</table>

For more information see Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching by Diane Larsen-Freeman. Oxford University Press, 1986.

Source: Illinois Adult Learning Resource Center

# Eight Approaches to Language Teaching

**ERIC** Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics
ED277280

Prepared by Gina Doggett December 1986

*Where there was once consensus on the "right" way to teach foreign languages, many teachers now share the belief that a single right way does not exist. It is certainly true that no comparative study has consistently demonstrated the superiority of one method over another for all teachers, all students, and all settings.*

*Presented here is a summary of eight language teaching methods in practice today: the Grammar-Translation Method, the Direct Method, the Audio-Lingual Method, the Silent Way, Suggestopedia, Community Language Learning, the Total Physical Response Method, and the Communicative Approach. Of course, what is described here is only an abstraction. How a method is manifest in the classroom will depend heavily on the individual teacher's interpretation of its principles.*

*Some teachers prefer to practice one of these methods to the exclusion of others. Other teachers prefer to pick and choose in a principled way among the methodological options that exist, creating their own unique blend.*

*The chart inside provides a brief listing of the salient features of the eight methods. For more details, readers should consult* Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching *by Diane Larsen-Freeman, published in 1986 by Oxford University Press in New York, on which this summary was based. Also see references listed on the next page.*

**Grammar-Translation Method**

The Grammar-Translation method focuses on developing students' appreciation of the target language's literature as well as teaching the language. Students are presented with target-language reading passages and answer questions that follow. Other activities include translating literary passages from one language into the other, memorizing grammar rules, and memorizing native-language equivalents of target language vocabulary. Class work is highly structured, with the teacher controlling all activities.

**Direct Method**

The Direct Method allows students to perceive meaning directly through the target language because no translation is allowed. Visual aids and pantomime are used to clarify the meaning of vocabulary items and concepts. Students speak a great deal in the target language and communicate as if in real situations. Reading and writing are taught from the beginning, though speaking and listening skills are emphasized. Grammar is learned inductively.

**Audio-Lingual Method**

The Audio-Lingual Method is based on the behaviorist belief that language learning is the acquisition of a set of correct language habits. The learner repeats patterns until able to produce them spontaneously. Once a given pattern - for example, subject-verb-prepositional phrase - is learned, the speaker can substitute words to make novel sentences. The teacher directs and controls students' behavior, provides a model, and reinforces correct responses.

**The Silent Way**

The theoretical basis of Gattegno's Silent Way is the idea that teaching must be subordinated to learning and thus students must develop their own inner criteria for correctness. All four skills - reading, writing, speaking, and listening - are taught from the beginning. Students' errors are expected as a normal part of learning; the teacher's silence helps foster self-reliance and student initiative. The teacher is active in setting up situations, while the students do most of the talking and interacting.

**Suggestopedia**

Lozanov's method seeks to help learners eliminate psychological barriers to learning. The learning environment is relaxed and subdued, with low lighting and soft music in the background. Students choose a name and character in the target language and culture, and imagine being that person. Dialogs are presented to the accompaniment of music. Students just relax and listen to them being read and later playfully practice the language during an "activation period.

**Community Language Learning**

In Curren's method, teachers consider students as "whole persons," with intellect, feelings, instincts, physical responses, and desire to learn. Teachers also recognize that learning can be threatening. By understanding and accepting students' fears, teachers help students feel secure and overcome their fears, and thus help them harness positive energy for learning. The syllabus used is learner-generated, in that students choose what they want to learn to say in the target language.

**Total Physical Response Method**

Asher's approach begins by placing primary importance on listening comprehension, emulating the early stages of mother tongue acquisition, and then moving to speaking, reading, and writing. Students demonstrate their comprehension by acting out commands issued by the teacher; teacher provides novel and often humorous variations of the commands. Activities are designed to be fun and to allow students to assume active learning roles. Activities eventually include games and skits.

**The Communicative Approach**

The Communicative Approach stresses the need to teach communicative competence as opposed to linguistic competence; thus, functions are emphasized over forms. Students usually work with authentic materials in small groups on communicative activities, during which they receive practice in negotiating meaning.

# Eight Approaches to Language Teaching

### 1. The Grammar-Translation Method

***Goal:*** To be able to read literature in target language; learn grammar rules and vocabulary; develop mental acuity.

***Roles:*** Teacher has authority; students follow instructions to learn what teacher knows.

***Teaching/Learning process:*** Students learn by translating from one language to the other, often translating reading passages in the target language to the native language. Grammar is usually learned deductively on the basis of grammar rules and examples. Students memorize the rules, then apply them to other examples. They learn paradigms such as verb conjugations, and they learn the native language equivalents of vocabulary words.

***Interaction: Student-Teacher & Student-Student***
Most interaction is teacher-to-student; student-initiated interaction and student-student interaction is minimal.

***Dealing with Feelings:*** n/a

***View of Language, Culture:*** Literary language seen as superior to spoken language; culture equated with literature and fine arts.

***Aspects of Language the Approach Emphasizes:*** Vocabulary, grammar emphasized; reading, writing are primary skills; pronunciation and other speaking/listening skills not emphasized.

***Role of Students' Native Language:*** Native language provides key to meanings in target language; native language is used freely in class.

***Means for Evaluation:*** Tests require translation from native to target and target to native language; applying grammar rules, answering questions about foreign culture.

***Response to Students' Errors:*** Heavy emphasis placed on correct answers; teacher supplies correct answers when students cannot.

### 2. The Direct Method

***Goal:*** To communicate in target language; to think in target language.

***Roles:*** Teacher directs class activities, but students and teacher are partners in the teaching/learning process.

***Teaching/Learning Process:*** Students are taught to associate meaning and the target language directly. New target language words or phrases are introduced through the use of realia, pictures, or pantomime, never the native language. Students speak in the target language a great deal and communicate as if in real situations. Grammar rules are learned inductively - by generalizing from examples. Students practice new vocabulary using words in sentences.

***Interaction: Student-Teacher & Student-Student***
Both teacher and students initiate interaction, though student-initiated interaction, with teacher or among each other, is usually teacher-directed.

***Dealing with Feelings:*** n/a

***View of Language, Culture:*** Language is primarily spoken, not written. Students study common, everyday speech in the target language. Aspects of foreign culture are studied such as history, geography, daily life.

**Direct Method** *cont.*

***Aspects of Language the Approach Emphasizes:*** Vocabulary emphasized over grammar; oral communication considered basic, with reading, writing based on oral practice;pronunciation emphasized from outset.

***Role of Students' Native Language:*** Not used in the classroom.

***Response to Students' Errors:*** Self-correction encouraged whenever possible.

**3. The Audio-Lingual Method**

***Goal:*** Use the target language communicatively, overlearn it, so as to be able to use it automatically by forming new habits in the target language and overcoming native language habits.

***Roles:*** Teacher directs, controls students' language behavior, provides good model for imitation; students repeat, respond as quickly and accurately as possible.

***Teaching/Learning Process:*** New vocabulary, structures presented through dialogs, which are learned through imitation, repetition. Drills are based on patterns in dialog. Students' correct responses are positively reinforced; grammar is induced from models. Cultural information is contextualized in the dialogs or presented by the teacher. Reading, writing tasks are based on oral work.

***Interaction: Student-Teacher & Student-Student***
Students interact during chain drills or when taking roles in dialogs, all at teacher's direction. Most interaction is between teacher and student, initiated by teacher.

***Dealing with Feelings:*** n/a

***View of Language, Culture:*** Descriptive linguistics influence: every language seen as having its own unique system of phonological, morphological, and syntactic patterns. Method emphasizes everyday speech and uses a graded syllabus from simple to difficult linguistic structures. Culture comprises everyday language and behavior.

***Aspects of Language the Approach Emphasizes:*** Language structures emphasized; vocabulary contextualized in dialogs but is limited because syntactic patterns are foremost; natural priority of skills - listening, speaking, reading, writing, with emphasis on first two; pronunciation taught from beginning, often with language lab work and minimal pairs drills.

***Role of Students' Native Language:*** Students' native language habits are considered as interfering, thus native language is not used in classroom. Contrasting analysis is considered helpful for determining points of interference.

***Means for Evaluation:*** Discrete-point tests in which students distinguish between words or provide an appropriate verb for a sentence, etc.

***Response to Student Error:*** Teachers strive to prevent student errors by predicting trouble spots and tightly controlling what they teach students to say.

**4. The Silent Way**

***Goals:*** To use language for self-expression; to develop independence from the teacher, to develop inner criteria for correctness.

***Roles:*** Teaching should be subordinated to learning. Teachers should give students only what they absolutely need to promote their learning. Learners are responsible for their own learning.

***Teaching/Learning Process:*** Students begin with sounds, introduced through association of sounds in native language to a sound-color chart. Teacher then sets up situations, often using Cuisenaire rods, to focus students' attention on structures. Students interact as the situation requires. Teachers see students' errors as clues to where the target language is unclear, and they adjust instruction accordingly. Students are urged to take responsibility for their learning. Additional learning is thought to take place during sleep.

***Interaction: Student-Teacher & Student-Student***

The teacher is silent much of the time, but very active setting up situations, listening to students, speaking only to give clues, not to model speech. Student-student interaction is encouraged.

***Dealing with Feelings:*** Teachers monitor students' feelings and actively try to prevent their feelings from interfering with their learning. Students express their feelings during feedback sessions after class.

***View of Language, Culture:*** Language and culture are inseparable, and each language is seen to be unique despite similarities in structure with other languages.

***Aspects of Language the Approach Emphasizes:*** All four skill areas worked on from beginning (reading, writing, speaking, listening); pronunciation especially, because sounds are basic and carry the melody of the language. Structural patterns are practiced in meaningful interactions. Syllabus develops according to learning abilities and needs. Reading and writing exercises reinforce oral learning.

***Role of Students' Native Language:*** Although translation is not used at all, the native language is considered a resource because of the overlap that is bound to exist between the two languages. The teacher should take into account what the students already know.

***Means for Evaluation:*** Assessment is continual; but only to determine continually changing learning needs. Teachers observe students' ability to transfer what they have learned to new contexts. To encourage the development of inner criteria, neither praise nor criticism is offered. Students are expected to learn at different rates, and to make progress, not necessarily speaking perfectly in the beginning.

***Response to Students' Errors***: Errors are inevitable, a natural, indispensable part of learning.

**5. Suggestopedia**

***Goals:*** To learn, at accelerated pace, a foreign language for everyday communication by tapping mental powers, and overcoming psychological barriers.

***Roles:*** Teacher has authority, commands trust and respect of students; teacher "desuggests" negative feelings and limits to learning; if teacher succeeds in assuming this role, students assume childlike role, spontaneous and uninhibited.

***Teaching and Learning Process:*** Students learn in a relaxing environment. They choose a new identity (name, occupation) in the target language and culture. They use texts of dialogs accompanied by translations and notes in their native language. Each dialog is

**Suggestopedia** *cont.*

presented, e.g., during two musical concerts; once with the teacher matching his or her voice to the rhythm and pitch of the music while students follow along. The second time, the teacher reads normally and students relax and listen. At night and on waking, the students read it over. Then students gain facility with the new material through activities such as dramatizations, games, songs, and question-and-answer sessions.

***Interaction: Student-Teacher & Student-Student***

At first, teacher initiates all interaction and students respond only nonverbally or with a few words in target language that they have practiced. Eventually, students initiate interaction. Students interact with each other throughout, as directed by teacher.

***Dealing with Feelings:*** Great importance is placed on students' feelings, in making them feel confident and relaxed, in "desuggesting" their psychological barriers.

***View of Language, Culture:*** Language is one plane; nonverbal parts of messages are another. Culture includes everyday life and fine arts.

***Aspects of Language the Approach Emphasizes:*** Vocabulary emphasized, some explicit grammar. Students focus on communicative use rather than form; reading, writing also have place.

***Role of Students' Native Language:*** Translation clarifies dialogs' meaning; teacher uses native language, more at first than later, when necessary.

***Means for Evaluation:*** Students' normal in-class performance is evaluated. There are no tests, which would threaten relaxed environment.

***Response to Students' Errors:*** Errors are not immediately corrected; teacher models correct forms later during class.

**6. Community Language Learning**

***Goals:*** To learn language communicatively, to take responsibility for learning, to approach the task nondefensively, never separating intellect from feelings.

***Roles:*** Teacher acts as counselor, supporting students with understanding of their struggle to master language in often threatening new learning situation. Student is at first a dependent client of the counselor and becomes increasingly independent through five specified stages.

***Teaching/Learning Process:*** Nondefensive learning requires six elements: security, aggression (students have opportunities to assert, involve themselves), attention, reflection (students think about both the language and their experience learning it), retention, and discrimination (sorting out differences among target language forms).

***Interaction: Student-Teacher & Student-Student***

Both students and teacher make decisions in the class. Sometimes the teacher directs action, other times the students interact independently. A spirit of cooperation is encouraged.

***Dealing with Feelings:*** Teacher routinely probes for students' feelings about learning and shows understanding, helping them overcome negative feelings.

***View of Language, Culture:*** Language is for communication, a medium of interpersonal sharing and belonging, and creative thinking. Culture is integrated with language.

***Aspects of Language the Approach Emphasizes:*** At first, since students design syllabus, they determine aspects of language studied; later teacher may bring in published texts. Particular grammar, pronunciation points are treated, and particular vocabulary based on students' expressed needs. Understanding and speaking are emphasized, through reading and writing have a place.

**Community Language Learning** *cont.*

***Role of Students' Native Language:*** Use of native language enhances students' security. Students have conversations in their native language; target language translations of these become the text around which subsequent activities revolve. Also, instructions and sessions for expressing feelings are in native language. Target language is used progressively more. Where students do not share the same native language, the target language is used from the outset, though alternatives such as pantomime are also used.

***Means for Evaluation:*** No specific means are recommended, but adherence to principles is urged. Teacher would help students prepare for any test required by school, integrative tests would be preferred over discrete-point tests; self-evaluation would be encouraged, promoting students' awareness of their own progress.

***Response to Students' Errors:*** Nonthreatening style is encouraged; modeling of correct forms.

**7. Total Physical Response Method**

***Goals:*** To provide an enjoyable learning experience, having a minimum of the stress that typically accompanies learning a foreign language.

***Roles:*** At first the teacher gives commands and students follow them. Once students are "ready to speak," they take on directing roles.

***Teaching/Learning Process:*** Lessons begin with commands by the teacher; students demonstrate their understanding by acting these out; teachers recombine their instructions in novel and often humorous ways; eventually students follow suit. Activities later include games and skits.

***Interaction: Student-Teacher & Student-Student***
Teacher interacts with individual students and with the group, starting with the teacher speaking and the students responding nonverbally. Later this is reversed; students issue commands to teacher as well as each other.

***Dealing with Feelings:*** The method was developed principally to reduce the stress associated with language learning; students are not forced to speak before they are ready and learning is made as enjoyable as possible, stimulating feelings of success and low anxiety.

***View of Language, Culture:*** Oral modality is primary; culture is the lifestyle of native speakers of the target language.

***Aspects of Language the Approach Emphasizes:*** Grammatical structures and vocabulary are emphasized, imbedded in imperatives. Understanding precedes production; spoken language precedes the written word.

***Role of Students' Native Language:*** Method is introduced in students' native language, but rarely used later in course. Meaning is made clear through actions.

***Means for Evaluation:*** Teachers can evaluate students through simple observation of their actions. Formal evaluation is achieved by commanding a student to perform a series of actions.

***Response to Students' Errors:*** Students are expected to make errors once they begin speaking. Teachers only correct major errors, and do this unobtrusively. "Fine-tuning" occurs later.

**8. The Communicative Approach**

***Goals:*** To become communicatively competent, able to use the language appropriate for a given social context; to manage the process of negotiating meaning with interlocutors.

***Roles:*** Teacher facilitates students' learning by managing classroom activities, setting up communicative situations. Students are communicators, actively engaged in negotiating meaning.

***Teaching/Learning Process:*** Activities are communicative—they represent an information gap that needs to be filled; speakers have a choice of what to say and how to say it; they receive feedback from the listener that will verify that a purpose has been achieved. Authentic materials are used. Students usually work in small groups.

***Interaction: Student-Teacher & Student-Student***
Teacher initiates interactions between students and participates sometimes. Students interact a great deal with each other in many configurations.

***Dealing with Feelings:*** Emphasis is on developing motivation to learn through establishing meaningful, purposeful things to do with the target language. Individuality is encouraged, as well as cooperation with peers, which both contribute to sense of emotional security with the target language.

***View of Language, Culture:*** Language is for communication. Linguistic competence must be coupled with an ability to convey intended meaning appropriately in different social contexts. Culture is everyday lifestyle of native speakers of the target language. Nonverbal behavior is important.

***Aspects of Language the Approach Emphasizes:*** Functions are emphasized over forms, with simple forms learned for each function at first, then more complex forms. Students work at discourse level. They work on speaking, listening, reading, and writing from the beginning. Consistent focus on negotiated meaning.

***Role of Students' Native Language:*** Students' native language usually plays no role.

***Means for Evaluation:*** Informal evaluation takes place when teacher advises or communicates; formal evaluation is by means of an integrative test with a real communicative function.

***Response to Students' Errors:*** Errors of form are considered natural; students with incomplete knowledge of English can still succeed as communicators.

November, 1998

***ERIC***

# Q & A

## *Current Concepts and Terms in Adult ESL*

*National Center for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE)*

by MaryAnn Cunningham Florez
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While the field of teaching English as a second language (ESL) to adults has its own unique terms and concepts, it often draws from the professional vocabulary of other areas of education such as K-12, adult basic education, and higher education. This article presents a selection of such terms and concepts, discussing them as they are applied in the adult ESL context and citing sources where they are described with adult immigrant learners in mind. Some terms are broad, representing theories or approaches, while others might be more accurately described as methods or techniques. Most are mutually supportive and can be integrated in instruction to expand and enrich learning in any ESL setting.

### Authentic or Alternative Assessment

Authentic or alternative assessment describes efforts to document learner achievement through activities that require integration and application of knowledge and skills and are based on classroom instruction. Ideally, these assessments are relevant to real-life contexts and include activities such as creating a budget, completing a project, or participating in an interview (Burt & Keenan, 1995; O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). Authentic assessments are criterion referenced, in that criteria for successful performance are established and clearly articulated. They focus on the learning process as well as the products and they include means for learner self-assessment and reflection (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996; Tannenbaum, 1996). Often, authentic assessments are used in conjunction with standardized tests to provide a more complete picture of learner progress.

Examples of authentic assessment include performance-based assessment, learner self-assessment, and portfolios. Performance-based assessment activities require learners to integrate acquired knowledge and skills to solve realistic or authentic problems, such as taking telephone messages, completing an application, or giving directions. Self assessment refers to checklists, logs, reflective journals, or questionnaires completed by learners that highlight their strategies, attitudes, feelings, and accomplishments throughout the learning process (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). Portfolio assessment consists of a systematic collection of the learners' work (such as writing samples, journal entries, worksheets, recorded speech samples, or standardized test results) to show individual progress toward meeting instructional objectives (Fingeret, 1993).

### Computer-Assisted Language Learning

The use of computer-based technologies for language instruction is known as computer-assisted language learning (CALL). Computer software, including multimedia applications, and the Internet and the World Wide Web are examples of such technologies at use in language programs today.

Computer technologies can provide a course of instruction, facilitate activities and tasks, or create opportunities for additional practice (Wrigley & Guth, 1992). CALL can also be structured to promoted teamwork and collaboration among the learners, a necessity for those programs with limited access to technology (Gaer, 1998). It can be incorporated in instruction as an integral part of a class, as an option that learners access individually, or in some combination of class-based and self-access models (Huss-Lederman, 1995). Using technology can sometimes be difficult. The planning process should involve consideration of at least the following elements: the needs and goals of the program, instructional focus, staffing, software and hardware availability or accessibility, learners' learning goals; and learners' and staffs' experiences with and attitudes toward computer use (Huss-Lederman, 1995; Wrigley & Guth, 1992).

## Critical Literacy Theory

Critical literacy theory expands the discussion of literacy practice beyond the basic functions of reading and writing. Where traditional literacy instruction might focus on skills such as decoding, predicting, or summarizing, critical literacy theory encourages critical examination of text, especially the social, political, and ideological elements present. Based in the assumption that literacy practices have the capability to both reflect and shape the issues and power relationships at play in the larger society, critical literacy theory seeks to empower learners through development of critical and analytical literacy skills (Auerbach, 1992; Hood, 1998).

In the general sense, critical literacy theory encourages teachers to create instructional activities that help learners use analytical skills to question and respond to such elements as perspective, purpose, effect, or relevance of what they read and write (Hood, 1998). For example, a teacher might prompt learners to distinguish fact from opinion in a newspaper editorial or to identify an author's position on a topic and compare it to their own. The focus is on the learner as decision maker and active interpreter in reading and writing activities.

## Family and Intergenerational Literacy

Family literacy has traditionally described the use of literacy within the context of the family, often as related to early childhood development and parental support of children's school achievement. Intergenerational literacy broadens that description, recognizing that relationships between adults and children, both within and outside the traditional definition of the family unit, affect the literacy use and development of all involved. Family literacy programs for ESL populations generally use family and family relationships as content and involve at least two generations of participants (Weinstein, 1998).

The goals of family and intergenerational literacy programs are varied. Some focus on the family and school, seeking to increase parental involvement, improve communication, increase schools' responsiveness to communities, and support children's academic achievement (Parecki, Paris, & Seidenberg, 1996). Others pursue broader objectives, such as furthering literacy skills development and positive behaviors linked to reading for both adults and children. Still others focus on facilitating the reconnection of generations divided by different linguistic and cultural experiences (Weinstein, 1998).

## Multiple Intelligences and Learning Styles

Multiple intelligences and learning style preferences both refer to the ways that individuals approach information processing and learning. Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences proposes that there are at least seven different abilities that individuals can develop to solve problems or create products: verbal/linguistic, musical, logical/mathematical, spatial/visual, bodily/kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal (Gardner, 1993).

Each intelligence is distinguished by its own competencies and skills and directly influences the way an individual will interpret and utilize information.

Learning styles are the broad preferences that learners tend to exhibit when faced with new content or problems that need to be solved. These styles encompass cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements, and describe learners in terms of their preferences for group or individual learning contexts, the degree to which they separate details from complex backgrounds (field dependent vs. field independent), or their affinity for analytic, abstract perspectives as opposed to more integrated, comprehensive ones (analytic vs. global) (Oxford, 1989).

Awareness of different intelligences and learning styles, and individuals' preferences for them can help teachers create positive learning experiences (Christison, 1996; Oxford, 1989). By varying instructional activities to accommodate learners' preferences (lectures, visuals, hands-on activities, songs) or by offering options for responses to instruction (write a paper, create a model, give a demonstration), teachers can support learners' access to and understanding of content.

## Practitioner Inquiry, Reflective Teaching, and Action Research

Practitioner inquiry, reflective teaching, and action research refer to a teacher-centered approach to professional and staff development. Like the learner-centered approach to instruction, which focuses on the needs of the learners and respects them as partners in the learning process, these approaches to professional development put practitioners at the center of the process defining, investigating, and addressing issues in their own teaching (Brookfield, 1995).

These models require practitioners to become researchers and take a questioning stance towards their work. Rather than focusing on their deficits, teachers concentrate on their strengths and interests as means for enhancing their knowledge and teaching skills (Foucar-Szocki, et al., 1997). The following steps are usually part of the process: reflecting upon practice as a means of identifying a problem or question; gathering information on that problem or question; examining and reflecting on the data gathered; planning some action based on the information; implementing the action planned; monitoring and evaluating the changes that may or may not result from the action; and collaborating or sharing with colleagues (Drennon, 1994). These terms and similar variations are often used interchangeably, their differences typically illustrating the elements emphasized, in other words, reflective teaching highlights ongoing self-assessment while action research focuses on planning, implementing, and evaluating actual changes in the classroom.

## Project-based Education

Project-based education is an instructional approach that seeks to contextualize language learning by involving learners in projects, rather than in isolated activities targeting specific skills. Project-based learning activities generally integrate language and cognitive skills, connect to real-life problems, generate high learner interest, and involve some cooperative or group learning skills (Gaer, 1996; Institute for Research on Learning, 1998). Unlike instruction where content is organized by themes that relate and contextualize material to be learned, project-based learning presents learners with a problem to solve or a product to produce. They must then plan and execute activities to achieve their objectives.

Projects selected may be complex and require an investment of time and resources, or they may be more modest in scale. Examples of projects include a class cookbook, an international food bazaar, a folktale-based story hour at a local library, a neighborhood services directory, or a class web page (Gaer, 1996; Baum, 1997). In the selection of projects and activities, it is important to include learners' input, as well as to consider carefully how the project will fit with overall instructional goals and objectives (Baum, 1997).

## Social Identity

The concept of social identity refers to the ways in which people identify and understand themselves in relation to others and to their environment (Ullman, 1997). It is complex and involves issues of self-perception and self-definition, ongoing psychological and cognitive development, interpersonal relationships, empowerment, and adaptation (Ullman, 1997; Zou, 1998).

For immigrant English language learners, discussions of social identity focus attention on the often dramatic transitions that they experience as they move from one sociocultural context to another, and the impact that this has on their acculturation and language acquisition. The process of aligning new societal expectations and requirements with previous cultural norms, individual perceptions, and experiences is preeminent in immigrants' lives, but often ignored. Examination of these social identity topics in the classroom can help to support learners' transition process and make it easier for them to acquire language. Suggestions for doing this have included eliciting learners' personal stories through portfolio writing, dialogue journals, large- and small-group discussions, improvisational dialogues and role-plays, and whole-class discussion of related issues such as perspectives on immigration or stereotyping (Ullman, 1997).

## Workforce Training, Employability Skills Instruction, and SCANS

Workforce training (or employability skills instruction) represents an effort to integrate employment preparation into adult ESL curricula. It is not workplace instruction, where ESL instruction is taken into the work environment and linguistic objectives are largely determined by worker and work-task needs analysis (Grognet, 1997). It also is not English for specific purposes (ESP), where vocabulary, structures, and concepts taught are those needed for a specific field or job. Workforce training attempts to incorporate employment skills training into ESL instruction, combining communicative and behavioral objectives with linguistic objectives to improve learners' abilities to function in an employment context.

Much of the content for workforce training has focused on the workplace competencies and foundation skills identified in the [Labor] Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) report (Brod, 1997-98; Grognet, 1997).

## The SCANS Skills

*Workplace Competencies*

**Resources:** allocating time, money, materials, space, staff

**Interpersonal Skills:** working with others

**Information:** locating, evaluation, organizing, and processing information

**Systems:** understanding, managing, and improving systems

**Technology:** interacting successfully in all aspects of technology use

## Foundation Skills

**Basic skills:** reading, writing, mathematics, speaking, and listening

**Thinking skills:** thinking creatively, making decisions, solving problems, reasoning

**Personal qualities:** responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, integrity (Brod, 1997-98)

The five competencies and three enabling foundation skills identify those skills necessary for success in any workplace setting, but which are transferrable to other life settings as well. They can be added to the adult ESL curriculum through classroom management and other methods that promote decision making, problem solving, individual and group responsibility, planning, and creative thinking (Grognet, 1997; Price-Machado & Damrau, 1997-98).

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# The Language Experience Approach and Adult Learners

by Marcia Taylor, JobLink 2000

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The language experience approach (LEA) is a whole language approach that promotes reading and writing through the use of personal experiences and oral language. It can be used in tutorial or classroom settings with homogeneous or heterogeneous groups of learners. Beginning literacy learners relate their experiences to a teacher or aide, who transcribes them. These transcriptions are then used as the basis for other reading and writing activities.

Although the LEA was first developed for native-English-speaking children (Ashton-Warner, 1963; Spache & Spache, 1964; Stauffer, 1965), it has also been used successfully with English as a Second Language (ESL) students of all ages. Adult learners entering ESL programs may or may not have previous educational or literacy experiences; nonetheless, all come to class with a wealth of life experiences. This valuable resource for language and literacy development can be tapped by using the LEA. The approach develops literacy not only with the whole learner in mind, but also the whole language.

## FEATURES OF THE LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE APPROACH

The LEA is as diverse in practice as its practitioners. Nonetheless, some characteristics remain consistent (Hall, 1970):

- Materials are learner-generated.
- All communication skills—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—are integrated.
- Difficulty of vocabulary and grammar are determined by the learners own language use.
- Learning and teaching are personalized, communicative, creative.

## LEA WITH ESL LEARNERS

Krashen and Terrell (1983) recommend two criteria for determining whether reading materials are appropriate for ESL learners: The reading must be 1) at a comprehensible level of complexity and 2) interesting to the reader. Reading texts originating from learners' experiences meet these two criteria because 1) the degree of complexity is determined by the learner's own language, and 2) the texts relate to the learner's personal interests.

Both criteria are of particular importance in adult beginning ESL classes, where the paucity of reading materials can be problematic. Many books written in simplified English are either too juvenile or too uninteresting to be considered appropriate reading material for adults.

## TWO VARIATIONS OF LEA

### The Personal Experience

The most basic, and in fact the original, form of the LEA is the simple transcription of an individual learner's personal experience. The teacher or aide (or in a mixed-ability class, a more proficient learner) sits with the learner so that the learner can see what is being written. The session begins with a conversation, which might be prompted by a picture, a topic the learner is interested in, a reading text, or an event the learner has participated in. Once a topic evolves, the learner gives an oral account of a personal experience related to that topic. The transcriber may help the learner expand or focus the account by asking questions.

In most forms of the LEA, the experience is transcribed as the learner dictates it, without transcriber corrections to grammar or vocabulary. This technique keeps the focus on the content rather than the form of what is written and provides concrete evidence of the learner's language growth over time (Heald-Taylor, 1989). Errors can be corrected later, during revising and editing stages of the writing process. The relationship between the transcriber and learner should be well established before attempting the LEA, and the transcriber should be supportive of what the learner has to say.

**The Group Experience**

Groups may also develop language experience stories together. An experience can be set up and carried out by the group, or stories can grow out of experiences and stimuli from any part of the learners' personal, work, or classroom lives. The following steps are often involved:

1. *Choosing the experience or stimulus.* In collaboration with the learners, choose a prompt or activity that can be discussed and written up in some form. This might include pictures, movies, videotapes, songs, books or articles, class projects, field trips, holidays or celebrations, or an activity designed for this purpose.

2. *Organizing the activity.* Develop a plan of action with the class. This might include what you will do and when, and what you will need. The plans can be written on the board to provide the first link between the activity itself and the written word.

3. *Conducting the experience*. The following activities might be done in the classroom or in the community.

| **In the classroom** | **In the community** |
|---|---|
| Preparing food (sandwich, French toast, salad, popcorn) | Taking field trips (to the bank, market, malls, library, city hall) |
| Making cards (thank you notes, get well cards, holiday cards) | Mapping the school or the neighborhood. |
| Class projects (simulations, bulletin boards, skits) | |

If the experience takes place within the classroom, the teacher can narrate it as it unfolds, repeating key words and phrases.

For more advanced learners, discussions, as well as actual experiences, can evolve into group-produced texts. Discussion topics might include work, adult education, adjustment to life in the U.S., or current local and world events. Again, the teacher might write key words and phrases on the board as they are mentioned in the discussion.

4. *Discussing the experience*, including all learners in the discussion and writing key words and phrases on the board. The class might, for example, reconstruct the sequence of events that took place. Some learners may be capable of describing an entire experience or generating an extended text about a prompt, while others may only be able to answer questions about it. The teacher may need to stimulate or focus the discussion by asking wh- questions—Who was involved? When did this take place? What did we do first? Regardless of the level of active participation of various learners, it is crucial that all *understand* the discussion.

5. *Developing a written account.* The class works together to develop a written account of what was done or discussed. Before actually writing a text, the class might do some planning activities like brainstorming, webbing or mapping, listing, or sequencing ideas. Learners may dictate a description or sequence of events in an activity while the teacher or aide writes it down, or a group of students may work together in groups to produce an account. Regardless of who does the writing, it should be easily visible to all learners—on the board, on a flip chart pad, or on an overhead transparency.

   The teacher does not correct the learners' language at this point, although learners may correct them selves or each other as they work together. Formal correction can be done later, as part of the revising and editing stages.

With beginning students, written compositions may be very simple, just a sentence or two if this represents their level of English proficiency. Length is not significant.

6. *Reading the account.* Once the written text is complete, the teacher or a learner can read it aloud to the class, focusing on key words and phrases, and then learners can read it silently on their own. Of course, oral reading of the account does not need to occur *only* at this stage, but can be done at many different points during its production, thus promoting rethinking and revision throughout its evolution.

7. *Extending the experience.* Many language and literacy activities beyond rereading can be based on the written text. The following possibilities can be selected and adapted according to learners' proficiency levels.

With beginning learners, teachers can...

- have students copy the story themselves;
- have students match words with pictures or definitions;
- delete every *n*th word (4th, 5th, 6th, etc.) to create a cloze exercise. Have the students fill in the blanks either with or without the assistance of a word bank, depending on their literacy level;
- select words from the story for vocabulary, spelling, or sound-symbol correspondence activities;
- use the texts to review a grammar point, such as sequence of tenses, word order, or pronoun referents;
- dictate the story for learners to write;
- write the sentences in scrambled order and have students rewrite them, restoring the correct sequence;
- scramble key words and have students unscramble them.

More advanced learners can...

- use the group-produced text as the basis for individually written texts about the same topic, about a similar experience, or as a critique of this experience. Then they might read each others' texts;
- revise and edit the texts and prepare them for publication;
- read other texts related to the topic;
- generate comprehension questions for classmates to answer;
- write other types of texts—songs, poems, letters (for example, a letter to the editor), or directions for how to do something.

In a class with learners at different proficiency levels, the teacher can use the more basic activities with the learners at lower levels while the more proficient learners work on the more advanced activities individually or in groups, with less teacher help.

## CONCLUSION

Although the LEA was developed primarily as a tool for reading development, this technique can be used successfully to develop listening, speaking, and writing as well. This integrated approach is unique in that it begins with students' individual or shared experiences as a basis for discussion, writing, and finally reading. As students see their personal experiences transcribed into the written word, they also gain a greater understanding of the *processes* of writing and reading and can make the bridge to reading and writing independently.

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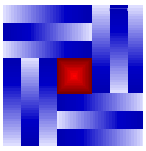


# SECTION D

## PLANNING LESSONS: HOW DO I INTEGRATE LEARNING SKILLS

1. Lesson Planning
2. Teaching the Four Language Skills
3. Materials and Activities for Integrating the Skills

***What do teachers actually do in an ESL lesson?*** *The following pages provide answers to that question. First you will find information, tips, and guidelines on planning, including sample lesson plan worksheets. Then there is information on teaching and integrating the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) as well as two language components that cross-cut the four skills (grammar and vocabulary). Finally, you will find tips and techniques for teaching and learning activities.*

## 1. Lesson Planning

*by Margaret Whitt*

**Why Write Lesson Plans?**

Lesson plans provide a framework for the ESL teacher . He or she can use plans to guide the class through activities , exercises and assessments. Plans can also function as a record of student progress or as an alternative form of assessment.

**What Should Be Included?**

Many variables influence lesson plans, including class-size, time constraints, level of the learners, availability of materials , etc. However, three broad categories may be helpful to keep in mind:

**I. Introduction**

This section may begin with a review of material covered previously, an attention-focusing activity or warm-up exercise, or an objective which will be taught during that particular lesson.

**II. Core**

The middle section of the plans may deal with the main body of information with which the teacher desires to familiarize the students. New information is presented at this time, and students practice utilizing this material.

**III. Conclusion**

The final section of the lesson plans may include summary material, reviews, assessments, applications, checks for understanding, and homework.

**Tips and Strategies**

- Variety is always a helpful teaching tool. The teacher may wish to vary the style of teaching, the place where learning occurs (field trips, instructional and recreational outings, etc.), the means by which instruction is delivered (guest speakers, videos, audio cassettes, etc.) and the focus of any given activity.

- Breaking the class into groups or pairs or teams is also a common teaching strategy which may be incorporated into the lesson plans.

- It may be helpful to plan for more than you can hope to accomplish in one class, in case you cover the material quickly and find that you still have more time left at the end of class.

- Always have contingency plans ready, in case something goes wrong with the lesson.
- Review your own teaching after class. Make notes of any problems or difficulties you encountered during instruction time. Also note any additional ideas you may have incorporated while teaching the lesson.
- Keep your plans together in a central location so that you can refer to them later to catch students up on what they may have missed.

# General Format Guidelines

## Sequencing the Session

### A. Openers

Purpose

- take care of housekeeping
- share lesson plan and objectives
- introductions
- let them know **you** know who they are
- focus the participants
- establish rapport
- revuew of previous work
- provide a rationale for the work
- motivate

### B. Presentation

Purpose

- introduce new information
- relate previous knowledge or experience to the information
- check understanding of the new material
- introduce and model tasks that will be expected in the practice part of the session

### C. Practice

Purpose

- provide opportunities to practice the new information
- introduce generic strategies
- introduce controlled, guided, and free responses
- monitor student work and learning
- provide feedback

### D. Application

Purpose

- use the information from the presentation in a new or familiar situation
- apply the information to one's own situation
- transfer already acquired skills to a new situation
- modify generic strategies to specific levels
- provide opportunities for feedback

### E. Closure

Purpose

- review, discuss, clarify new information
- plan a follow-up session

Adapted from "Advanced Teacher Training for Staff Development and Teacher Trainers," Mary Ann Christison and Sharron Bassano, TESOL 1993, Atlanta, GA.

# LESSON PLANNING FORM

**TOPIC** _____

**TIME** _____

**LESSON OBJECTIVE** _____

*Basic language skill for that objective* _____

*Life skill for that objective* _____

**LANGUAGE SKILL** _____

Circle the major focus **L S R W**

**STAGES OF THE LESSON**

Warm up / review _____

Introduction _____

Presentation _____

*Comprehension check* _____

Practice _____

Application _____

Evaluation _____

Materials Needed _____

Follow-up Activity(ies):_____

Adapted from ESL Teacher Institute: Lesson Planning. ACSA Foundation for Educational Administration, 1989.

## LESSON PLAN

### I. WARM UP / REVIEW / RETEACH

a. _____ warm up

b. _____ establish purpose for lesson

c. _____ students practice previously studied material

**Method: _____** realia, _____ visuals, _____ written materials, _____activity, _____ other

### II. PRESENTATION

a. _____ provide information

_____ visuals / realia _____ describe or explain

b. _____ model new learning

_____ provide examples _____ work with the language needed

c. _____ check students' level of understanding before going to the practice stage

_____ ask questions (requiring both verbal and nonverbal response)

_____ elicit answers from individual students

_____ move around room and check

### III. PRACTICE

a. _____ provide materials to guide students (realia, visuals, worksheets, etc.)

b. _____ use a variety of grouping strategies (whole group, small groups, pairs, individuals)

c. _____ provide for more than one learning style (speaking, listening, writing, doing)

d. _____ on-going evaluation and feedback (correct response from teacher, individual student, or responses from all students to identify items not agreed upon)

**IV. APPLICATION**

a. _____ provide students with opportunities to apply the material in a new situation (role play, games, community assignment, other)

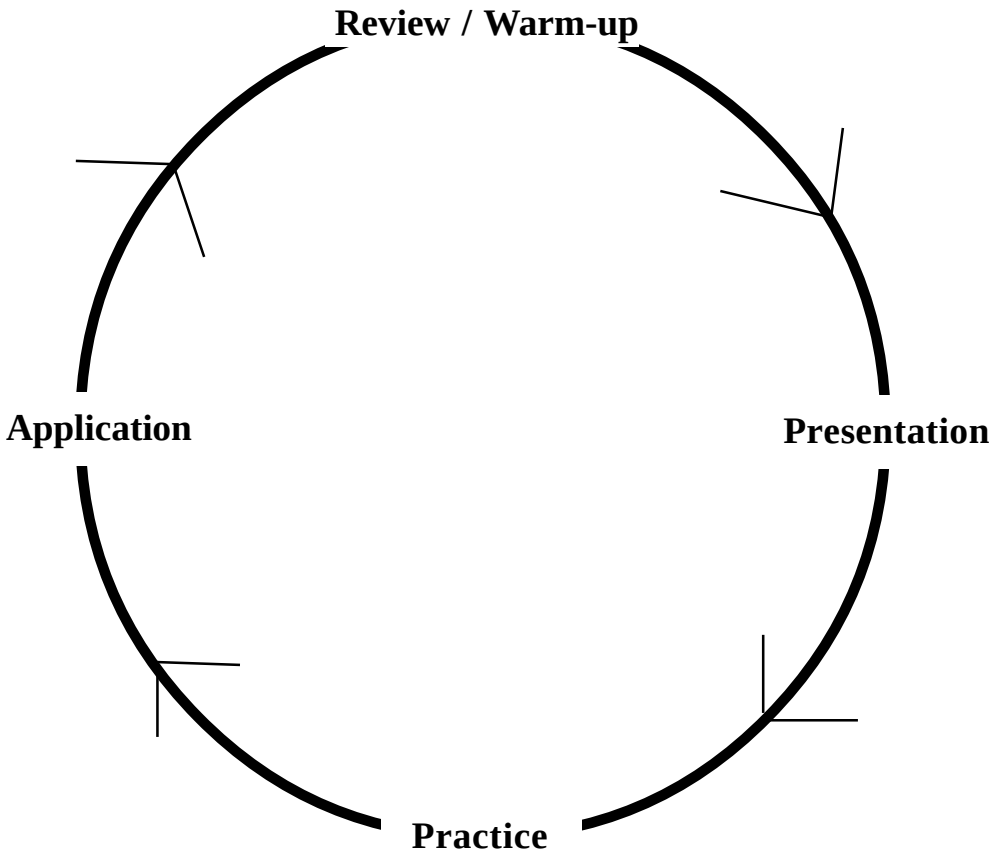
b. _____ provide purposeful student communication

_____ have students provide responses based on their own experience

_____ have students interact with each other using their own words

c. _____ evaluate (quizzes, supervised activities, student input)

**The ESL Lesson Plan is an Ongoing Process ...**




***Source: Illinois Adult Learning Resource Center***

## LESSON PLAN WORKSHEET

| | MATERIALS |
|---|---|
| **I. WARM-UP, REVIEW, RETEACH** | |
| **II. PRESENTATION** | |
| **III. PRACTICE** | |
| **IV. APPLICATION** | |

*Source: Illinois Adult Learning Resource Center*

# FOUR PHASES OF THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF A SECOND LANGUAGE

*By Joanna Escobar, College of DuPage, Associate Dean, ABE/ESL Office, National Education Association*

## INTRODUCTION

To teach an adult ESL class is an awesome responsibility. To teach an adult ESL class effectively is an even more awesome task. The combination of skills which must be introduced, taught, practiced, integrated, put into meaningful situations, and re-taught makes the act of organizing even one language lesson a complicated, elusive process for many teachers.

There can be, however, a method to this madness. There are certain patterns to be found in organizing and teaching a language class which simplify the job of the teacher and ease the burden of the learner. At the end of this chapter is a chart[*not included in this reprint]* which explains each of the steps of language teaching, along with a description of what each step consists of, how it is accomplished, and the kind of environment the teacher must provide for instruction to result in maximum production. It is by no means intended to be all inclusive and/or selectively exclusive. It is rather, a basic guideline for teachers which provides assistance in recognizing and hopefully, incorporating these patterns of organization in all language classes.

## PHASE I - ESTABLISHING A MEANING

**What**

The first of the four phases is the establishment of meaning. A teacher cannot teach without giving careful attention to the critical task of setting a clear cut meaning for the students. The learners must not be practicing meaningless language. The teacher and the materials used have the responsibility to establish a reasonably clear, albeit limited, meaning for all the language that is part of the lesson. The learners should not be forced to move into the practice phase of the cycle until this is accomplished. The teacher must not mistake careful, accurate practice for comprehension. A student who has no trouble practicing "His name is Brian" or "Her name is Mary" but who has no reasonable meaning for "his" or "her" or "name" has *bypassed* the first phase.

Establishing a meaning may be, indeed it usually *is*, the most difficult phase to complete successfully. It may take the longest. It may tax both the teacher and the material. The difficulty encountered in establishing a meaning may tempt the teacher to move on, rationalizing that students will "get it" later. The teacher must resist this particular temptation. If this phase is neglected, both the learners and the teacher are guaranteed bleak, difficult, frustrating sessions in the future.

Student comprehension, within the limits set by the teacher and the situation, must not be sacrificed in the name of speed, curriculum objectives, time, or materials. The students must have a meaning for the language, and it must be clear to the students and the teacher that comprehension has been achieved. For example, many beginning materials teach the concepts of *color* and articles of clothing, showing a picture of a woman wearing, say, a pink blouse. The configuration p i n k could, to a beginning student of English, *mean* anything. "Pink" could mean "woman," "what the woman is wearing" or, as is the intention here, the *color* of what she is wearing. We could list several other "possible" student-associated meaning: the eyes, the hair, the color of each of these, the nose, the mouth, the buttons of the blouse, the collar, etc., etc., etc., but the point has been made. Non-comprehension can frustrate learners beyond a tolerable point.

**How**

There are at least *five ways* to teach meaning. The first is through the use of tangible objects—a glass, an

ashtray, a match. The second is through illustrations, paintings, photographs, and drawings. The third way is through the development of a verbal context—a number of already known elements are recombined so that the student can guess the meaning of the new item from the language which surrounds it. A fourth effective way to establish meaning is through actions—walking, running, swimming. The last means is translation. Where the class make-up permits, and where all the time needed to set a clear meaning through methods other than translation will be inefficient and unreasonable, translation should be used. Remember, however, that translation occurs once. After that, it is practice.

Each of these "hows" can be used independently or in any variety of combinations.

**Conditions**

Through each phase, a certain set of conditions or environment should be maintained. The teacher needs to develop for the learners a non-threatening environment where the learners are safe enough to learn, which means they feel safe enough to take personal risks without fear of loss of self-esteem, peer respect, and teacher acceptance.

To foster such a safe and, therefore, effective learning environment in this phase, we suggest that you first of all draw the language content for your materials from your students' own lives. They have jobs, friends, concerns, needs—in short, they have experiences for which they need language. We see little need to exclude the language and situations through which they move from this first phase. Rather, we draw as much of our classroom materials from our students' lives as we can.

Second, we suggest that you vary the type of activity. Even dining on freshly caught Maine lobster and a well-chilled bottle of Taittinger can pale if you have it every day.

Third, vary the pace of the activity. All of us respond to and need a change of pace. Language learners, especially, need the pace variations. They both relax and exhilarate the learners.

Finally—and this one may be the most difficult—you, the teacher, should sustain your enthusiasm. Like the three hundredth performance of the longest running play in the history of the theater, your performance should be as fresh and enthusiastic as if you were hearing or saying or reading or writing it for the first time.

All of these conditions present make for the setting which helps learning occur.

## PHASE II - PRACTICE

The second phase of the teaching/learning function, practice, has three characteristics. Practice must be *manipulative*, *meaningful*, and *communicative* if students are to reap maximum benefits. Manipulation ensures that learners won't be in "over their heads," having to deal with linguistic functions they are incapable of handling. Meaningful practice goes a long way toward easing the boredom factor long associated with the practice phase by eliminating extraneous effort on the students' part. It guarantees that students will not be forced to practice linguistic functions they already control. Communicative practice is essential in helping students make the jump between the security of the classroom and the real-life surprise of communication in the second language outside the classroom.

These characteristics must be ever-present in the practice phase and must be carefully woven together by the teacher. The three characteristics are consistently interdependent and deletion of one of the characteristics will

result in decreased lesson effectiveness and increased student frustration, boredom, and parroting.

**What**

The backbone of the Practice Phase consists of the audio-lingual drill types. Although the audio-lingual method has come under fire in recent years, drills of this type remain an important component of any ESL class (and methodology). By including the three characteristics of practice, situations represented in the following old joke, are eliminated.

> Mother: "Son, why did you flunk your ESL course?"
> Son: "It's not my fault, I knew my half of the dialogues – nobody else knew theirs."

Audio-lingual drill types go under various aliases. The terms used in the chart may be clarified as follows:

a) minimal pair drills: a pair of words, phrases, or sentences which sound alike except for one phonemic difference. Students may be asked solely to recognize the difference between the two examples or may be expected to recognize the difference and incorporate it into a productive activity (saying the two examples, writing the two examples, etc.).

b) substitution: consists of a base phrase or sentence in which one element is replaced by another. Example:

T: Mary has a book.
T: train S: Mary has a train.
T: truck S: Mary has a truck.

c) multiple slot substitution: employs the same features of single slot substitution, however, introduction of the first new element necessitates the change of a second element.

T: John calls his mother.
T: Mary, her S: Mary called her mother.
T: They, their S: They called their mother.

d) transformation: effects a change in sentence type or tense.

Example: John is happy.
John isn't happy.

Example: John wrote a letter yesterday.
John will write a letter tomorrow.

e) integration: two separate statements are combined into one.

Example: I saw the dog. The dog has brown spots.
I saw the dog that has brown spots.

f) expansion: adding a word to an utterance.

Example: The dress is pretty.

blue The blue dress is pretty.

A second form of practice is achieved through the question-answer sequence. There are four basic question types:

a) yes-no: asks for nothing more than affirmation or negation of information presented.
Example: Are you going to the party?

Example: Do you know the answer?

b) choice: presents respondent with two or more alternatives.

Example: Are they walking or running?

c) interrogative word: requires the respondent to supply information to the questioner.

Example: Where is my peanut butter sandwich?

Example: How long have you lived in Illinois?

d) tag: requires affirmation or negation of statement which precedes it.

Example: He's not serious, is he?

Example: Hildegarde is playing tennis, isn't she?

The third component of practice is dialogue completion. In this circumstance the students are given a contextual situation to which they must respond. It may also supply a response to which the students supply a question.

S1 _____?

S2 No, I was at the library last night.

S3 Did you find the book you wanted?

S4 No, _____

**How**

The practice components of Phase II may be implemented in several ways. All are essential to complete the Practice Phase. The first method of implementation is *repetition*. Repetition includes the old stand-bys: choral repetition, individual repetition, and backward build-up. The chain type has been added in repetition, rather than as an audio-lingual drill type, simply because the chain normally serves as a two-fisted approach to individual repetition. The individual student responds to a set question, then asks the set question of another student. Songs are included in this category because any singing done by the students in class must necessarily be preceded with establishment of meaning plus non-singing intensive repetition of the lyrics to ensure accuracy.

The second type of implementation is *recombination* of oral/aural drills for reading and writing practice. While it is assumed that all the components of practice (with the exception of the minimal pair drill type), may be used for all four skill areas, it is especially important to use what has already been heard and reproduced as the basis for reading and writing practice.

The final methods of implementation in the Practice Phase, is through a category called *selection*. Selection implies that the teacher has set up a fairly controlled communication situation based on what has been learned previously in an even more controlled situation. Now, however, the students may answer the teacher's effort to elicit a response by selecting from several alternative patterns of words they have at their command, or, according to the selective environment set up by the teacher, formulate questions.

Three major areas of selection are available to teachers and students at this point: open-ended questioning, description, and games.

a) Open-ended questioning may be either teacher or student initiated. In the case of teacher initiation, the answer to be given by the student, while drawn from previously studied areas, will not be discernible by the teacher until produced by the student.

   Example: After studying various types of foods, the teacher may ask "What's your favorite food?" Although the response set has been narrowed by the teacher, s/he has no way of predicting the student's answer.

   Student-initiated questioning may be found in such circumstances as student interviews or as a component of the other two categories of selection: description and games.

b) Description entails the teacher controlling what is to be described and sets up the descriptive pattern to be used through instructions to the student.

   Example: The class has been studying "there is," "there are," and types of food. A picture of a supermarket is handed to the students and the teacher says, "Tell me all the things there are in the picture." If the class has been studying the simple present tense, the teacher may want to instruct the students, "Tell me five things you see."

c) Games are included as part of selection due to the more flexible nature of most games. The game of charades, for example, forces students through the process of selecting the correct name for an act being performed from many of the names for action they may have at their disposal. As the action starts, students immediately start classifying these names and as the action continues, becoming more precise, students start rejecting incorrect choices.

**Conditions**

As in the First Phase, "Establishing a Meaning," the four conditions the teacher must maintain to foster a good learning environment remain in the Practice Phase. There is, however, an additional condition imposed on the teacher in this phase. The teacher must vary the difficulty level of the drill or activity. The difficulty level has direct impact on whether the students will be bored or frustrated. Each class meeting should seek to help the students feel comfortable by providing activities the students can easily master, as well as challenging them to grow, by providing activities which require them to stretch beyond their already acquired skills. It is a tentative

balance which the teacher must plan for and implement in every class meeting.

## PHASE III - PURPOSEFUL STUDENT COMMUNICATION

The third phase of the teaching/learning function is one which gently pushes the fledgling students out of the "practice nest." It encourages students to try their wings in the second language, through student-initiated manipulation and recombination of what has been previously taught as well as student-initiated introduction of patterns and vocabulary learned outside of the ESL classroom. The rapid expansion of student knowledge results in more student-centered instruction, as students become active contributors in designing the focus of the ESL class. It is at this point that the ESL teacher must be most sensitive. The teacher must listen not only consciously to what the students are trying to communicate, but also must internalize where the students are coming from as they try out new items. Are the items related to immediate student needs for comprehension, frustration at their limited ability to express themselves, or a reflection of the more unstructured language situation the students have found outside of the classroom? The ESL teacher must critically examine students' communicative needs and goals and tailor situations which will enhance student communication accordingly.

### What

The bulk of the third phase rests within a single concept—student utilization of what has been introduced and learned (whether inside or outside of the classroom) to suit the individual's purposes. It is a time of experimentation, both for the students and the teacher, as both parties try to move through the shock waves of increasing language variations on what has been taught, to the epicenter of economically effective communication.

### How

All purposeful communication is a function of one basic process: selection. Now that the student possesses a repertoire of language, every student-initiated question asked and every student response made involves a choice-making decision on the part of the student.

Selection may be implemented in several ways:

a) role-playing: a situation is established which requires certain behavior of the students. Language, however, is not fixed. Students must respond to the situation using language which best fit their own roles in the situation, with regard to reactions issued by other students taking part in the role-play.

b) gaming-simulation: is best viewed as an extended role-play. Here the student is given or creates not only a character in a single situation but a whole environment—a culture, an economy, a life-style. Role-play may be considered a single scene in the play while gaming-simulation is the play itself.

c) problem solving: a real-life problem is introduced to the students. Student communication takes place within the context of brainstorming solutions to the problem.

d) hypothetical recombination: involves stretching language capacities to deal with situations that will probably not occur. It matches creativity and imagination to functional language patterns.

Example: What would you be like if you lived on Mars?

e) directed discourse: uses a structured situation to encourage students both to choose and use language that is appropriate to a specific situation and at the same time help students safely encounter situations which,

up to this point, they have avoided. A more or less full description of a particular situation is given. At appropriate points in the situation being developed, a student is asked to "speak" for a specific character in the situation. This allows the teacher to incorporate a greater range of experiences than individual students might be able to identify. It allows the student to respond originally but in a limited way, thus reducing the risk factor of failure considerably while expanding the base of student experience.

**Conditions**

The conditions added to the third phase emphasize the shift to a more student-centered ESL class. Get out of the way, teacher!

An additional condition introduced is that of identification and incorporation of learner goals into the class. While students may not be able to choose whether they need to learn the past tense of verbs, it is obvious that the context in which the past tense is practiced may be of critical importance. Tailoring communication situations to reflect the life goals of students enables the learners to acquire life-coping skills which will be immediately useful to them.

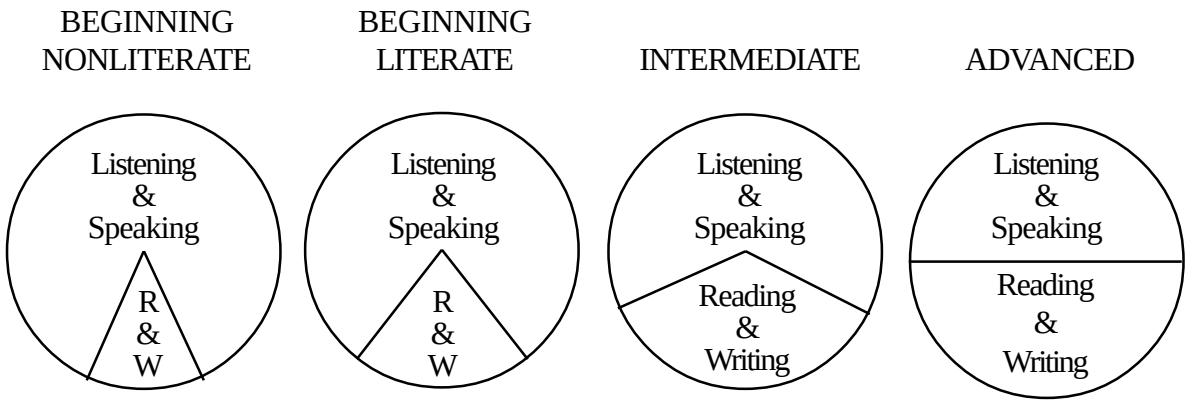
## PHASE IV - REVIEW, RECOMBINATION, OR RETEACHING

It is important to review and recombine language already covered in the first three phases using any or all of the three phases and the activities outlined in each for 1) establishing a meaning, 2) practicing and 3) purposeful communication.

This fourth phase may also mean reteaching the material or the need once again to move the student through each of the first three phases.

## 2. TEACHING THE FOUR LANGUAGE SKILLS

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing




**Beginning nonliterate** students are those students who cannot read or write in their native language.

**Beginning literate** students are those who are literate in their own language but not in English.

Note that beginning nonliterate students need to spend the majority of their class time focused on listening and speaking skills. As students become more proficient in English, the instructor can spend more time with them on reading and writing skills.

---

*Adapted from the Illinois Adult Learning Resource Center*

Oral/aural skills are the most important skills for communication

**Present language through meaningful activities relevant to students' lives.**

## Listening

We listen for a reason.
We usually respond quickly.
We usually speak face-to-face, except for the telephone.
There are "clues" that help us understand what we are hearing.
In most instances we hear language that is choppy (slang, sentence fragments).

***Students need listening skills to:***

- engage in social rituals
- exchange information
- share feelings
- follow directions
- complete a task

Virginia Adult Learning Resouce Center for Professional Development, ESL Basics, Jan. 1996.
Adapted from the Illinois Adult Literacy Resource Center

## Speaking

***Steps to teaching oral skills:***

1. Present and model language that is understandable and appropriate to the learners' level of proficiency.
   - model using visuals, realia or other materials
   - model using dialogue, or situation in dialogue, role play, information gap, questions and answers, drills (substitution, dialogue), opinion, etc.
   - explain new vocabulary and grammar

2. Check comprehension frequently:
   - ask questions that require verbal and nonverbal responses
   - elicit answers from individual students
   - allow students to discuss (agree/disagree) with response
   - move around the room and listen to responses

3. Give students **ample** opportunities to practice:
   - provide materials for practice (realia, visuals, worksheets, etc.)
   - have learners practice in different groupings (pairs, small groups, whole groups, individually)
   - design practice for more than one learning style if possible

Adapted from *Techniques for Teaching Oral Skills in the Adult ESL Classroom:* REEP, Teacher Training Module

# Conversation Activity Guidelines

- Select meaningful activities
- Determine what materials are needed
- Set clear objectives
- Provide clear instructions
- Check comprehension
- Establish appropriate time limits

**Whole Class**

**Small Groups/Pairs**

Group according to
–Similar Abilities
–Different Abilities
–Similar Interests
–Random Grouping

**Individual**

**More Ideas**

- interviews
- surveys
- role plays

# Reading

We read for pleasure and for information.

***Pre-Reading Activities:***

- Help the reader think about what to expect from the reading.
- Help to give a student missing background information.

***Suggestions:***

1. Display visuals to stimulate discussion.
2. Take a field trip or watch a movie.
3. Start a discussion about something which relates to the students' lives (including previous experiences, background knowledge).

***Making Reading Successful:***

1. Make readings meaningful and relevant to students.
2. Use comprehension questions: yes/no, true/false, agree/disagree, etc.
3. Use questions taken directly from the reading: "When is Memorial Day?"
4. Use questions requiring students to apply what they have read: "Do you have a similar holiday in your country?"
5. Allow students to read silently.
6. Integrate reading with other language skills.

---

Adapted from "*Narrative Reading*", ESL Teacher Institute, 1989

## Sample Reading Assessment

***Circle True or False:***

1. Watching a movie is a good pre-reading activity. T F
2. Readings should be relevant to students' lives. T F
3. Reading is most effective as a skill by itself. T F

***What kind of books do you like to read?*** Write your answer below:

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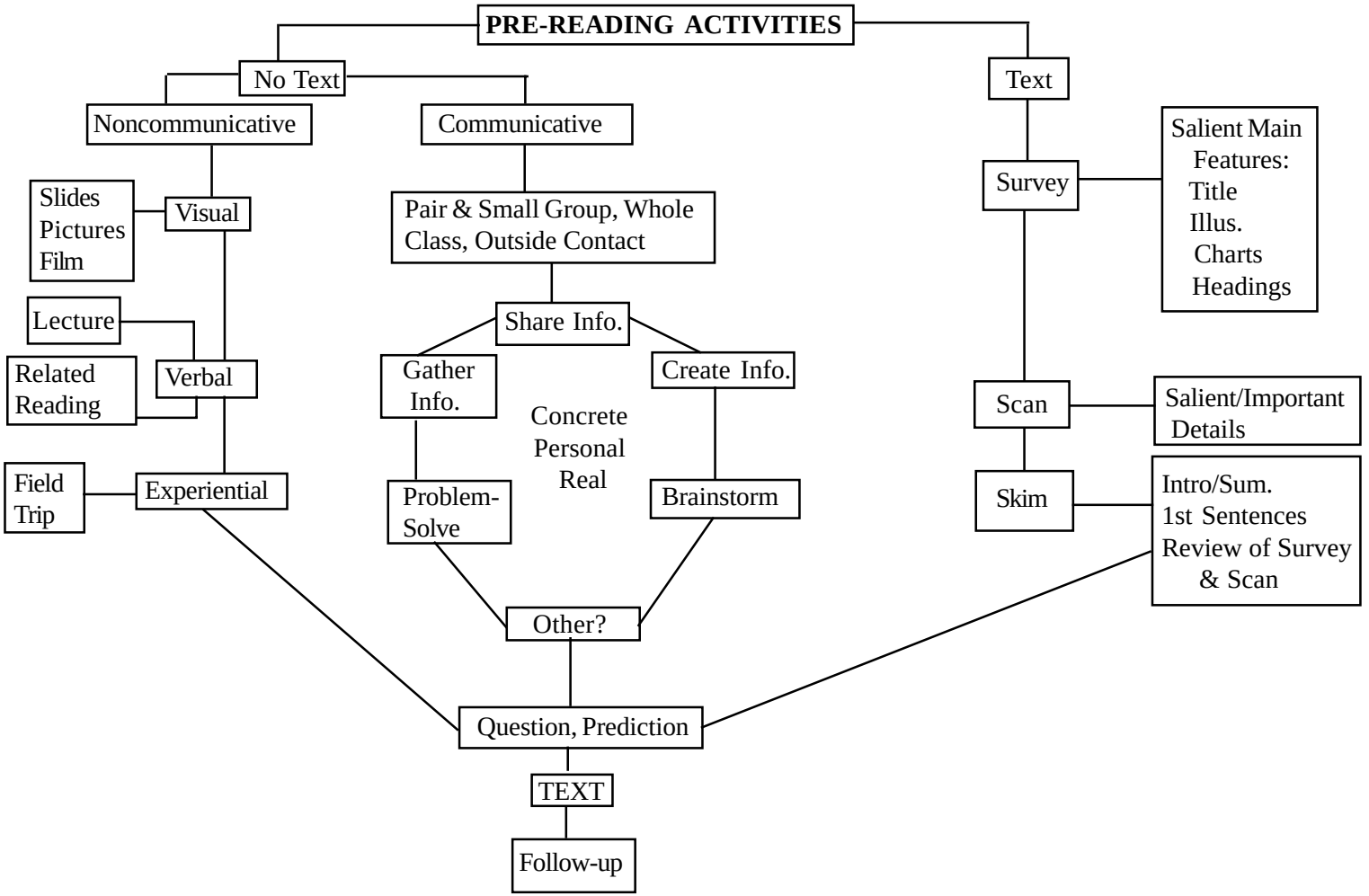
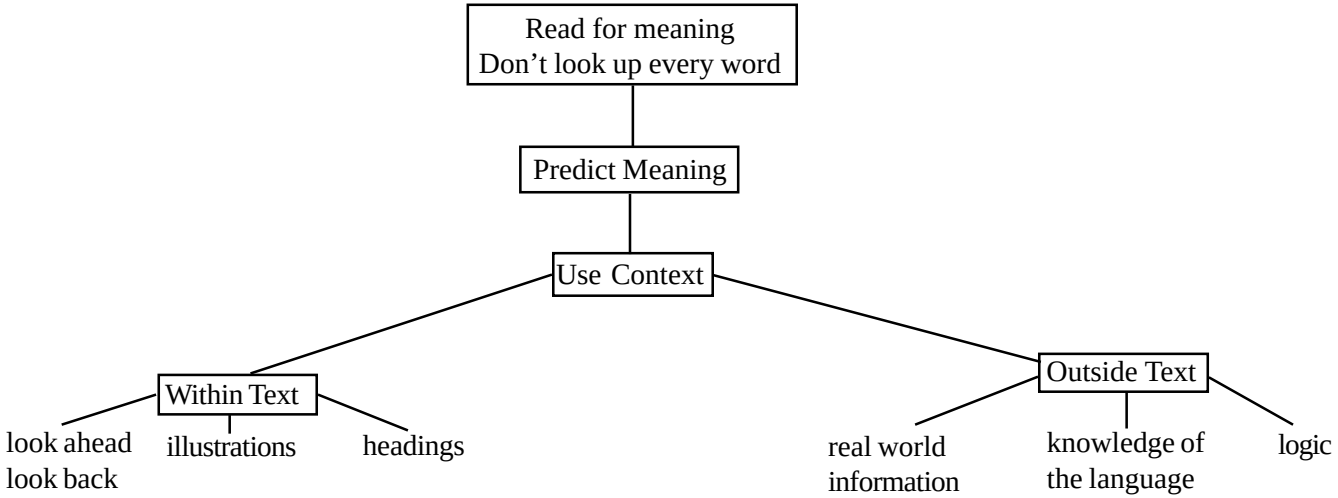
Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center , ESL Basics, Jan. 1996.




Elsa Auerbach, University of Massachusetts-Boston

## READING STRATEGIES

*(from Krashen and Terrell, The Natural Approach, Alemany Press)*




1. Pre-reading activities
   - brainstorm meaning of title, headings, key sentences
   - ask one or two questions to direct reading
   - visual task: make predictions based on pictures
   - provide background information about topic
   - elicit students' background knowledge
   - establish purpose for reading

2. Don't allow discussion of words or structures until main idea established

3. Teach skills through peer discussion

4. Techniques for teaching skills
   - cloze procedure
   - flow charts to teach rhetorical structure
   - non-linear reading (headings, topic sentences, charts)
   - multiple choice with elimination of bad choices through group discussion

5. Vocabulary
   - don't present it in isolation (out of context)
   - teach as needed - don't pre-teach
   - teach hieracrchy of attack strategies (semantic clues, morphological clues, asking a friend, skipping and LASTLY using English-English dictionary)

## Stages of Reading for ESL Students

This chart outlines the five stages of reading for ESL students. It can be used to 1) identify student reading ability levels, 2) develop a reading component, and 3) select and/or adapt appropriate reading texts and activities.

| Stage | Focus | Type of Student | Sample Activity |
|---|---|---|---|
| **I**:<br><br>Mechanical skills | Discrimination of shapes, letters, numbers<br><br>Directionality and spacing | Preliterate<br><br>Nonliterate<br><br>Non-Roman alphabet | Same/different, matching, tracing, copying |
| **II**:<br><br>Connecting written language with oral language | Developing a base of written English<br><br>Using print to reinforce oral language practice | Starts from Stage I<br><br>Semi-literate<br><br>Literate in own language, but no knowledge of English | Dialogues<br><br>Sight Word Exercises<br><br>Language Experience<br><br>Total Physical Response |
| **III**:<br><br>Reading for new information | Obtaining NEW meaning<br><br>Sampling, predicting, confirming/rejecting strategies | Starts from Stage II<br><br>Transferable native language reading skills and some knowledge of English | Short simplified reading passages with new information<br><br>Pre-reading exercises<br><br>Silent Reading<br><br>New vocabulary from context |
| **IV**:<br><br>Reading for different reasons | Utilizing different reading strategies for a variety of materials | Starts from Stage III<br><br>Transferable reading skills in native language and good knowledge of English | Surveying<br><br>Scanning<br><br>Skimming |
| **V**:<br><br>Independent Reading | Selecting appropriate strategies for a variety of materials | Starts from Stage IV | Self-selected material |

# How to Teach Reading

*by Debra Tuler*

Reading involves several skills:

- decoding
- understanding vocabulary
- reading for meaning; gaining meaning from the text
- predicting
- thinking critically about the text

Reading is also closely linked to the other three skills areas.

Following are four suggested techniques for developing reading skills of adult ESL students.

**1. Language Experience Approach (LEA)**

Objective: to read and write using students' own words and experiences.

Assumption: it is easier to learn to read language that you speak; language generated by students reflects their own experiences and perceptions, unlike published reading material, and is therefore more interesting and relevant to them; the reading/language is always meaningful in LEA.

1. Start a conversation with students, using pictures or photos. Students can name what they know in the picture, describe what they see, tell a story about what they see, discuss how people in the picture feel, etc. Do not correct student errors, except to ask for clarification where you need it.
2. Record student comments (words, sentences, stories) on the board, writing it exactly as they say it (without corrections). You may be selective about what you write (only words or simple sentences or complex sentences) depending on their level and what you want to work on with them.
3. Read aloud what you have written, following with your index finger, at normal pace.
4. Ask students to read individual words or sentences if they want; when reading words, you can point to the corresponding part of the picture to reinforce vocabulary.
5. Ask if they want to add or change anything in the story, and make any changes.
6. Read the whole thing again, with students joining in.
7. Individual students read all or parts of the story.
8. Point out words that students often leave out (such as 'the'), sound patterns, etc.

Follow up Activities:

1. Scatter words around the board and have students read again.
2. Mix up the words and have students re-create sentences.
3. Photocopy story, give to students for silent reading.
4. Create cloze exercises (blank out certain words, students fill them in).
5. Create columns: subjects on the left, verbs in the middle, complements on the rights. Review word order, create new sentences to read and write.
6. Students copy story (writing practice).
7. Work on phonics, etc.
8. Develop comprehension questions for students to respond to.
9. Teach a grammar lesson based on errors students made in telling the story; correct the story.
10. Cut a typed copy of the story into sentence strips; students reconstruct the story by reading

**2. Directed Reading-Thinking**

Objective: Engage students in reading; encourage them to take risks; facilitate comprehension of the reading; have students set their own purposes for reading.

1. Pre-read title, pictures, subtitles, charts, etc.
2. Close the book and make hypotheses:
   - What do you think this selection might be about?
   - What do you know about it?
   - What can you expect to learn from it?
   - What do you think will happen?
   - Why do you think that?
   - What questions would you like to have answered?
3. Read the first part.
4. Discuss:
   - Are there any changes we should make in our predictions?
   - Can we make new predictions?
5. Read second part.
6. Repeat predicting, questioning, reading, and verifying for entire reading selection.

Variations: If the student cannot read independently, the teacher can read aloud. Students can also be asked to write their predictions, and then review them at the end to see if they were correct.

Follow up Activities: To check comprehension, students can re-tell as much of the story as they can remember to a partner (encourage them to negotiate meaning with each other). Students can write questions about the story (factual, inference, etc.), one question on each index card or piece of paper. Mix them up; students select a card not their own, read the question aloud, and either answer or ask the other students.

Suggestion: Do not make value judgements about students' predictions.

**3. Reading with Beginners**

Duet Reading: A method for reading materials of interest to your student but which may be too difficult for him/her to read independently, a way to develop fluency.

Objective: To help students read faster with more confidence, and to discover that reading is fun.

1. Choose something that is a little too hard for the student, on a topic of interest to the student. The material could be a newspaper article, book, pamphlet, etc.
2. Tutor and student begin to read aloud together; tutor reads at normal speed, with expression, following along with index finger (helps student get used to left-right orientation and to not losing place); student reads along, trying to keep up.
3. If the student hesitates over a word of falls slightly behind, tutor keeps going at normal speed. If the student stops, tutor stops also, offers encouragement, and keeps going. After a few sessions of this, it will become easier and the student will begin to look ahead at coming words.
4. Do not stop to explain the meaning of a word unless the student requests it. Do not ask any comprehension questions. Use the reading material only as an oral reading exercise.
5. If the student is able to keep up with little effort, choose something slightly harder; if the student is

becoming frustrated and is having difficulty keeping up or recognizing words, choose something easier.

**4. Oral and Silent Reading**

Comprehension depends heavily on one's silent reading, so have students begin to read silently as soon as possible. Ways to transition from oral to silent reading:

1. Turn the title or first sentence into a meaningful question.
2. Ask the student to read silently to find the answer.
3. When the student has finished reading, he/she answers the question. Instant success!

# Criteria for Text Selection

by Elsa Auerbach

University of Massachusetts, Boston

**Reader-Based Factors**

- What is the relationship between the students' interests and the text content? Are the readings meaningful for students?
- Does the content reflect your students' reality?
- Does the content incorporate your students' prior knowledge/experience/culture?
- Is there an appropriate range of language levels in reading selections for your students in reading selections for your students?
- Is the content geared toward ESL or EFL?
- How are different cultural groups represented? Is there cultural/racial/sexual stereotyping?

**Text-Based Factors**

Format:

- Is the text graphically attractive/visually pleasing, modern?
- Is the print accessible (large enough with blank spaces)?
- Do the graphics correspond to content of the selections?
- Do the graphics take the audience into account (not patronizing for adults)? Are the graphics clear?
- Is the text structure clear and consistent?
- Is the organizational plan of each selection identifiable?

**Content of Readings:**

- Do the readings challenge readers to think?
- Are the readings authentic, relevant, and age appropriate?
- Is there continuity between readings?
- Are there several readings on each theme?
- Is the text long enough to provide for a variety of topics and for student selection but not overwhelming?
- Is the language of the reading selections controlled for vocabulary, syntax, etc? If so, are the readings still lively and realistic?

**Exercise Strategies and Skills**

- What is the proportion of exercises to reading selections?
- Do the exercises mainly teach reading strategies and/or language?
- Does the text teach ABOUT reading; does it identify strategies and encourage readers to use top-down strategies (metacognitive awareness)?
- What is the prioritization of strategies (quantity and sequence)?
- Are there pre-reading exercises? If so, what kind? ...vocabulary/prediction of content/identification of text structure/elicitation of prior knowledge or opinion/use of graphics?
- Do the exercises for each lesson target one strategy?
- How is vocabulary taught? ...guessing/use of context, etc.
- What kind of "during reading" strategies are there? Are they interactive/reader based?
- What type of post-reading exercises: Are they text-based (recall detail/vocabulary) or interactive (relate text to readers' experience? Think critically? Make inferences?

# Teaching ESL Writing

| | |
|---|---|
| **Controlled** | Forms<br>Charts<br>Grammar Practice<br>Dictation |
| **Semi-Controlled** | Interviews<br>Model Paragraphs<br>Pictures<br>Sequencing |
| **Free** | Story Completion<br>Giving Opinions<br>Giving Advice<br>Dialogue Journals |

Virginia Adult Learning Resouce Center, ESL Basics, Jan. 1996.

# How To Teach Writing

*by Margaret Whitt*

**Beginning Writers**

Sometimes, in order to learn how to discriminate letters while reading, students need to practice writing the letters of the alphabet. Thus, reading and writing are linked closely in this initial phase of learning. According to Celce-Murcia, in *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*, there are three types of recognition tasks used at this stage.

The first, "**matching tasks**", often take the form of games or puzzles or other seemingly non-academic activities. In these exercises, students develop effective recognition habits based on distinctive graphic features.

The second, **"writing tasks**", involves tracing letters, words and sentences, and then moving on to basic, unaided letter formation.

The third, "**sound-spelling correspondence practice**", demands that the student focus on pronunciation as well as the written shape of the letters or words.

Sometimes difficulties may arise when students who write from right to left in their native language are asked to write from left to right in English. Simple memory-triggering devices, such as asking the students to place a mark or symbol in the upper left-hand corner of the paper, will be adequate in serving as a reminder to the learners to begin writing on that side.

**Intermediate - Advanced Writers**

As students begin writing their own sentences and paragraphs, the goals of writing change. Students may now have a purpose for writing. Three types of writing tasksfor this level are, also, suggested by Celce-Murcia.

The first category is "**practical writing tasks**". Lists, notes, messages, requests , filling in job forms or applications, all fall under this category.

The second category is "**emotive writing tasks**". These student writing exercises emphasize personal writing, including journals, personal biographies, letters, and other narrative forms.

The third category is "**school-oriented tasks**". Academic writing may involve essays, summaries, answers to questions based on a given text, etc.

The teacher also may choose the format in which writing occurs. In *controlled writing* the teacher may use *dictation* or *sentence/paragraph modification*, where the learner must change some grammatical features in a sentence or paragraph. In *guided writing tasks*, the teacher acts as a guide through part of the writing task, while the student has responsibility for the majority of the writing effort. In *free writing tasks*, students compose the complete text in response to pictures, music, previously-read texts, etc.

**Steps in the Writing Process**

Sometimes students view writing as a daunting task; however, if they are encouraged and motivated to write, the task becomes a more enjoyable one for both the learner and the teacher. If students believe there is a purpose to writing, or that their own writing will be read by someone else, then they will become actively

involved in their own writing.

As students become actively engaged in their writing, it is helpful to view the task as a process. This process can be divided into four steps:

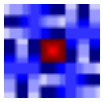
**I. Prewriting**
The prewriting stage involves stimulation of ideas through various techniques, such as brainstorming and clustering ideas, listing or discussing ideas, writing in journals, interviewing people and listening to music.

**II. Rough Draft**
After students pick a topic and develop a variety of ideas pertaining to that topic, encourage them to put these ideas on paper, without concern for grammatical correctness, mechanics, etc. With beginning level learners, this step may be achieved by having students dictate these ideas to the teacher, who then writes them down.

**III. Revision**
During revision, other people have the opportunity to respond to a student's writing, including peers and the instructor. This can occur as a student re-reads his or her own paper, in a conference setting, or in a small group sharing time. Comments, both written or spoken, should be phrased in a positive manner. During the revision process, the teacher may take the opportunity to teach lessons on sentence structure, paragraph writing, writing for a particular audience and developing writing style.

**IV. Editing**
Editing is the last stage in the writing process before the final draft is written. This stage involves correction of grammatical errors, spelling and punctuation mistakes and other problems of mechanics. This step may be accomplished by using a checklist, working in peer-editing teams, reading the piece aloud or relying on teacher comments.

At the completion of this step, the student may re-write the work in order to share it with other students, have it published in a print or electronic medium, or present it orally.



## 3. Materials and Activities for Integrating the Skills

### Student Survival Kit

*by Altrice Walden*

In order for students to "survive" in a language they must be able to speak certain basic words and possess certain skills. Teaching these survival skills should be a part of every beginning student's lessons. Listed below are items to include in a " student survival kit," as recommended in *I Speak English, A Tutor's Guide to Teaching Conversational English*. Keep in mind that what is important here is what your particular students need to begin living their lives with English. This is just a suggested list. There may be many more items you would like to add.

- Student's name, address, telephone number
- Alphabet - letter names
- Neighborhood map, U.S. and world maps
- Number cards
- Price tags
- Money - coins and "play" bills
- Cardboard clock
- Calendar
- Menus
- Bus schedule
- Applications - school, job
- Coupons
- Grocery store ads
- Medical office forms
- Anatomy drawings - labeled and unlabeled
- Income Tax Forms
- Any other items that may be unique to your student's situation

#### STUDENT NAME, ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER

While most adult students know their name, address and telephone number, they may not be able to make themselves understood when speaking to someone because of their native accent. One suggestion for counteracting this difficulty is to keep a written copy of this information with them at all times. This is especially helpful if they should need to ask for directions or if they should get lost and need help finding their way home.

Using the telephone is a much more difficult skill, when learning a new language, than speaking to someone face-to-face. In a telephone conversation, the parties cannot see each other's expressions, mouths or eyes, all of which provide important clues for a speaker of a new language. Telephone skills to teach include: How do you dial the phone? How do you reach information? What do you say once you reach your party? What do you say if the party you are talking to is using words you do not understand? Many lessons can be planned around the use of a telephone. Use toy telephones and go for it! By having two students stand back to back, a real telephone conversation can be simulated. The whole idea is that they not be able to see each others faces during the conversation. A good reinforcement of this skill is to have a real telephone conversation, from

home, with your students.

## ALPHABET (LETTER NAMES)

An argument you often hear in teaching a beginning language student English is to teach the sounds of the letters before teaching the names of the alphabet. However, since each English letter can represent many sounds, this can be a very difficult task. Also, new ESL students usually have to spell words, like their name and address, long before they are in the situation of sounding out words. Therefore, teaching the names of the letters before the sounds they represent is recommended.

To begin teaching the alphabet, you can help your students learn to spell their names in English. Teach your students the meanings of the words "say" and "spell". Write the student's name in manuscript letters as you repeat the letter name: "E-d-g-a-r-d-o J-a-c-o-b-o". Practice this at each lesson until the student can spell his/her name and can identify the letters in random order.

Teach the entire alphabet to your students. Once they have the concept of spelling their names they will have a concrete idea about saying letters. Teaching the entire alphabet is a memorization drill, but there are ways to make it fun. Remember the alphabet song you or your children learned in kindergarten or on the Sesame Street TV Show? Use it with your students or make up flash cards using 3x5 index cards with both the capital and small letters written on them and play games with them. The student who names the most letters wins.

## MAPS AND DIRECTIONS

Getting lost in a new country, with a new language, can be frightening. The more vocabulary involving directions you can teach your ESL students the better. Understanding directions and being able to read a simple map will be a true asset to them.

Begin with easy maps involving directions from their houses to class or from their class to work. Stay with very meaningful subject matter as you begin this process. Draw simple maps, using their home address and only major roads they would take to get to class. Think of relevant vocabulary you can teach in this context: **street, right, left, around the corner, after, before, map, up, down, stop light, stop sign,** etc. It may take several lessons to get all this mastered but it is certainly worthwhile for the student. One challenge is that many newcomers are not familiar with the concept of a map which shows a birds-eye view of what's on the ground.

After teaching the vocabulary and simple map reading, culminate the exercise by taking a walk while reading the map you have worked on in class. Be sure to incorporate as many of the directional words and place names into the field trip as possible.

## NUMBERS AND MONEY

Think of all the ways we need numbers in our daily lives and you have dozens of ideas for teaching numbers. Probably the most meaningful and concrete way to begin is with money. Use the **real** thing when you begin teaching money; as the numbers become greater, switch to play money so you can teach the larger numbers like 50 and 100, etc. It's very important that the students understand the pronunciation of numbers when it involves their money, an approximation of the pronunciation may be a very costly mistake for them (e.g. the difference between $15 and $50). Be sure to teach where the dollar sign goes and the decimal point. Many countries use commas where we use decimals--these small details are important to understand when dealing with money.

## TIMES AND DATES

Time is very important to Americans. Many cultures approximate time, but not Americans. When we tell our students to be in class at 9:00, we mean 9:00, not 9:15 or sometime after 9:00. This concept must be **taught.** Don't be surprised if you have students who have been told to be in class at a certain time and they left the house at the time you told them to be in class. In teaching time in the classroom, use a clock with real hands and numbers. You can make one out of cardboard or use one of the many teaching tools on the market. Start teaching the hours first: 1:00, 2:00, etc., then go to 1:30, 2:30 and continue teaching 1:15, 3:20, etc. Begin with your students where they are. If they can say certain times in English, but get confused with other phrases, such as quarter past 2, instead of 2:15, work with them on their trouble spots. Just think of all the different ways people will say the time and be sure your students understand these different ways.

Use an actual calendar when teaching the days of the week and the dates of the month. Teach the days of the week and the months of the year, as well as the dates in ordinal numbers (first, second, twentieth, and so on) when teaching the calendar. Make this more fun by asking students when their birthdays are and teaching them major American holidays.

Model the pronunciation of the days of the week and the months for students. An easy way to test comprehension is to say a day or month and have them point to it on the calendar. The following example demonstrates the importance of clear pronunciation. If a student says he will see you on "thirsty" instead of "Thursday", you can see where he may have difficulty making himself understood. But "Thursday" and "thirsty" do sound very much the same, don't they?

With all the survival skills, your students may vary in their level of knowledge and ability. Find out what they know well and what their trouble spots are, and tailor your lessons to meet their needs.

# "Stuff," Realia, or Authentic Materials

*by Altrice Walden*

No matter what you call it, the **real** thing is always better than a substitute when teaching ESL. Some of the best teaching tools aren't books at all, but authentic (real) materials. Try to develop an instinct for gathering interesting "stuff" around you. By relying less on course books and more on authentic materials, students will speak practical English more quickly.

Real materials are far more relevant to your students than just another text. Start introducing real materials to your students from day one. Be creative and put yourself in their shoes and imagine what **you** would find imotivating. The following is a list to get you started thinking about the "real" materials you can use:

- Bills
- Brochures
- Catalogs
- Classified Ads
- Comics
- Coupons
- Forms or Applications
- Information from Clubs and Organizations
- Instructions
- Kids' Pages in the Newspaper
- Labels
- Maps
- Menus
- Newspapers
- Personal Notes, Letters
- Photos
- Postcards
- Recipes
- Schedules, Timetables
- "Stuff " on Holidays
- Telephone Directories

## USING MIRRORS TO HELP WITH PRONUNCIATION

To assist adult ESL students with pronunciation, use a mirror . When working with one or two students at a time, one mirror about 9" x 4" will do. If you have an entire class, you may suggest that they each have an individual hand mirror.

When working with one student, hold the mirror so the student can see just your lips and his or her lips. Students will feel less self conscious if they don't see your eyes. Have the student shape his or her mouth the same as you do to pronounce whatever is giving them difficulty. It may take several tries in a session or many tries over a longer period of time for the student to be able to form the words correctly, but over a period of time the student will make progress.

## TELEPHONE BOOKS

When acquainting students with their new community, a telephone book is loaded with useful information. At the beginning of the book you will find such things as local maps, zip codes, transportation routes, emergency numbers, recreational facilities, etc.

Different phone books are divided up differently, so acquaint your students with the one they will be using. Sometimes general information will be in the middle of the book and other times at the beginning or end. Don't hesitate to use phone books in class to demonstrate this point. Recycling old telephone books and having them on hand for the classroom can be very useful.

## PICTURE FILES

Remember, a picture is worth a thousand words! When teaching ESL students, a picture file is a must. Yes, bringing the "real thing" into the classroom to teach a concept is by far the best, but that is not always feasible. Pictures are definitely a great substitute for actual objects in teaching conversational English.

**Where Do You Find Them?**

Anywhere you can find a photo that portrays the concept you are trying to teach, go for it! Pictures from catalogs, magazines, calendars, advertisements, maps, family photos, etc., all work well. Many publishers have picture files available in their catalogs, but they are a bit pricey. However, if you're short on time with a budget to buy them, do so. Otherwise, collect your own. It will take time, but over a year or two you'll be amazed at how large a file you will have. Ask friends and colleagues to save their magazines for you. Go to used bookstores, garage sales and flea markets. You can often get dozens of publications for very little money. There are several that are especially good for pictures. Here are a few examples: *Smithsonian Magazine, People Magazine, National Geographic, Newsweek, Time, US News and World Report,* and all the catalogs that you get in the mail every month.

When choosing pictures, the simpler and clearer the better. Keep in mind the size audience with which you will be using the picture. If need be, take it to a copy center and have it enlarged so it can be viewed clearly by all the students. When using pictures of people, look for ones that are representative of the diversity of the students.

**How Do You Organize Them?**

In setting up a picture file, there are many different ways you can categorize pictures. For more ideas on this see *The ESL Teacher's Book of Lists* by Jacqueline E. Kress.

**How Do You Preserve Them?**

With lots of use, the pictures will need protection if they are to last. Probably the easiest and least expensive preservation method is to back them with construction paper and laminate them.

## FLASHCARDS

Flashcards may be used for any subject that the student needs to memorize or drill. Whenever possible, turn it into a game. With beginners, start simple with things like vocabulary or colors.

Index cards are a natural to make into flashcards. When making vocabulary cards simply glue a picture of the object on one side of the card and print the word on the opposite side. That way the card can be used for a dual purpose. Does the student know the name of the object and can he or she read the word? Start with the picture first to reinforce recognition and speaking skills.

Index cards can be purchased in many different colors, allowing for color coordination. For example, if the book you currently are working in is green, use green index cards for the flashcards that coordinate with that book. Change card color as you change books. Another idea is to divide the parts of speech by different colors to give students a visual clue when building sentences.

## GAMES WITH FLASHCARDS

The following is a sample of some simple games that can be played using flashcards to learn colors:

**COLOR GAMES** - When the student is learning colors, flashcards are a natural to be used in as many ways as possible. Here are several suggestions:

**Game I: Single Word Answer.** Lay all the flashcards on the table, color side down. The students take turns selecting a card and naming the color.

**Game II: Asking a Question and Answering it in a Complete Sentence.** Lay all the flashcards on the table, color side down. Have one student select a card off the table and show the color to another student while asking: "What color is this?" The other student replies in a complete sentence, "That color is _____." If the student answers correctly in a complete sentence he or she gets a point. If the students are just beginning to learn their colors, have them switch roles after each answer, but if they are pretty proficient in this skill, they should not switch roles until all the cards on the table have been used. Whoever ends up with the most points wins the game.

This can be modified for a larger class by dividing the class into teams and having them stand in lines of two, three or four, depending on the size of the class. One student can be the flashcard monitor calling out the question, and another student can keep score on the chalkboard. To make this more difficult, as students progress, add more colors to the primary set *(e.g., beige, pink, violet).*

If possible, when playing games, get the students up and moving around. The following game does not only that, but it encourages whole brain processing.

**Game III: Circle Game, Passing Left-to-Right or Vice-Versa.** Have the students stand in a circle. At a selected starting point in the circle (student) the instructor hands a color card to this student, instructing the student to take it with his right hand. This student names the color, then switches the card to his left hand, and then the student to his left takes the card with her right hand. She then names the color and passes it on to the next student, switching hands to pass, etc. This continues all the way around the circle. It can be made more difficult by the first student asking: "What color is this?" and the next student answering, "That color is___." If it is a large circle, the instructor can change the color card several times in the circle. This is especially effective if you have students that are having difficulty remembering certain colors.

These games can be adapted to other categories of vocabulary as well.

## HOLIDAYS AND OTHER AMERICAN CUSTOMS

Introduce students to the holidays as they occur. Also, include as many American social customs as possible. Many publishers have materials available to help you in these areas.

# Games, Puzzles and Other Activities

*by Altrice Walden*

To make learning English much easier and a lot more fun you can never have too many games, puzzles or activities. When the students have a chance to get up out of their seats and interact with other students in some game or creative activity it is helping them to learn in a fun relaxing atmosphere. **DO LOTS OF IT!**

There are many books on the market that list activities. *The ESL Teacher's Book of Lists* by Jacqueline Kress (ordering information in this kit) breaks down activities by skills. They are 1) auditory, 2) aural (listening), 3) oral, 4) grammar, and 5) writing.

The following is an example from the book, *Zero Prep, Ready-to-Go Activities for the Language Classroom*, by Laurel Pollard, Natalie Hess and J.H Alta Book Center, 2001:

Paying Compliments:
The purpose of this activity is to help beginning students learn how to give and receive compliments. They will be practicing the present tense and learning the phrases: "I like your…" and "Thank you."

1. Students stand and look carefully at the student on their right. They are to think of a compliment they can give that student using vocabulary they've learned. Suggest such phrases as, "I like your red scarf" or "I like your smile," etc.

2. Students exchange compliments with their partners.

3. They can repeat these to the class, or mingle, giving further compliments as they move around the room.

4. Stop the activity so individuals can share with the class. Be sure to teach new vocabulary as it arises.

## REPRODUCIBLE WORKSHEETS

Time is of the essence in the classroom, and anything that helps save time is welcome. One of these time savers is reproducible worksheets. This means the publishers have given the user permission to reproduce these materials for use in the classroom. When previewing catalogs be aware of the symbols for reproducible materials.

## MUSIC

Music is a great activity for the ESL classroom. It is not only fun, but a change of pace for students. It also is a great way for students to develop their listening skills, to learn more about their new culture, and to learn more words. Think of how much easier it is for you to remember something when it's a simple song or a jingle.

When teaching the alphabet, it helps students to memorize more quickly if they can "sing" the ABC song. That songs works just as well on adults as it does on children. Don't fret that it's too "babyish" for your adults. It's not! If you were learning the alphabet in French or Swahili or whatever language , wouldn't you welcome any little mnemonic device to assist you? Well, guess what? Your students feel the same way.

**Record Your Own**

Although there are recordings available from educational catalogs, you'll probably find the recordings you make yourself most helpful. Choose recordings for which you have the lyrics. Choose songs that can be clearly understood. Use the music for listening exercises.

Before starting a listening session with music, be sure the students know the vocabulary. Ask the students to listen for specific words or phrases in the music. Repeat short segments of the music several times until students can identify the answers to your questions. Then pass out the lyrics to the song at the end of the exercise. Be sure to sing the song if it is a simple jingle or something appropriate for the group such as "Happy Birthday".

Don't be surprised if you have to play a passage many times before the students understand. Ask a question. Play the portion of the music that gives the answer. Stop the music. Ask the question again. Gradually the students will begin to understand the procedure.

Start with easy short songs for beginners and get progressively harder. Don't forget to teach any new vocabulary before starting the music. For example, for beginning students, introduce the "ABC Song" when working on the alphabet and "Happy Birthday" when it's someone's birthday. When they are learning parts of the body, teach them a song such as, "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes" and "Hokey Pokey". You get the idea. Get up and sing and dance!

For more advanced students, don't hesitate to use current popular recordings. Just be sure you can get the lyrics for the songs. Some good old stand-bys of folk music from the '60s work well, too. Think of songs that you sing along with on the radio. The Beatles, John Denver, Mamas and the Papas, The Eagles, The Beach Boys, Joan Baez, and Carly Simon are a few that come to mind that have easily understandable lyrics. There are dozens more to choose from.

Remember, national holidays are naturals for teaching about our culture and customs through music. It's one of the many ways to develop students' listening discrimination.

# Flashcards

*by Noura Durkee*

**What They Are:**

Flashcards are small squares of paper, card or index cards on which you have put pictures, words, letters, colors, numbers, or anything else you like. They may be blank on one side or have a picture on one side and a word on the other. They might have a word in English on one side and the translation in the student's native tongue on the other. They might be color-coded (color of card or of ink) by parts of speech, all verbs being yellow, for example. They may be in sets, such as twenty cards of fruits and vegetables, or buildings, or people working, or pieces of furniture. You might have two pairs of sets so students can work together in various ways with them. They are a super way to memorize vocabulary. If you have enough of them you can use them to build sentences, or word combinations, on the desktops. They are versatile tools which are a particular help if you have a big class with no assistant or a multi-level class that needs a lot of different things going on at the same time.

**Where You Get Them:**

Some books, such as the, *Listening and Speaking Activity Book* accompanying the *New Oxford Picture Dictionary*, have sets of them in the back for free to copy. You can make good cards from everyday magazines and newspapers, old cookbooks, National Geographic magazines, etc. Make a habit of stopping at garage sales and picking over their old magazines and children's books, etc. for this purpose. After you go to all the work of making them, it's a good idea to have them laminated either through your school or at the local copier. The process isn't very expensive, especially if you use big sheets. Lay out all the cards with about a quarter inch between them, and after they are laminated, cut them out. Remember to keep a supply of envelopes, rubber bands or folders with good pockets so you don't lose them later.

**How To Use Them:**

There are many ways to use flash cards. Here are a few:

1. A single student or a pair or small group can use a set of cards to learn vocabulary. They can have just pictures OR pictures with words on the back, so the person holding the card for the other(s) can see and correct OR one set of pictures and one of words that the students match up.

2. They can be the names of things all over the classroom which the students have to take around and put in the right places.

3. You can make a big grid with squares the size of the cards, and play lots of games with it. Here are a few:

    a. Have two students face each other across a desktop with a big book or manila folder upright between them so they can't see. One student lays out a pattern of cards to fill his or her grid. The other student has copies of the same cards, and tries to identify the pattern and lay out the same one by asking questions. This can be done in different ways: the student with the cards laid out can describe the card in square one, two and so on, or, the student with no cards laid out can ask if the apple is square one, and get yes/no answers or a description of where the apple is, such as "the third square from the left in the third row." It's kind of like the game of Battleship. It's great for teaching directions, left, right and so on, and the process demands that the students talk to each other.

    b. Bingo: number the squares in the grid. The teacher or a student can call out the number.

    c. Print words on the grid and have students cover them with appropriate pictures.

4. Memory: put two identical sets of cards face down and mixed up on the table or, use one set of pictures and one of the words they match. Students take turns picking up a card, turning it over in place, and trying to pick the one that matches it. If a pair is found, the student gets another turn. If not, the cards are turned face down again in the same place. The trick is to keep the cards in their same places and to be sure all students get to see each card that is turned over.

5. Students write something descriptive about themselves on an index card. Take all the cards, mix them up, hand them out at random and the students have to get up and start asking one another questions until they find the person who wrote the sentence they have. A variation of this is to write two parts of a sentence on two cards such as: "John went to the beach and/ he found some shells." Students then find the corresponding part of their sentence.

6. Use several index cards to write down different words, parts of speech, concepts, or noun groups. Have pairs or small groups sort them out by kind and then make sentences with them on the tabletop.

7. Write a sentence on the top of a card that could be the beginning of a story or conversation. The student takes the card and completes the story or conversation.

8. Write a conversation, one sentence to each card. Mix them up. Students have to put the cards in order on the desktop or using sticky tack, on the board. If they are beginners, be careful to make the sentences relate to each other sequentially. There will always be several ways to do it, and they can be quite funny.

# One Way to Use Cloze Exercises

*by Noura Durkee*

**What It Is:**
A cloze exercise may be a paragraph or group of sentences written on the board from which you remove, gradually, word after word. The text can be written in chalk or pen on appropriate boards or even done with pieces of cardboard and sticky tack. There is a technical way to use the cloze by counting exact numbers of words, but it may be used in a more intuitive way.

This cloze is a wonderful teaching tool. It makes people stretch their brains, and can be very funny. It is a simple and effective way to memorize both vocabulary and sentence structure, and works in harmony with many other techniques. It's a way of doing the old drill without drilling. It is a particularly good way to round off a lesson, wake up a class, or summarize what you have been trying to do without anyone quite realizing what you are doing. Here are a few possibilities.

1. **With pictures:** hold up a picture or a series of pictures which tell a story. Choose pictures with a lot of action in them. Using few words yourself, elicit from the class all the words they know that can be found in the illustration. Make lists of these on the board, separating verbs, modifiers and nouns. If you have a student who can write well enough to do it, have a student make the lists. (This is always true for any board work). After the class runs out of vocabulary, have them try to describe what is going on in the picture. Together they will piece together some kind of sentence. Write it on the board. Get from them another sentence. Write it. Keep going until you have a fairly big paragraph, five or six sentences at least, filling maybe 7-8 long lines on the blackboard. Write neatly; the placement of words on a straight line is important.

2. **From text:** take a good paragraph from something you are reading or something that they can nearly read, that has vocabulary or structures you want to teach. Write it or have it written on the board. A conversation with idioms you are trying to teach is useful.

3. **From student writing:** if your students can write a little, give them a topic to write about; they may do this in pairs if you like, and get from each two or three good sentences. Write them up so that the content is connected; otherwise they are too hard to remember. Depending on the level of the class, you may want to have the group as a whole correct them as you write them up on the board.

4. **From poetry:** pick a poem that suits the level and content you want, with a few selected words for them to learn, and write it on the board.

**How To Do It:**
1. First, work on reading the paragraph, sentences, or poem. You can read it together a few times, trying to establish a common rhythm. Then different members of the class can read it through; be sure everyone can pronounce the words and knows what they mean.

2. Second, erase about every ninth word. Replace the word with a line so everyone remembers it was there. Don't tell the students what you are doing; it's more fun.

3. Then read the text as a group again, letting the students remember the words that are erased and fill them in verbally.

4. Depending on the group, you can have one individual read it, and keep going as long as he or she doesn't make a mistake. When they do, someone else takes over.

5. Erase about every fifth or sixth word of what is left. Remember to replace words with lines.

6. Repeat reading again, letting the students remember the words. Don't write anything...leave all the blanks.

7. Erase the middle word of each remaining group of words...read again. By this time the class is very amused and anxious to remember.

8. Continue until there are no words, or only a few, remaining, along with the periods, commas etc. See if they can still read it. Usually they can, or if only a few can, they become heroes.

# Using Poetry

*by Noura Durkee*

*(Much of the material in this section reflects the thinking of Helena Devereux and Kate Rosenfield, who presented their research on "Poetry in the Classroom" at the VAILL Conference, Radford University, July 23, 1997. Many thanks.)*

**Why Poetry?**

Poems are useful teaching tools for both beginners and more advanced students. For beginners, they provide a simple and effective way to learn words. The method of rhyme and repetition has been used for many centuries in many different cultures to teach children both words and concepts. Short poems can be read easily in a class period. They usually have several layers of meaning, so with adult students they offer a way to introduce more complex use of language in different forms.

**Uses of Poetry in the Classroom**:

Simple poems can be read aloud. Their meanings can be discussed, and students find that such discussion brings the class together and allows people to express opinions they might otherwise never say. The teacher, by asking questions, can get the students to begin to talk about their own feelings. It is good to choose poems that have some direct connection to their lives, such as the samples included here. Memorizing a poem is much easier than memorizing a piece of prose, and can give the student a grand sense of accomplishment besides filling his or her head with English. Poetry shows the students that language goes far beyond dictionary usage. It can introduce them to kinds of English they might otherwise seldom meet, English that is not necessarily commercial or practical.

**Translation of Poetry**:

Songs and rhymes from the students' childhoods are another way to bring meaning into the learning process. This can be done with intermediate or advanced students. Simple English poems can translate back into their language. Finding "just the right word" to express something may lead into research, lots of conversation with other students, and increased language learning, besides finding the word itself, which will probably never be forgotten.

**Questions for Discussion** may hinge on a word or general content. Here are a few samples:

1. Do you think the poem is funny?
2. What thoughts did you have while you were reading the poem?
3. Did the poem make you think of some experience you have had?
4. Do you think you would enjoy talking to this poet if you could?
5. What is your favorite line in this poem? Why?

**Examples:** on the next two pages you will find some examples of poems that would be appropriate for using with your students.

***Oscar the Janitor***
**by Oscar Anderson**

Oscar keeps the school clean
He polishes up and scrubs
He sweeps away the crumbs
And washes away the mud.
He shines each door and window
Dusts each table and chair
So that you stay all clean
Whenever you sit there.

Smiling as he's working
He makes the building shine
For the busy little feet
That move like yours and mine.

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***Nobody's Heroes***
**by M.R. Appell**

three weeks unemployed
sitting at home
warm & comfortable
when i suddenly
out of the blue
get this job
out on a school roof
wet snow blowing
cold & thick
across the landscape
working with tar
& crushed stone
on a roofing crew
for just above
minimum wage.

come the end
of the day
we ride in the back
of the open truck
through the centre
of town
like battle weary soldiers
but there are no women & children
lining the streets
cheering & waving & throwing kisses
for we are nobody's heroes.

(Reprinted by permission of the author. This and other poems are printed in *Paperwork: Contemporary Poems from the Job*, Tom Wayman, ed. 1991. Harbour Publishing.)

***Madam and the Rent Man***
**by Langston Hughes**

The rent man knocked.
He said, Howdy-do?
I said, What
Can I do for you?
He said, You know
Your rent is due.

I said, Listen
Before I'd pay
I'd go to Hades
And rot away!

The sink is broke,
The water don't run,
And you ain't done a thing
You promised to've done.

Back window's cracked,
Kitchen floor squeaks,
There's rats in the cellar,
And the attic leaks.

He said, Madam,
It's not up to me.
I'm just the agent,
Don't you see?

I said, Naturally,
You pass the buck.
If it's money you want
You're out of luck.

He said, Madam,
I ain't pleased!
I said, Neither am I.

So we agrees!

(Reprinted from *Selected Poems of Langston Hughes*. 1983. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, p. 204.)

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# Using Music in the Adult ESL Classroom

Kristin Lems, National-Louis Univeristy

Music can be used in the adult English as a second language (ESL) classroom to create a learning environment; to build listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing skills; to increase vocabulary; and to expand cultural knowledge. This digest looks briefly at research and offers strategies for using music in the adult ESL classroom.

## Research

Neurologists have found that musical and language processing occur in the same area of the brain, and there appear to be parallels in how musical and linguistic syntax are processed (Maess & Koelsch, 2001). In one study, college students demonstrated improved short-term spatial reasoning ability after listening to Mozart. This was dubbed the "Mozart effect" in the popular press (Rauscher, Shaw, & Ky, 1993).

Adult learners in South Africa, exposed to instrumental music during an intensive English course, showed benefits in language learning (Puhl, 1989). Many educators report success using instrumental music as a warm up and relaxation tool, as a background for other activities, and as the inspiration for writing activities (Eken, 1996).

## Using Songs in Instruction

Most classroom music activities focus on lyrics. Educator Tim Murphey conducted an analysis of the lyrics of a large corpus of pop songs and found that they have several features that help second-language learners: They contain common, short words and many personal pronouns (94% of the songs had a first person, I, referent and are written at about a fifth-grade level); the language is conversational (imperatives and questions made up 25% of the sentences in the corpus); time and place are usually imprecise (except for some folk ballads); the lyrics are often sung at a slower rate than words are spoken with more pauses between utterances; and there is repetition of vocabulary and structures. These factors allow learners to understand and relate to the songs (Murphey, 1992). A further benefit of pop song lyrics is that their meanings are fluid, and, like poetry, allow for many different interpretations (Moi, 1994). Following are strategies to use with songs.

### *Listening and Oral Activities*

Songs contextually introduce the features of supra-segmentals (how rhythm, stress, and intonation affect the pronunciation of English in context). Through songs, students discover the natural stretching and compacting of the stream of English speech. For example, the reduction of the auxiliary *have* to the sound /uv/ can be heard in the song by Toni Braxton "You've Been Wrong for So Long" (2000). Similarly, the change of word final *t* + word initial *y* to /ch/ can be heard in a line from the Tracy Chapman Song "All that You Have Is Your Soul" (1989), where the singer says, "Don't you eat of a bitter fruit." Moriya (1988) points out the value of using songs for pronunciation practice with Asian learners because of the many phonemic differences between Asian languages and English. However, students from any language background can benefit from a choral or individual reading of the lyrics of the songs mentioned above, practicing the natural reductions that occur in spoken English.

Students may summarize orally the action or theme of a song or give oral presentations about a song or musician, playing musical selections for the class. To involve the whole class, students can fill out response sheets about each presentation, answering questions about the featured topic, something new they learned, and something they enjoyed.

### *Reading and Writing Activities*

Students can fill in the blanks before, during, or after listening to a song, and then check to see whether their word choices made sense semantically, even if they did not pick the exact word used. This helps build the important skill of forming hypotheses based on context (predicting). This activity, called cloze, is usually created by deleting words at predetermined intervals, e.g., every 5th or 7th word. However, words can be deleted instead to practice a target grammar point, such as past tense verbs, prepositions, or compound nouns, or to identify key words (Griffee, 1990). For example, in the popular Enya song "Only Time" (2001), the auxiliary "can" could be omitted. ("Who can say where the road goes, where the day flows, only time. And who can say if your love grows, as your heart chose, only time.")

One popular activity is to cut the lyrics into lines and have students put them in the correct order as they listen to the song. This can be done individually or in small groups. It may be necessary to play the song several times. After the lines of the song have been put in order, the song can be played once more as students read or sing along. Alternatively, the class can be divided into teams with identical sets of strips and compete to see which group can put the strips in the correct order first.

For short songs, students can work in small groups to write the words of a song. The process of putting the lyrics together as a group involves making decisions about word order, verb tense, and parts of speech. It also builds the teamwork skills so important to the workplace and community. When the lyric sheet is handed out, the groups can compare what they heard and wrote with the actual words.

Adult students enjoy writing responses to songs, either in class or at home. Possible responses include topics comparing music in the students' homeland with music in the United States. This assignment draws upon the knowledge and experiences that adult ESL learners bring to language learning and provides a known context for comparing and contrasting, often a difficult skill for beginning writers.

Many songs tell a story, and these stories can be rewritten or retold to practice narrative or summarizing skills or direct and reported speech. Students can also complete a writing prompt or answer a question from the point of view of the narrator or other characters in a song. For example, the Nancy Wilson song, "Guess Who I Saw Today" (1960) is sung by a wife catching her husband having a romantic lunch with another woman. The prompt could require the students to respond to the accusations in writing, saying what the husband might say.

### *Vocabulary Building Activities*

Pop songs are written to be easily understood and enjoyed. As discussed above, they tend to use high frequency lyrics that have emotional content. This makes them strong candidates for word study or for reinforcing words already learned through written means. If a series of songs is to be used, students can be paired and given a song to teach the class.

However, the songs may also have idioms in them that might be difficult to explain, depending on the level of the students. For example, Cat Stevens' rendition of "Morning Has Broken" (1975) may appear initially to be a solid intermediate-level song that practices the present perfect tense. On closer examination, the expression "morning has broken" can be confusing to English language learners and may need to be discussed prior to listening to the song.

### *Cultural Knowledge Activities*

Songs can be used in discussions of culture. They are a rich mine of information about human relations, ethics, customs, history, humor, and regional and cultural differences. A song can be part of a unit that also contains poems, video footage, or still photographs. Recordings of freedom songs from the civil rights movement can be a powerful accompaniment to watching Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech on video, for example.

## Selecting Music

Songs should be carefully selected for the adult ESL classroom. Lems (1996) and Poppleton (2001), make the following suggestions:

Song lyrics should be clear and loud, not submerged in the instrumental music.

The vocabulary load for the song should be appropriate to the proficiency level. For example, Led Zepplin's "Stairway to Heaven" (1971)-with its vivid imagery and possibilities for multiple interpretations-might be successful with an advanced-level class. With other learners, however, its fast pace, obscure references, and lack of repetition could prove troublesome, as could the word inversion in lines such as, "There walks a lady we all know."

Songs should be pre-screened for potentially problematic content, such as explicit language, references to violent acts or sex, or inappropriate religious allusions.

Griffee (1990) recommends using short, slow songs for beginning-level students and discusses activities such as creating song word puzzles, drawing a song, or showing related pictures. With higher levels, he suggests using songs that tell stories, moving toward short, fast songs, and finally, longer, fast songs that have fewer high frequency vocabulary items.

Finding copies of song lyrics is not difficult. Many are available on the Internet, and many recordings contain lyric sheets. Beatles' songs such as "Yesterday" (1965) and "In My Life" (1966) have clear, direct lyrics and a timeless quality that make them appropriate with adult English language learners. Because teachers will show care and effort when presenting songs they are especially fond of, their favorites are also good. Finally, students are often strongly motivated to learn the lyrics of a new pop song or an old favorite they have heard and never understood, so their choices for classroom music should not be overlooked.

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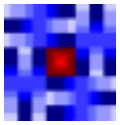

# SECTION E

## MANAGING THE CLASSROOM: HOW DO I MEET THE CHALLENGE?

1. The Multi-level Class
2. Working with Students with Special Needs
3. Using Volunteers in an ESL Program
4. Evaluating your teaching

# 1. The Multi-Level Class

*by Mary Ray*

All classes are multi-level. No two students are at the same level in all four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing). Adult students come to our classes with a great variety of skills, not only because of their formal language training, but also because of their native language background. Students often enter our classes at different times throughout the school year. The teacher needs to be able to accommodate each student at his or her level whenever he or she enters.

The following materials may be helpful in dealing with classes made up of students at varying levels of language development.

**ORGANIZATION PLAN FOR A MULTI-LEVEL CLASS**

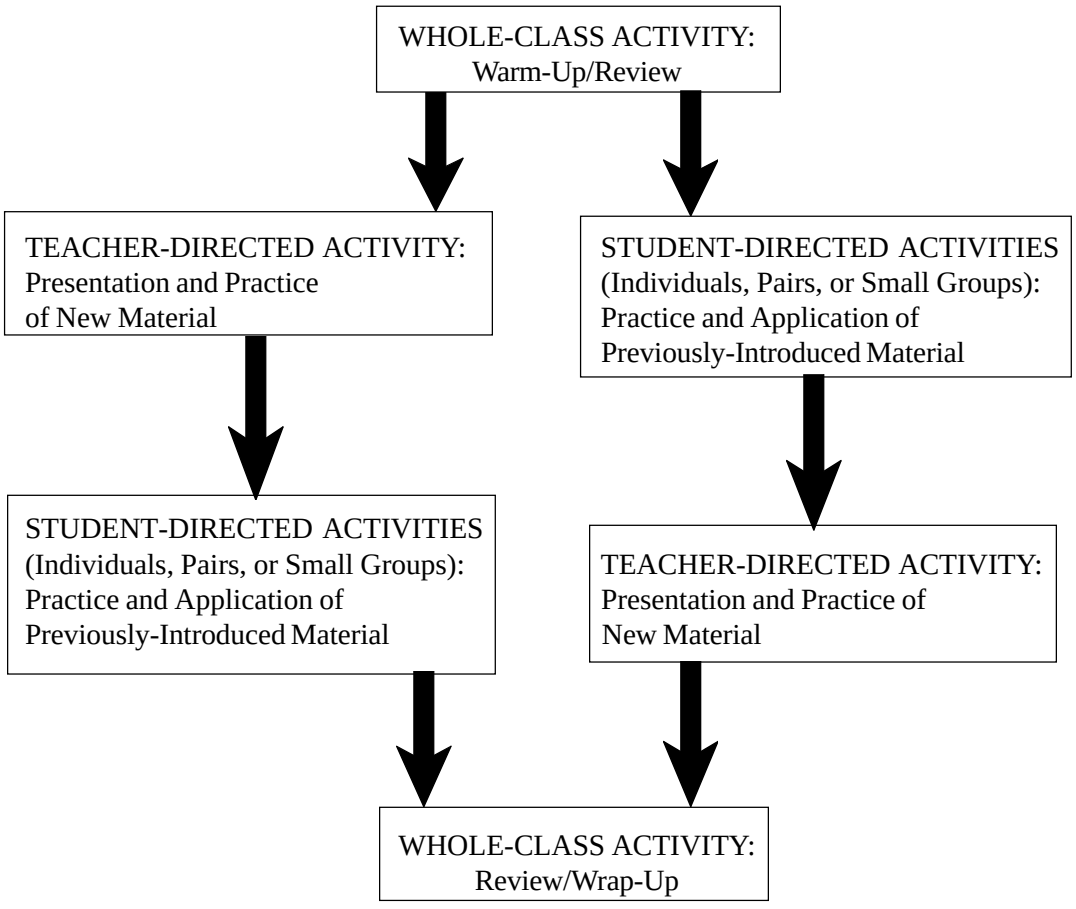


Chart developed by Catherine Porter

# Teaching Multilevel Adult ESL Classes

by Cathy C. Shank and Lynda R. Terrill
Arlington Education and Employment Program, Virginia
ERIC Digest, May 1995

In multilevel adult English as a second language (ESL) classes, teachers are challenged to use a variety of materials, activities, and techniques to engage the interest of the learners and assist them in their educational goals. This digest recommends ways to choose and organize content for multilevel classes; it explains grouping strategies; it discusses a self-access component, independent work for individual learners; and it offers suggestions for managing the classes.

## THE MULTILEVEL CLASS

Teachers use the term *multilevel* to identify any group of learners who differ from one another in one or more significant ways. Arguably, every class is multilevel because learners begin with varying degrees of competence and then progress at different rates in each of the language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Bell & Burnaby, 1984; Santopietro, 1991; Wrigley & Guth, 1992). However, in many adult ESL classes, there are even more variables that affect the levels within the class. Some programs (generally because of funding constraints, learner scheduling difficulties, number of learners, and program logistics) place learners of all levels, from beginning to advanced, in a single class. Often such classes include speakers of many native languages, some that use the roman alphabet, some that do not. Learners may have varying degrees of literacy in their first language as well as in English (Bell, 1991; Santopietro, 1991; Wrigley & Guth, 1992). Other factors that add to diversity in the classroom and to rate of progress in learning English are the type and amount of a learner's previous education; the learning style preference; learner expectations of appropriate classroom activities; and the culture, religion, sex, and age of each learner (Guglielmino & Burrichter, 1987).

## NEEDS ASSESSMENT

To ensure some success for all learners in the multilevel classroom, teachers must determine what each learner needs and wants to learn. This is accomplished through ongoing needs assessment that includes both standardized tests and alternative assessment, one-on-one interviews with learners, group discussions, and learner observation (Alexander, 1993; Holt, 1995; Isserlis, 1992; Wrigley & Guth, 1992). Throughout the needs assessment process, it is important that adult learners are actively involved in choosing the direction and content of their learning (Auerbach, 1992; Wrigley & Guth, 1992). Techniques for selecting the content or themes of class activities might include whole or small group brainstorming and prioritizing activities, and documentation and prioritization of individual learner goals ("I need English for..."). (See Auerbach, 1992 for additional suggestions on using learner themes.)

## PLANNING FOR THE MULTILEVEL CLASS

Planning for multilevel classes requires the ability to juggle many different elements as teachers must provide activities that address the learning styles, skill levels, and specific learning objectives of each individual (Bell & Burnaby, 1984; Wrigley & Guth, 1992). Teachers can use a variety of techniques and grouping strategies and a selection of self-access materials to help all learners be successful, comfortable, and productive for at least a portion of each class time. The planning is time-consuming and the classroom management is exhausting. However, the alternative to this effort (planning and using activities that meet the needs of only those learners whose skills fall somewhere in the middle) will frustrate those with lower skills, and bore the more advanced learners (Boyd & Boyd, 1989; Wrigley & Guth, 1992).

When planning and teaching the multilevel ESL class, as with any adult ESL class, the teacher must remember that learner perceptions of what constitutes sound language learning may not match those of the teacher. The teacher's enthusiasm and goodwill can usually encourage learners who resist unfamiliar and non-traditional classroom activities to participate fully in the class. However, where there is a mismatch between learner and teacher perceptions of useful activities, teachers should be prepared to include activities that meet learner

expectations (Wrigley & Guth, 1992). For example, a story developed from a language experience approach (LEA) activity (Taylor, 1992) could be a source for grammatical drills or for pronunciation exercises.

## GROUPING STRATEGIES

The use of grouping strategies can form the basis for the multilevel class as teachers mix and match groups, pair learners, and allow time for individual or solo activities during each class period (Bell, 1991; Berry & Williams, 1992).

Certain factors should also be considered in setting up group and pair activities, including differences in age, social background, country of origin, and educational background, as well as English ability. Some learners might not be comfortable in groups with other learners they consider to be more prominent or of higher status. And some men may resist being in groups where women are the leaders. Although the teacher can often encourage reluctant learners to try new activities, sensitivity to potential difficulties arising from group and pair work is necessary. Class discussions of cultural and personal differences in learning styles and interaction patterns may help overcome initial resistance (Wrigley & Guth, 1992).

- *Whole Group* activities are appropriate initially for beginning a new class and regularly for daily warm-up time. They can focus the entire group on a theme that later involves various individual and small group tasks. The whole group can participate in a class project to create a finished product (such as a book, bulletin board, or video), where each learner completes a part of the task based on individual abilities and interests (Bell, 1991). Other initial whole group activities that lend themselves to follow-up activities at various difficulty levels include reading comic strips or photo stories; listening to audiotapes or viewing videotapes; taking field trips; learning songs; and brainstorming on topics of interest.
- *Small Group* work provides opportunities for learners to use their language skills and is often less intimidating than whole group work. Small groups can be set up according to interest or ability, and need not be equal in size or permanent (Bell & Burnaby, 1984).

Heterogeneous groups are made up of learners who have disparate skills. Cross-ability grouping allows stronger learners to help others and maximizes complementary learner strengths (Bell, 1991). Activities suitable for cross-ability groups are jigsaw activities; board games; and creating posters, lists, art, and multimedia projects.

Homogeneous groups are made up of learners who have roughly equal skills (for example, all are literate or are orally fluent). Activities often suitable for like-ability groups are problem-solving, sequencing, and process writing.

- *Pairs of learners* working together have the greatest opportunity to use communicative skills. Like-ability pairs succeed when partners' roles are interchangeable or equally difficult (Bell, 1991). Activities for homogeneous pairs include information gap (where the assignment can only be completed through sharing of the different information given each learner), dialogues, role plays, and pair interviews.

Cross-ability pairs work best when partners are given different roles and heavier demands are placed on the more proficient learner (Bell, 1991). Some examples are LEA stories where one dictates and one transcribes, interviews where one questions and one answers, and role plays where one learner has a larger role than the other.

## USING SELF-ACCESS MATERIALS

When learners are doing independent or solo activities in the multilevel classroom, using self-access materials can enable them to take responsibility for choosing work appropriate to their individual levels and interests (Bell, 1991; Berry & Williams, 1992). A self-access component includes activities from all skill areas as well as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation exercises. With self-access materials, each task is set up so that learners need minimal, if any, assistance from the teacher to accomplish the activity. Directions are clear and answers (when applicable) are provided on the back of the activity allowing learners to informally evaluate

their own work without teacher intervention (Bell, 1991). When used regularly in the classroom, self-access time can foster a relaxed environment where learners decide how and when to interact with one another, with their teacher, and with English.

Teachers need not have their own rooms to set up self-access corners; a box of materials can travel with the teacher to workplace sites, community centers, or church basements. The following are some materials to include in the self-access collection: art supplies such as scissors, markers, crayons, pens, pencils, paints, paper in various sizes, types, and colors, glue, tape, stapler, stencils, stamps, and magazines for collages, *and* directions for projects (e.g., draw pictures of the native country, draw a calendar and put in holidays, draw the U.S. map); crossword puzzles; articles and books for a range of reading levels; partner dialogues, in envelopes, with directions; information gaps; scrambled sentences; interview questions (with tape recorder and blank tape); writing tasks for individuals, pairs, or groups; board games and puzzles; review materials from topics, structures, and functions covered in class; contact assignments such as drawing a map of the neighborhood or telephoning for information; high interest videos and taped radio segments with teacher-made activities; and computer software programs to choose from.

## MANAGING THE MULTILEVEL CLASSROOM

Planning for the multilevel class must also include strategies for managing the group, pair, and individual activities. The teacher may work with one small group at a time while the other learners or groups of learners are engaged in independent work (Berry & Williams, 1992). Some teachers manage the various groupings by enlisting a volunteer to work with one group while the teacher works with others (Santopietro, 1991). Learners can also act as peer tutors or peer group leaders (Bell, 1991). Again, as was true with grouping and pairing strategies, in choosing peer group tutors and leaders, teacher sensitivity to learner expectations, to learning styles, and to personal and cultural issues is paramount.

## CONCLUSION

Teaching multilevel adult ESL learners is a challenge that requires great skill and sensitivity. Teachers whose planning reflects knowledge of their learners' different language abilities, culture, educational background, classroom expectations, and preferred learning styles can help adults learning English as a second language to be partners in their own education. Through use of versatile grouping strategies and self-access materials, teachers can manage a multilevel adult ESL class where all learners will experience success.

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Refugee Education Guide
Adult Education Series #13

**Grouping**

**Peer Tutoring**

**Small Group Activities**

**Volunteers**

**Performance Objectives**

**Resource Labs**

**Language Experience Stories**

**Strip Stories**

**Cloze Exercises**

# Teaching ESL in a Multilevel Classroom

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# TEACHING ESL IN A MULTILEVEL CLASSROOM

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# Introduction

Multilevel classes have been a reality in foreign language courses for some time. The limited literature on the topic cites attrition, limited enrollments, and scheduling problems as the culprits responsible for such a situation. Although this may be true, many language teachers also contend that there is no such thing as a truly **homogeneous** language class: each class is made up of individuals who bring with them different backgrounds, different abilities, and different needs. Thus, in principle, we can say that all language classes are "multilevel" in one way or another.

This is probably true of all ESL classes, but particularly of adult ESL classes. Most adults have work and family obligations which take first priority in their daily schedules; thus, the ESL class in which they enroll is often the class which best fits their time schedule or is closest to home, and is not always the class which best suits their level of language proficiency. Moreover, adult refugee ESL programs are often mandated to serve all refugees who sign up for instruction, whether or not there is a place in the appropriate class. All this results in large classes consisting of students with different ethnic backgrounds and a wide range of language needs. In other words, the multilevel classroom situation is quite typical in an adult ESL setting; and the problem is further compounded by a variety of other factors which contributes to the heterogeneity of the class.

By gathering information and insights from the literature, interviewing teachers, and observing classes, we have produced this guide to aid teachers in dealing with the problems which plague multilevel, heterogeneous classrooms. Section I contains a description and discussion of the factors which contribute to the existence of multilevel and/or heterogeneous classes, and Section II outlines some practical approaches and techniques for dealing with the situations described in the first section.

## I. Factors to be Considered

A multilevel class is traditionally defined as a single class in which there are students of various levels of language proficiency. Yet, as mentioned earlier, **no** class consists of students who all have exactly the same level of proficiency, which leads to the usual practice of "teaching towards the middle" or aiming the instructional content at the largest number of students. However, if the students have an extremely wide range of language abilities or needs, or if no more than two or three students can be considered to be at roughly the same level, the usual teaching strategies will only serve to frustrate the class.

Four major factors that contribute to multilevel ESL are *open entry-open exit* programs, the grouping of *literate and non-literate* students in the same class, wide *age differences* in the same class, and the mixing of *different cultural groups*. Each is discussed in more detail below.

### A. Open entry-open exit

Nowhere is this problem more apparent than in an **open entry-open exit** ESL program, which has been, and still is, quite common in adult education centers. In its purest form, an open entry-open exit program is operated just as its name implies: students may enter the program at any time, given there is physical space in the classroom, and may leave just as suddenly. Although there are usually testing procedures to place the student according to level, there may only be a limited number of existing classes (and therefore, "levels"). Moreover,

since students may enter at any time, others who might have been at the same level as the entering student several weeks ago, may now be more advanced due to several weeks of instruction. It is difficult to compensate for this "teaching effect" on the existing class when a new student enters. Even in a modified open entry-open exit program (where students can enter only at specified times) the problem exists; new students are likely to be less advanced than those already in the class.

Although an open entry-open exit system offers some advantages from a programmatic point of view (e.g. no waiting list, full classes, individual or small group testing, student mobility), it is often an exasperating situation for both teachers and students. Faced with a constantly changing number of students, high rates of absenteeism (common in adult classes), and students with different abilities and different goals, teachers need to continually readjust goals and re-establish group rapport, which is often bewildering and frustrating to the students.

This situation seems to call for a departure from traditional teacher-centered strategies to free the teacher to concentrate his/her energies where they could be more beneficial. These strategies may include grouping students for peer tutoring or small group activities, the use of independent teaching modules, or the use of specific language activities which allow students to work separately or together at their own level. Each of these will be discussed in Section II.

## B. Literate and non-literate

As more and more non-literate adults (many of them refugees) enroll for ESL instruction, the placing of first language **literate and non-literate** students in the same class has become the most recently contributing factor to the multilevel situation. Due to the fact that in most placement procedures there is no test for native language literacy, it is not always readily apparent which students are literate, semi-literate, or non-literate in their native language. As a result, teachers are often ill-prepared to deal with the instructional problems these differences in literacy skills will create.

Differences in literacy skills often derive from differences in educational backgrounds. More educated students will possess more literacy skills, and as such will not only feel comfortable and have strategies for learning in a classroom situation, but also have the means (literacy skills) for learning. For example, it is much easier to remember and practice a particular language point if you can write it down for review later. Students with literacy skills can take advantage of visual cues (in addition to aural cues) for learning. Therefore, although the students may all be at the same low level of oral English proficiency initially, differences in literacy skills will yield different rates of learning, creating a multilevel situation almost spontaneously.

Even though you may separate those who can read in English from those who cannot in order to teach ESL/literacy skills, there will still be great differences in the progress of those who cannot read in a Roman alphabetic language and those who cannot read in **any** language. In any case, many adult ESL programs do not find it feasible to establish a separate ESL/literacy class due to such reasons as the small number of students in need of such instruction, the lack of appropriate materials, the lack of expertise, and/or the shortage of classroom space.

Yet, whether or not literacy skills are specifically taught, it is still quite possible to offer ESL instruction to these students, as long as activities and materials are employed which allow the students to use and develop the skills they already possess. More specific suggestions and descriptions will be given in Section II.

## C. Age

The factor of **age** also contributes to a multilevel class, especially if a wide age span exists. Although a program may be termed "adult ESL", students in one class often range from 17 to 65 years of age. The younger students, less threatened by the learning situation and less constrained by societal roles, usually progress more rapidly than the older ones.

If the younger students are allowed to dominate and set the pace of instruction for the entire class, problems of a sensitive cultural nature may arise. These problems can be especially acute if members of the same family (e.g. grandfather, father, son), constitute the age span in the classroom. The teacher must strive to preserve the natural roles in the classroom, while meeting the instructional needs of the students.

Although this is never easy, some simple classroom management techniques may suffice. For example, the teacher may assign older students the role of taking attendance, handing out papers, or collecting homework; or the teacher may give older students the opportunity to answer first. Techniques such as these, in addition to instructional techniques discussed in Section II, may prove quite fruitful.

## D. Divergent cultural (ethnic) groups

A fourth factor which gives rise to multilevel classes is the presence **of divergent cultural (or ethnic) groups** in the same class, the norm for ESL classes. These group differences, which may surface as a natural antagonism between cultural groups, may also encompass geographical (urban vs. rural) and gender-role (male vs. female) differences both within and between ethnic groups. These differences can serve to compound the difficulties in managing and teaching a multilevel class.

Students from urban and rural backgrounds not only will require different contexts for learning, but will also need encouragement to become contributing members of the class, each in their own right. Experience tells us that students with urban backgrounds are more sophisticated and usually more educated. Thus, there is a tendency for them to be more verbal, dominating. Yet, it is the teacher's responsibility to help **all** the students to be participating members of the class. Both males and females should be encouraged to contribute equally to the benefit of the entire class. Choice of classroom activities will help in these aims.

The natural antagonism between groups will always cause some friction, but the problem will be made more acute if one specific group turns out to be more proficient in English than the other. Again, all must be encouraged to be important, contributing members of the class, and a common ground must be found. One teacher reported that, after several uncomfortable weeks, the common ground on which her students could unite was the fact that they had all fled communist regimes. Therefore, a short anti-communist discussion served to rid the class of much of its antagonistic feelings.

# II. Approaches and Techniques for Teaching in a Multilevel Class

## A. Ice Breakers

A good class ambience is very important in helping to decrease any existing antagonism and feelings of inferiority on the part of the weaker students. Therefore, successful management of multilevel classrooms usually calls for at least initial and final whole group activities, if not periodic whole group sessions, in order to foster the atmosphere necessary for later small group cooperation. In fact, many practitioners alternate individual or small group activities (lasting from ten to thirty minutes) throughout the class period. Other practitioners begin with the

whole group (for presentation) and gradually divide the class into smaller and smaller groups as the tasks become more individualized. In order to maintain the class unit some whole class activities need to be interspersed with the smaller group sessions.

Review exercises, during which stronger students will automatically help the weaker ones (often in their native language), may foster class unity. In addition, initial ice-breakers and game activities such as the following encourage students to interact and help create good class rapport.

1) Teacher cuts up paper of different colors into different shapes, making sure there are at least two of each shape in each color. The shapes are randomly distributed, and the students pin the pieces of paper to their shirts. Students must then find at least one other student who is "like" (either in shape or color) him/her, and find out his/her name and/or country of origin.
2) Similar to number 1 above, students are instructed to find someone like him/herself in
   - physical attributes (i.e. color of eyes, hair, etc.)
   - dress (i.e. type of clothing and color)
   - occupation

   Students must then explain to others how they are alike.
3) Pictures of animals or common objects are pinned to each student's back. Students must then ask others for clues in order to find out "What am I?"

These are just a few of the kinds of activities or games that can be utilized with multilevel classes. Some ESL resource books devoted to these types of activities are listed for your convenience in Appendix A at the end of this guide.

## B. Grouping

One often-used approach to grouping students is according to similar skill abilities. For example, students with higher reading levels are given a specific reading assignment (with questions to be checked by the teacher later), while the teacher works to develop reading or even basic literacy skills with another group. Or, students who are more fluent are assigned to interview each other (with a set of specific questions to answer) while the teacher practices a dialogue of similar content (i.e. personal information) with the less verbal students.

In contrast, the grouping of students of different abilities can also be an effective practice, since it is then possible to emphasize each student's strengths; thus, all feel they have something to contribute. This can be done in two ways.

***1) Peer Tutoring***. By this term we mean that a student who possesses a certain knowledge (e.g. of the Roman alphabet) teaches another student who needs to learn that particular item. It is particularly useful to use this type of pairing when literates and non-literates are in the same class. The peer tutor can facilitate the learner's practice of letter formation and reading of simple sight words (in the form of a matching exercise). Especially able peer tutors may even create some of their own materials so that the tutoring session becomes a learning situation for tutors as well as tutees.

However, if peer tutoring is to be an effective tool, it is important that tutoring situations not always be "one-way". This means that the student who is the tutor should not always have that role, just as the learner should not always be kept in his/her role; roles should be reversed. The tutee can teach another student what he/she has just mastered. Knowing that he/she will soon be placed in the tutor's role, the learner will pay closer attention, which can result in faster progress. Teaching will also serve to reinforce what the tutee has just learned.

In the case that the tutee is an especially slow learner, he/she can, for example, be given the job of introducing a new student to the class and familiarizing that student with the classroom routine.

***2) Small Group Activities***. A common approach to small group work is the pairing of students. The main advantage of pairing is that it is fast and easy to move two desks to form the pair; the main drawback is that one student of the pair will tend to dominate. Therefore, some teachers place students in odd-numbered groups of three or five to minimize the chances that a single student will dominate the group. Forming such odd-numbered groups may be noisy and initially chaotic, but once the students learn what is expected of them, groups can be formed quite efficiently.

When forming these groups the teacher may mix students of different abilities, giving each student a specified tasks to perform. For example, after having practiced a dialogue as a whole group, students can be divided into threes, and one of the group given one part of the dialogue. That student reads it, another student (who may or may not be literate) provides the other part orally, and the third person writes down the other part of the dialogue, which can later be compared with what was provided orally. Or, for example, after having practiced a dialogue, a strip story consisting of both pictures and sentences may be given. One student puts the sentences in sequence, another puts the pictures in sequence, and the third matches the sentences with the pictures. Again, at least one member of the group need not be literate.

Some of these activities may be repeated, rotating tasks. By the third time, the weakest of the group may have learned to perform the harder tasks.

## C. Aides and volunteers

Having an aide may be a luxury most ABE/ESL teachers can only dream about. Even those who have this luxury, learn that it is initially just another time-consuming task for the teacher. Aides must be given at least some training and attention by the teacher if they are to be effective; yet, it can be a time investment worth making.

Aides and volunteers may be used to teach some basic literacy skills to the few who need them to catch up to the others in Book I. Or, they may be used to monitor group or individual reading and writing activities of the more advanced students. Or, they may be used to fill in the forms or make the phone calls that the low-level students invariably ask the teacher to do for them. Whatever the task, it is important that aides and volunteers (like students) know exactly what is expected of them.

If there are no aides or volunteers available to your class at this time, and you want one, there are many possibilities you can pursue: former students, retired people, or students in teacher training programs. You may wish to use a former, successful student who has a couple of hours a week to spare. Using a former student has its advantages: that person has bilingual capacity, and can empathize fully with the students. You may also wish to approach local retired teachers' organizations or other community groups. Retired teachers and older people usually have the time, patience, and skills that younger people do not have. Still another possibility is a local institution of higher education which offers a teacher training program. Prospective teachers may welcome the opportunity for experience; you might try to arrange with the director of the ESL teacher training program for students to receive some credit (such as one credit for independent study) for their effort. Many graduates of teacher-training programs often complain that they are not adequately prepared for situations such as multilevel classes: this can be your selling point.

## D. Independent modules

Treating each class session as an independent unit is a popular practice among teachers in open entry-open exit program; a lot of repetition of vocabulary and structure is built into each lesson, so continuing students are given reinforcement and entering students (or those who are absent) do not feel lost.

The use of independent modules rather than the grouping of students is also popular with teachers whose students are at the lower levels. Lower level students may have difficulty in groups because they do not yet have the confidence to be self-directing. This is also true of some ethnic groups who expect a teacher-dominated classroom, and may not do well in self-directed groups. Thus, independent modules may be preferable to grouping. Two methods for developing independent modules are the use of topic or situation and specific performance objectives.

***1) Topic***. One way to present a topic or situation is through a dialogue. For example, a simple dialogue based on a phone call, a visit to the doctor, a bus ride, or a trip to the grocery store, may be chosen. The teacher can then practice the dialogue material by directing questions of varying difficulty to individual students. For example, a lower-level student may be asked: "What's the man's name?" and a higher level student may be asked an open-ended question, such as: "What happened?" or "What is the man's problem?"

Another way to present a situation is through pictures, which can be used to evoke language. Again, students are asked to respond at their level of ability. Higher level students may be asked to write answers on the board. In addition, pictures on a particular topic may be used for language experience stories, to be discussed in Section II.F.

Another use of topic may be termed "theme" teaching, whereby the whole class works on a project, and each student is given a specific assignment. For example, the theme may be Medicine: Folk vs. Modern. Some higher level students may be assigned to read an article and give an oral report on it. Other students may be asked to bring in a traditional medicine (from their home country) and explain its application to the class; still others can be asked to make comparison charts of medications (using pictures and/or words) based on the information gathered by the others. The point here is to capitalize on each of the students' abilities and talents so all are contributing to the whole.

***2) Identifying Performance Objectives***. Another way of presenting independent units is by identifying what it is that you want the class to **do** with language, and teaching towards that objective. For example, you may want the students to be able to ask for directions. Lower level students should be able to fulfill this objective by asking: "Where is the post office?" whereas higher level students may be expected to ask: "How do I get to the post office?" For more detailed information on how to construct this type of lesson or curriculum, see Refugee Education Guide, Adult Education Series #12: "Teaching ESL to Competencies."

## E. Resource labs and some possible activities

Another popular way of managing a multilevel class is by organizing a resource lab in the classroom in order to personalize instruction. A resource lab may consist of learning stations where students may choose exercises and activities to practice individual skills. For example, there may be a reading table where students can choose activities which range from simple vocabulary identification and matching exercises to reading passages or stories with related questions or exercises. Other stations which can be established include a writing center, a listening/pronunciation table equipped with a tape recorder, earphones, and various tapes, and a grammar practice table. The following are a list of suggested activities that can be developed for each station.

***Reading***

1. For sight word practice, write vocabulary items on large cards with a picture denoting the meaning on the back. Students must read the word, and then can check the meaning by looking at the picture on the back.
2. Have sheets of matching exercises consisting of traffic and street signs and their corresponding meaning.
3. For survival reading comprehension practice, have a selection of actual or adapted classified ads, numbered by difficulty. Write a set of multiple choice questions for each ad.
4. Have a selection of short stories, numbered by difficulty. Write a set of comprehension questions for each story.
5. For sequencing, cut up a short reading selection into paragraphs, tape the paragraphs to different colored large index cards. Have the students identify the order to paragraphs. (Answer key will be by colors.)

***Writing***

1. For vocabulary and sentence writing practice, write a word on an index card, and put these cards into meaning-related sets of five. Have the students write a sentence with each word.
2. For pre-literacy skills practice, have a set of alphabet cards. Have non-literate students practice copying the letters.
3. For functional communication practice, have a set of one-sided dialogues. Students must write the other part.
4. Have a folder of picture sequences (e.g. cartoons). Students choose one sequence, and write a description of what is happening.
5. For letter-writing practice, have folders of sample business and personal letters. On index cards write instructions such as: "You are writing to the X Publishing Company to request a certain book." Students choose an index card and write a letter, following the directions indicated on the card. They may refer to the sample letters in the folder.

***Grammar***

1. For practice with troublesome grammatical structures, have an assortment of dittoed multiple choice and fill-in-the-blank exercises on the following areas:
    - verb tenses
    - prepositions
    - question formation
    - adjective placement
    - modals

    Prepare an answer key for self checking.
2. On index cards write a sentence or question, with each word on a separate card. On the back number each word card in sequence. The students must put the cards in the correct word order. They can check themselves by looking at the numbers on the back. Keep each set of cards in a rubber band or in an envelope.

***Listening/Pronunciation***

Have at least one cassette player, with several earphone jacks. The following types of tapes can be made available:

1. Dictations of:
    - letters of the alphabet (for non-literates)
    - survival vocabulary (for low-level students)
    - sentences drawn from previously-practiced dialogues

- sound contrasts, i.e., are the following sounds (or words) the same or different?

2. Get the commercial tapes which accompany the text or workbook you are using.
3. Record short stories on tape. Depending on the students' level of ability, assign the following accompanying exercises.
   - a set of comprehension questions
   - the text of the story with words missing. Students must fill in the missing words as they listen to the tape.
4. Make tapes of sentences of words students have had trouble pronouncing. Leave space for them to repeat.

Developing these various individualized learning activities will take time; a resource lab cannot be established overnight. Yet, once these activities and exercises are developed, they can be used over and over again: thus, the time will have been well spent. However, many teachers may not have enough time to develop all the activities and exercises needed for a resource lab. Fortunately, there are many and varied ESL materials available commercially which are devoted to review exercises, games and learning activities. Many of the activities for a resource lab can be drawn from these sources.

The learning stations of a resource lab allow the students to work individually at their own pace in the needed skill area, and free the teacher to be where he/she is most needed. However, in order for resource labs to be most effective, they should not be overutilized. In addition, answer sheets for all exercises and activities should be provided (when possible) so students can check their own work. If there are no answer keys available for certain exercises, the teacher (or classroom aide) should plan some time to review the students' work.

## F. Other activities

***1) Language Experience Stories***. Widely used as a method for teaching children to read in their native language, language experience stories can also be quite effectively used with adults to practice not only reading skills but all language skills. The advantage of language experience stories is that they are student-generated materials, and as such hold the students' interest and are never too difficult nor too easy: students will only provide stories that are within their language capabilities. There are many variations of language experience stories: the following is one of them.

a. Teacher brings in a large picture which evokes a story or situation that students may find of interest.
b. By going around the room, each student gets the opportunity to contribute to the story. (Students' level of ability is not a problem: for example, if shown a picture of a refugee, one student may say, "He is a refugee", while another might say, "There are many refugees from around the world who have come to the U.S.")
c. On the board, or preferably on newsprint with a dark marker, the teacher records what each student dictates. The teacher does not correct at this point, as this would only serve to discourage and inhibit students. The students are expressing what they want to say in a way they know how to say it. However, it is perfectly acceptable if other students make corrections (which they are bound to do, especially in a multilevel class).
d. When the story is finished, the teacher reads it aloud to the students, and has them repeat it.
e. Certain words may be pointed out for special practice and repetition.
f. The teacher later edits the story for corrections (perhaps at home), and types it up to make a copy for each

student.

g. The story is distributed during the following class, and reviewed in its final form.
h. Students keep a folder of all their language experience stories, and thus always have reading material which they are capable of reading.

Other variations include doing individual language experience stories with each student. (Aides may be very helpful in this capacity.) Language experience stories may be based on students' experiences (e.g. field trips, vacations, celebrations), rather than on a picture.

Many kinds of activities can be created from the student-generated stories. For example, sentence strips can be made, and the order of the story can be rearranged. Sentences can then be cut up and rearranged to practice grammatical structures and word order. The vocabulary generated by the students can be worked into new dialogues. And the stories can be made into cloze exercises. A wonderful versatile technique, the language experience story helps to unify a multilevel situation.

***2) Strip Stories***. In general, strip stories are short stories or dialogues, cut into sentence strips. Students then arrange the strips in logical order. Non-literate students can use pictures instead of words to make a strip story. Strip stories as a teaching technique can be developed for use at all levels. As mentioned earlier, strip stories may be used in small group activities, or they may be developed for use in the resource lab; they can even be adapted for individual use, with students working on similar versions of the same story, but at their own level of ability.

For example, the class is presented with a short dialogue about city buses. The dialogue may go like this:

a. Does this bus go to the East Side Shopping Mall?
b. Yes, but you have to transfer to the #20 bus at Broadway.
a. How far is that?
b. Five more stops.
a. How much is that?
b. Sixty cents, exact change, please.
a. Thank you. Can I have a transfer?

After practicing this orally, non-literate students may be given an illustration of, for example, a woman talking to the bus driver, 60 cents change, a bus transfer, bus numbered 20, and a picture of the shopping center. They can order these pictures and repeat what they know of the dialogue. Other students can be given the dialogue, in the form of sentence strips and asked to sequence them. Still others may be given a version which includes reported speech and perhaps more details (e.g. "How much is that?" she asked, looking in her purse for money). Thus, all students are working on the same topic at their own level. However, the teacher (and/or aide) must make sure that there is time to go over the assignment with each student, or at least provide an answer key.

***3) Cloze Exercises***. Cloze exercises are also a useful technique, since they help students develop several types of language skills (e.g. vocabulary, grammar, reading). In addition, similar versions of the same cloze exercise can be developed for use at different levels. Some of the exercises may even be based on dialogue or strip stories previously presented. Below is an example of three related cloze exercises, all based on an employment dialogue.

*Version A* (for newly and semi-literates):

a. _____ have a __ob interview __omorrow.

b. Great. What __ime?

a. At _____ o'clock.

*Version B* (based directly on dialogue practiced orally previously):

a. I _____ a job _____ tomorrow.

b. Great. What's the _____?

a. Receptionist.

b. What does _____ receptionist do?

a. Answer _____.

b. What _____?

a. _____ messages.

*Version C* (dialogue adapted to a narrative):

Mary _____ a job _____ tomorrow _____ one o'clock in the afternoon. She wants _____ be a receptionist. She likes _____ answer _____ and she can _____ clear messages.

In Version A, students are instructed to supply the missing letter. They have already practiced the dialogue orally and have seen it written. Now they can concentrate on writing the individual letters that help form the shape of the word. Version B is to help literate students recall the vocabulary and structure of the dialogue. Version C is the dialogue adapted to narrative form, for more advanced students who can handle the challenge of something new. It is modified cloze passage since there are more deletions than usual. However, students have practiced most of the material orally, enabling them to successfully complete what could be a very difficult task. Which students will receive which version is decided by the teacher; however, if one version is either too easy or too difficult, another version should be given instead.

## Conclusion

As all teachers know, flexibility in the classroom is always needed, and a multilevel classroom is no exception. It is our hope that some of the suggestions made in this guide will help teachers to provide for that flexibility. The suggestions made here are not meant to be a foolproof methodology for daily use in the multilevel class. However, by choosing from a variety of activities, the severity of the multilevel "problem" can be lessened. Rather than wishing the "problem" would go away, it is only by accepting the challenge that teachers can help to reduce the feelings of frustration and failure that are inherent in the multilevel situation.

## Appendix A
## Selected Readings on the Topic

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# Appendix B
# Activity and Game Resources

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# Project-Based Learning for Adult English Language Learners

ERIC Digest

by Donna Moss, Arlington (VA) Education and Employment Program (REEP)
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Project-based learning is an instructional approach that contextualizes learning by presenting learners with problems to solve or products to develop. For example, learners may research adult education resources in their community and create a handbook to share with other language learners in their program, or they might interview local employers and then create a bar graph mapping the employers, responses to questions about qualities they look for in employees. This digest provides a rationale for using project-based learning with adult English language learners, describes the process, and gives examples of how the staff of an adult English as a second language (ESL) program have used project-based learning with their adult learners at varying levels of English proficiency.

## Rationale for Project-based Learning

Project-based learning functions as a bridge between using English in class and using English in real life situations outside of class (Fried-Booth, 1997). It does this by placing learners in situations that require authentic use of language in order to communicate (e.g., being part of a team or interviewing others). When learners work in pairs or in teams, they find they need skills to plan, organize, negotiate, make their points, and arrive at a consensus about issues such as what tasks to perform, who will be responsible for each task, and how information will be researched and presented. These skills have been identified by learners as important for living successful lives (Stein, 1995) and by employers as necessary in a high-performance workplace (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991). Because of the collaborative nature of project work, development of these skills occurs even among learners at low levels of language proficiency. Within the group work integral to projects, individuals' strengths and preferred ways of learning (e.g., by reading, writing, listening, or speaking) strengthen the work of the team as a whole (Lawrence, 1997).

## The Process of Project-based Work

The basic phases found in most projects include selecting a topic, making plans, researching, developing products, and sharing results with others (Wrigley, 1998). However, because project-based learning hinges on group effort, establishing a trusting, cooperative relationship before embarking on a full-fledged project is also necessary. Activities that engage learners in communication tasks and in peer- and self-evaluation help create the proper classroom environment. Information gap activities (where the assignment can only be completed through sharing of the different information given each learner), learner-to-learner interviews, role plays, simulations, field trips, contact assignments outside of class, and process writing with peers prepare learners for project work.

*Selecting Topics*

A project should reflect the interests and concerns of the learners. Teachers can begin determining project topics at the start of an instructional cycle by conducting a class needs assessment to identify topic areas and skills to be developed. As the teacher and learners talk about projects and get to know each other, new topics and issues may come to light that are appropriate for project learning. A project may focus on the objectives of one instructional unit, such as a unit on health, or it may span several units. It may take place during a unit or be a culminating final event. Whatever the project, learners need to be in on the decision making from the beginning (Moss, 1998).

*Making Plans and Doing Research*

Once a topic is selected, learners work together to plan the project, conduct research, and develop their products. Learners with low language proficiency or little experience working as part of a team may require structure and support throughout the project. Pre-project activities that introduce problem-solving strategies, language for negotiation, and methods for developing plans are useful. Learners may also need practice in specific language skills to complete project tasks. For example, learners using interviews as an information gathering technique may need instruction and practice in constructing and asking questions as well as in taking notes.

*Sharing Results with Others*

Project results can be shared in a number of ways. Oral presentations can accompany written products within the classroom or in other classes within the program. Project products can also be disseminated in the larger community, as in the case of English language learners from an adult program in New York City, whose project culminated in the creation and management of a cafe and catering business. (Lawrence, 1997; Wrigley, 1998).

## Assessing Project-based Work

Project-based work lends itself well to evaluation of both employability skills and language skills. Introducing learners to self-evaluation and peer evaluation prior to embarking on a large project is advisable. Learners can evaluate themselves and each other through role plays, learner-to-learner interviews, and writing activities. They can become familiar with completing evaluation forms related to general class activities, and they can write about their learning in weekly journals where they reflect on what they learned, how they felt about their learning, and what they need to continue to work on in the future. They can even idenitify what should be evaluated and suggest how to do it.

Assessment can be done by teachers, peers, or oneself. Teachers can observe the skills and knowledge that learners use and the ways they use language during the project. Learners can reflect on their own work and that of their peers, how well the team works, how they feel about their work and progress, and what skills and knowledge they are gaining. Reflecting on work, checking progress, and identifying areas of strength and weakness are part of the learning process. Assessment can also be done through small-group discussion with guided questions. What did your classmates do very well in the project? Was there anything that needed improvement? What? Why? The ability to identify or label the learning that is taking place builds lifelong learning skills. Questionnaires, checklists, or essays can help learners do this by inviting them to reflect critically on the skills and knowledge they are gaining. In a New York City initiative using project-based learning with adult English language learners called Expanding Capacity in ESOL programs (EXCAP), assessment occurred daily in dialogue journals, checklists, and portfolios (Lawrence, 1997).

## Examples from the Field

At the Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP) in Virginia, a team of teachers designed and implemented several projects for their students, ranging from literacy level to advanced pre-TOEFL. They developed a framework for projects including learning strategies and affective behaviors that have a positive effect on progress and language learning. These behaviors include risk taking; using technological, human, and material resources; and organizing materials (Van Duzer, 1994). The project followed the four purposes for literacy identified by the Equipped For the Future initiative of the National Institute for Literacy—to access information, voice ideas and opinions, act independently, and continue learning throughout life (Stein, 1995). The two projects described below, developed by REEP staff, illustrate the range and complexity of project work.

In one project, parents in a family literacy program and their elementary school children created a coloring and activity book of community information for families living in their neighborhood in Arlington, Virginia. All of the parents and children took part in brainstorming sessions. They selected information, text, and graphics topics for each page of the book and contributed to the creation of the pages. Parents in the intermediate level class managed the production of the book and researched the topics selected (e.g., immunization, school). The adult literacy class located addresses and phone numbers of local agencies that provide needed services and illustrated a shopping guide of local stores they liked. They also designed a page of emergency telephone numbers. The children worked on drawings and activity pages for children. When the book was completed, the families presented it to the principal of the local elementary school. Some of the families participated in a "Meet the Authors" day at the local library.

Parents and children alike kept their work in portfolios and completed assessment questionnaires. They shared their evaluations with each other and explained why they evaluated themselves the way they did. The teachers evaluated the parents on language skills, team participation, and successful completion of tasks.

In another project, learners in an advanced intensive ESL class worked in pairs to present a thirty-minute lesson to other classes in the program. They worked collaboratively to determine the needs of their audience, interview teachers, choose topics, conduct research, prepare lessons, practice, offer evaluations to other teams during the rehearsal phase, present their lessons, and evaluate the effort. Topics ranged from ways to get rid of cockroaches to how the local government works.

Before the lesson planning began, learners identified lesson objectives and evaluation criteria. They shared ideas on what makes a presentation successful, considering both language and presentation skills. The evaluation criteria used for feedback on rehearsals as well as for final evaluations include the following:

- Introduces self and the topic clearly, respectfully, and completely.
- Includes interactive activities in the lesson.
- Speaks in a way that is easy to understand.
- Is responsive to the audience.
- Shows evidence of preparation and practice.
- Shows knowledge of the topic.

In addition, the teachers and learners in the classes receiving the presentations wrote evaluations of the lessons. The presenters also wrote an evaluation essay reflecting on their own work and the value of the project itself.

## Conclusion

Project-based work involves careful planning and flexibility on the part of the teacher. Because of the dynamic nature of this type of learning, not all problems can be anticipated. Moreover, sometimes a project will move forward in a different direction than originally planned. Project work is organic and unique to each class. This makes it exciting, challenging, and meaningful to adult learners.

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## Principles of Project-Based Learning

Project-based learning is characterized by the following principles:

- Builds on previous work;
- Integrates speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills;
- Incorporates collaborative team work, problem solving, negotiating and other interpersonal skills;
- Requires learners to engage in independent work;
- Challenges learners to use English in new and different contexts outside the class;
- Involves learners in choosing the focus of the project and in the planning process;
- Engages learners in acquiring new information that is important to them;
- Leads to clear outcomes; and
- Incorporates self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and teacher evaluation.

## 2. Working with Students with Special Needs

Working with ESL learners can be a very gratifying experience for both student and instructor. However, most ESL professionals will agree that one of the most challenging aspects of their jobs is working with a learner with special physical, emotional, or psychological needs.

Many adult immigrants and refugees may have lived through difficult situations and/or been victimized in their native countries. Others may be very stressed due to their separation from family members or friends. Older adult learners may be confronting diminished hearing or vision abilities. Some students may have an undiagnosed learning disability which accounts for their continued lack of success in meeting learning objectives.

As you work with your learners, it is important to be sensitive to the special needs that they might have and to seek out professional assistance from experts regarding how to identify effectively any of these special needs. Explore the use of teaching techniques that may facilitate the learner's understanding, e.g. use larger font size on worksheets (or enlarge text on the copier) for older learners.

The articles in this section contain suggestions and strategies to help the special needs student have a positive and productive learning experience.

For a complete listing of articles and other resources for working with adult learners with special needs, please consult the National Center for ESL Literacy Education's Resource Collection. This can be found at: http://www.cal.org/ncle/resld.htm This resource collection both provides background materials about learning disabilities from K-12 and adult education and gathers the few resources that directly address adult ESL concerns. While this is not a definitive list of LD materials, it is representative of what is readily available online and in print.

CLEARINGHOUSE
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DIVISION OF ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY WASHINGTON, D.C. 20202-7240

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

**BRIEF**

In FY 1989, Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs funded under the Adult Education Act served over 3.0 million people in adult basic, adult secondary, and English as a second language programs. Each year increasing numbers of adults with learning disabilities are entering and being instructed in both adult education and literacy programs throughout the United States. In an effort to improve these programs, Section 353, Adult Education Act funds have been used for research and development projects at the State level. The following list of twenty-five instructional strategies for adults with learning disabilities have been compiled from these 353 projects:

1. Break down tasks into small increments of learning and present them to the student in a paced, sequential manner.
2. Present a variety of short assignments.
3. Make sure the student has acquired one skill before presenting the next skill in the sequence of learning tasks.
4. Structure assignments for the student and provide frequent feedback about the quality and appropriateness of work completed.
5. Provide activities that allow the student to experience small successes in order to enhance his/her self-concept.
6. Use as many modalities (sight, hearing, speaking, touch) as possible when presenting material. Making information available through different senses helps students to be active learners who use their strongest channels to get information.
7. Capitalize on the student's strengths. For example, if the student is a good listener and can follow oral directions well, present materials orally. Teaching through the student's strengths helps to remediate weak areas.
8. Teach new concepts in as concrete a way as possible. It is often easier for learning disabled students to learn the theory after its practical application.
9. Relate new material to everyday life whenever possible. This can make abstract concepts more understandable.
10. Control the complexity of directions. Many learning disabled students benefit from having directions broken down into steps with one step presented at a time.
11. Consider a nontraditional grading system that reinforces appropriate responses. For example, on a composition, provide two grades: one for content (ideas), the other for grammar and structure.
12 De-emphasize timed tests. Provide additional time for task completion to alleviate pressure.
13. Use a directed-reading approach for all assignments involving reading (social studies, science, etc.). Review new vocabulary. Establish a purpose for reading (e.g., reading to acquire specific information, reading to answer specific questions, etc.). Providing a focus for reading may enhance attention.

14. Limit the teaching of a new vocabulary to words used in a specific lesson or exercise. Simple drawings and large print can clarify definitions in handouts.

15. Help the student to visualize material. The more a student can visualize as well as hear what is presented, the better the material will be understood. Visual aids can include overhead projectors, films, slide projectors, chalkboards, flip charts, computer graphics, and illustrations.

16. Use color whenever possible. Visual impact is even sharper in color and color coding is an aid to learning.

17. Provide opportunities for touching and handling materials that relate to ideas presented. This can strengthen learning.

18. Whenever possible, make announcements of changes in the schedule, assignments, or examinations orally and in written form.

19. Speak at an even speed, emphasizing important points. If there are three points, it helps to say, "my first point is...", and "now, the second important point is."

20. Make eye contact frequently. This is important for maintaining attention and encouraging participation.

21. Encourage students to sit in the front of the classroom where they can hear well and have a clear view of the chalkboard.

22. Some students are particularly self-conscious about talking in front of groups. Ask these students questions with short answers, or start the answer, trying not to interrupt once the student begins to respond.

23. If possible, provide the student an opportunity to repeat verbally what has been taught as a check for accuracy. This can take place during the lesson or after class.

24. It is especially important to pay attention to self-concept enhancement when working with learning disabled adults. Opportunities for student success should be maximized.

25. Instructors should encourage students to obtain the help of the following:

    a. Notetakers and/or readers

    b. Tutors

    c. Tape recorders for taping classroom instruction, preparing homework, and taking tests

    d. Typewriters, word processing equipment, calculators, computers, Kurzweil reading machines, and other types of equipment suitable for classwork and homework

    e. Audiocassettes for instruction and test taking

    f. Recorded texts and voice indexing approaches

The twenty-five strategies listed above are not inclusive, but are suggested approaches that can be easily implemented in an adult education/literacy program. We welcome your suggestions for additional strategies that will be helpful in instructing the learning disabled adults.

To learn more about how to improve adult education/literacy programs for adults with learning disabilities, contact your State Directory of Adult Education or William R. Langner, Education Program Specialist, Division of Adult Education and Literacy, 400 Maryland Avenue, S.W., Mary E. Switzer Building, Room 4416, Washington, D.C. 20202-7240, (202) 732-2410.

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# ESL Instruction and Adults With Learning Disabilities

ERIC Digest

by Robin Schwarz, American University, Washington, DC
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Some adult English language learners experience difficulty in sustaining employment and showing progress on assessment measures. This may be due, in part, to learning disabilities. According to the federal Interagency Committee on Learning Disabilities, learning disabilities are disorders "that create difficulty in acquiring and using skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, and reasoning. These disorders can also inhibit mathematical abilities and social interactions" (Brown & Ganzglass, 1998, p. 2). Learning disabilities are generally thought to be caused by a dysfunction in the central nervous system, and people who have learning disabilities are considered to possess average or above-average intelligence (Seattle-King County Private Industry Council, 2000). Little is known about how these disabilities affect the adult learner of English as a second language (ESL).

This digest reviews what is known about adult ESL learners and learning disabilities, suggests ways to identify and assess ESL adults who may have learning disabilities, and offers practical methods for both instruction and teacher training.

## Learning Disabilities in a Second Language

Learners may show learning disabilities in a second language when they do not in their first. A learning disability may be so subtle in a first language that it is masked by an individual's compensatory strategies, e.g., getting general information through the overall context when specific words or concepts are not understood, and substituting known words for words that cause difficulty. These strategies may not be available to the learner in the new language (Ganschow & Sparks, 1993). Sometimes a learning disability does not manifest itself in the learner's first language "because of the systematic structure or transparent nature of his native language versus English" (D. Shewcraft, personal communication, June 2000). For example, a reading disability may be more pronounced in English than in Spanish, where the sound-symbol correspondence system is more predictable.

## Identifying Learning Disabled ESL Adults

It is thought that the percentage of learning disabled students in adult education classes may exceed the percentage in the population as a whole, with some estimates as high as 80% (Seattle-King County Private Industry Council, 2000). Although it is not known if this is true in ESL classes, there is a general sense in the field that it may not be true. Unlike native speakers in adult education programs, many ESL learners were not unsuccessful in their previous educational experience. Rather, they are enrolled in programs to learn to speak, read, and write in a new language. Therefore, care should be taken before labeling ESL learners as learning disabled.

Being identified as learning disabled can be stigmatizing for anyone-adult, child, native English speaker, or ESL learner (McCormick, 1991). Educators stress the importance of weighing the advantages of identifying adult learners as learning disabled (planning instruction to help learners, making them eligible for services, and so forth) against the possible stigma of the label (Almanza, Singleton, & Terrill, 1995/96).

Before testing and labeling an adult ESL student as learning disabled, other reasons for lack of expected progress should be considered. Educators (Adkins, Sample, & Birman, 1999; Almanza, Singleton, & Terrill, 1995/96; Grognet, 1997; Schwarz & Burt, 1995) have noted the following reasons for slow progress in learning English:

- Limited academic skills in a learner's native language due to limited previous education
- Lack of effective study habits
- The interference of a learner's native language, particularly if the learner is used to a non-Roman alphabet
- A mismatch between the instructor's teaching style and the learner's expectations of how the class will be conducted
- Stress or trauma that refugees and other immigrants have experienced, causing symptoms such as difficulty in concentration and memory dysfunction
- Sociocultural factors such as age, physical health, social identity, and even diet
- External problems with work, health, and family
- Sporadic attendance
- Lack of practice outside the classroom

These behaviors or problems will most likely affect all learning, whereas a learning disability usually affects only one area of learning.

## Assessing the Learner

The use of standardized testing to identify learning disabilities presents problems. First, instruments designed to diagnose learning disabilities are usually normed on native English speakers, so the results cannot be reliably used with learners whose first language is not English. Second, since the concepts and language being tested may have no direct translation, the validity of tests translated into the native language is questionable. Third, most tests are primarily designed for and normed on younger students and may not be suitable for adults.

No single assessment technique is sufficient to diagnose a learning disability; multiple assessment measures are necessary. Even before an interview or other assessments are administered, instructors should answer the following questions about a learner:

Has the problem persisted over time?
Has the problem resisted normal instruction?
Does the learner show a clear pattern of strengths and weaknesses in class?
Does the learner show a clear pattern of strengths and weaknesses outside of class?
Does the problem interfere with learning or a life activity in some way to a significant degree?

If the responses to these questions are affirmative, there is probably a learning problem that should be looked into more closely. The following are suggestions on how to do this.

- Interview learners. This can provide a variety of useful information, such as educational and language history and social background, the learner's strengths, and the learner's perception on the nature of the suspected problem.

- Collect information about the learner's work. Portfolio assessment, where measurements of learner progress in reading and writing are considered along with attendance data, writing samples, autobiographical information, and work on class assignments, can provide a broad picture of the learner's performance. Keeping a learner portfolio is helpful in documenting the persistence of problems as well as which teaching strategies have worked or not worked.
- Use visual screening and routine hearing tests. What appears to be a learning disability may be due in part to developmental visual problems or correctable auditory problems.

## Instructional Methods and Materials

Learning disabilities affect learning in any language and must therefore be a guiding factor in designing instruction for the adult learner with disabilities. Educators of learning disabled children and adults (Almanza, Singleton, & Terrill, 1995/96; Baca & Cervantes, 1991; Ganschow & Sparks, 1993) give the following suggestions for providing instruction.

- Be highly structured and predictable.
- Teach small amounts of material at one time in sequential steps.
- Include opportunities to use several senses and learning strategies.
- Provide multisensory reviews.
- Recognize and build on learners' strengths and prior knowledge.
- Simplify language but not content.
- Emphasize content words and make concepts accessible through the use of pictures, charts, maps, etc.
- Reinforce main ideas and concepts through rephrasing rather than through verbatim repetition.
- Be aware that learners often can take in information, but may experience difficulty retrieving it and sorting it appropriately.
- Provide a clean, uncluttered, quiet, and well-lit learning environment.

In adult basic education and adult ESL instruction where little time or money is spent on program capacity building through research and teacher training, there are few instructional models to look toward (Burt & Keenan, 1998). However, some programs are developing their own practical guides and disseminating them to a wider audience (Hatt & Nichols, 1995; Shewcraft & Witkop, 1998).

Technology has potential for assisting adult learners with learning disabilities to acquire a second language; computers have proven to be particularly useful (Gerber & Reiff, 1994; Riviere, 1996). In fact, adult ESL learners who have had limited success in learning English report that working one-on-one in the computer lab with a teacher seems more comfortable and productive than being one of many students in a crowded classroom (Almanza, Singleton, & Terrill, 1995/96). Using assistive technology can build self-esteem as well as provide immediate feedback, two things all adult language learners can benefit from.

## Conclusion

Although a learning disability does not effect all areas of learning, it may have a significant impact on the social and work life of the learner. Therefore, the field of adult ESL must intensify its efforts to assist learning disabled adult ESL learners and their teachers. Such efforts require greater and more long-term sources of funding for research, specifically in the areas of assessment and instruction, training, and assistive technology.

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# Learning Disabilities in the Classroom: Strategies for Learning

by Nancy Van Valkenburgh and Janet Gibson

For learning to take place, instruction must be meaningful: students must be able to see how the information being presented relates to their own lives. They must be able to make associations between new information and what they already know. In addition, students must be able to see how new ideas or concepts fit into a broader scheme of knowledge. They must be able to compare and contrast, to generalize, and to fit the new information into some type of organized framework. .0

Teachers must not assume that students with learning disabilities automatically see relationships or make appropriate associations. Because they may lack sufficient experience or background knowledge about a topic or because they fail to employ strategies which enable them to make appropriate associations, many students will see relationships that appear illogical or are quite different from what is expected.

Unfortunately, many adult students with learning disabilities have never learned how to learn. Because they view learning as a passive act of simply absorbing information, they fail to use strategies for learning and remembering. One of our first objectives as teachers is to help these students realize that learning is an ACTIVE process of relating new information to what they already know. They must consciously make associations by comparing and contrasting and categorizing new information. A variety of techniques which help stud0ents to make these associations and to create the necessary frameworks which facilitate the storage and retrieval of information are discussed below.

**Directed questions**

One technique which can help students learn to make conscious associations between new information and what they already know is to ask a series of **directed questions** whenever a new concept is encountered. Students can be taught to ask questions such as the following each time they encounter new information:

What is this part of?
How do I describe it?
What is this similar to?
How is it different?

In this manner they develop a strategy or system for consciously comparing and contrasting information and seeing how it fits into their own base of knowledge and experience. Gradually the teacher's role of asking the questions should fade and students should be encouraged to go through the questioning process independently. As they learn to use strategies such as the directed questioning process, students are more likely (1) to increase their awareness of language and how words relate to each other, (2) to learn to scan consciously for related information whenever new material is presented, and (3) to develop frameworks or systems for storing the information.

**Paraphrasing**

Paraphrasing or restating the major points or concepts of a topic in one's own words is another strategy which can help students organize information into some type of meaningful framework. Paraphrasing requires students to think consciously about the material, to identify what is important, and to organize the information in some manner so that it can be restated. Memory is enhanced not only because the information is consciously organized, but also because the students hear and feel themselves say the information aloud. In addition, when students know they have difficulty receiving or processing information, paraphrasing is an excellent habit to develop for self-correction or verification.

Techniques such as directed questions and paraphrasing which provide a structured approach to processing

information, encourage students to focus on the topic and to relate the new material systematically to what they already know. As they try to fit the information into a broad base of knowledge, students with weak auditory or visual channels of input are often able to use the context to fill in or correct bits of information that may have been missed or improperly received.

**Verbal Mediation**

Another strategy which some students find helpful, particularly when they are trying to remember or learn how to do something, is **verbal mediation** or self-talk. That is, actually talking to oneself through each step of a task. Self-talk requires the student to size up verbally the demands of a task, to identify consciously each step, and to think through or mentally rehearse each step in the proper sequence. This strategy helps students focus their attention on the task and actually provides a system for self-guidance and reinforcement. As with paraphrasing, memory is enhanced because the students hear and feel themselves say the steps aloud.

**Visual Imagery**

While directed questions, paraphrasing, and self-talk use a verbal mode for organizing and storing information, some students may prefer to organize information visually. Consciously creating **visual images** while listening or reading often helps students see relationships and how the parts fit together to make a whole. While words present information step-by-step and sequentially, visualization gives the whole picture at once. In addition, visualization provides another avenue for remembering. Visual images add to or enrich language-related associations and, for some students, information which is stored in visual images may be easier to recall than information stored in words alone. Of course, just as with the verbal techniques, visualization requires conscious effort on the part of the student.

**Mnemonics**

Another type of strategy which students often find helpful is called **mnemonics**. Learning is an active process of fitting new information into an existing framework by making relevant associations. When these associations alone are not enough to evoke memory, mnemonic cures may prove useful. Mnemonics are strategies which involve creating an "artificial" framework by making forced associations between what the student wants to remember and something which is familiar and can be used to evoke or trigger memory later. Some students may find verbal mnemonics such as associating the names of the Great Lakes with the acronym HOMES (where each letter of HOMES stands for one of the Great Lakes, Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, and Superior) or associating the notes on the music scale with "Every Good Boy Does Fine" helpful. Others may find visual mnemonics such as associating pictures with certain words more useful. Often the more bizarre or absurd the associations, the easier they are to remember.

**Loci**

The method of **loci** is another technique based on creating an artificial framework. Some students find this method useful for remembering lists or events, or groups of information in sequence. To use this method, a student creates a visual framework for storing information by memorizing a very familiar and easily imagined location such as the bedroom or kitchen. Then, to store the information for later retrieval the student imagines walking around the room mentally placing items or thoughts to be remembered on the furniture or in the cabinets. To retrieve the information, the student simply imagines retracing his or her steps through this familiar setting, gathering the images from where they were stored. Once a student learns this method, the same storage system can be used over and over for remembering different sets of information. Of course, a student must be good at visualizing for this technique to work.

**VATK**

Commonly associated with the field of learning disabilities are the multi-sensory strategies which combine input from the visual, auditory, tactile and kinesthetic modalities and are referred to as **VATK.** Frequently used for teaching word recognition, phonetic analysis, and spelling, the VATK approach allows the student to see the word, hear the word, and feel it all at the same time, thus provoking associations through the strong as well as the weak channels. When input is received through several modalities, information which is missed or inaccurately received through one channel may be corrected or filled in through other channels. In addition, multisensory approaches such as VATK help students focus their attention on the task itself because these approaches require active involvement on the part of the student. Such active participation is more likely to provoke meaningful associations and enhance memory than are the more passive learning tasks such as listening to a lecture or reading a textbook. There are a number of programs based on the VATK approach; they all involve having the student see the word, say the word, traced the word while saying the letters or sounds, and then repeat the word. The procedure is repeated until the word is committed to memory and the student is able to read or write the word independently. Of course, there will be some students who do not benefit from a multisensory approach. Students who have problems integrating information received through two or more modalities will find a multisensory approach distracting or confusing as the input from one modality actually interferes with the processing of information from another modality.

Depending on the needs of your student and the nature of the material being presented, you may choose strategies which are multisensory and involve both the strong and weak channels for learning or you may use strategies which emphasize the strengths and bypasss the weaknesses. Regardless of your approach, it is important to help students build some type of meaningful framework or system for organizing, storing, and retrieving new information. Only by actively responding to new information, consciously thinking about how the new information fits in with or relates to what the learner already knows, will the student develop the understanding and organization necessary for learning.

*Ms. Van Valkenburgh and Ms. Gibson were formerly on the staff of the Rappahannock Rehabilitation Facility and have worked on a variety of 310 projects concerning learning disabled students.*

## 3. Using Volunteers in an ESL Program

*by Cheryl Fuentes*

Now that the ESL learners have arrived on your doorstep, you are probably asking yourself what you can do to meet their needs. What's the next step? How are you going to help them? A wonderful resource for you is volunteers—members of the community who want to help a newcomer learn English in order to live and work in the United States. Volunteers bring a wealth of resources to you. Perhaps most important of all is that they are motivated and want to help—and you should act on their interest immediately!

Here are some steps to follow and tips for working with volunteers:

**Recruiting volunteers**. Your initial contact is important. Be clear and concise about the goals of your program or class, who you serve, the opportunities for volunteers, and steps to getting involved. Contact the local volunteer office, community groups, or companies to see if they have members or employees who want to volunteer individually or as a group to "adopt" your program as an office/company/group volunteer project. Consider recruiting other students (e.g. those who have exited from your class, advanced students) to assist with newcomers or lower level students.

**Providing an orientation.** Hold an orientation meeting for your new volunteer(s). Inform them about your program (mission, services, students) and if possible, encourage the volunteer to visit a classroom and provide time to "de-brief" the volunteer after the classroom visit. It is also important to explain what you expect from the volunteer and for the volunteer to know who their contact is at your school.

**Training.** An informed and prepared volunteer will be a happy volunteer! Provide appropriate training to your volunteer. Topics may include how to work with adult learners, teaching techniques, special needs, etc. If you do not have the expertise to lead the training sessions, look for outside presenters, i.e. colleagues, long-time volunteers, public school programs, community college or university ESL/linguistics staff, or local, state or national organizations. You may also wish to consult other similar programs to find out if your volunteers can join their training sessions. Training should be on-going and provided at a time convenient for the volunteers.

**Working as a volunteer.** There are many ways that volunteers can contribute to your program, including working as classroom aides or actually teaching a class, preparing materials, assisting in the office, planning field trips, marketing your program, or coordinating your growing volunteer program. As you discuss the volunteer assignment with your new volunteers, consider how their interests and goals can match program needs. Be flexible and offer a variety of options that can meet everyone's needs.

**Staying in touch.** Maintaining communication and contact with your volunteer is very important, especially if you do not see them regularly. Some suggestions for keeping in touch include keeping a log book at the location where your volunteer works to write notes, leaving messages, etc.; posting information on a central bulletin board; or distributing a newsletter or monthly update.

**Saying thank you.** Recognizing your volunteers for their help, expertise, ideas, and time is crucial to keeping them involved. Some (inexpensive) ways to show your appreciation include remembering their names, introducing them to other staff members, saying "thank you", remembering their birthday or anniversary date with you, awarding certificates of appreciation, throwing a potluck in honor of the volunteer, asking for suggestions on improving or developing the program, and providing letters of reference to the volunteer.

**Additional resources:**

"Suggestions for Volunteers Setting Up ESL Programs", compiled by Fairfax County Public Schools Adult ESL, State 353 Grant, June 1993.

Staff Development for ABE and ESL Teachers and Volunteers, Mark Kutner, Pelavin Assoc., ERIC Digest, Sept. 1992.

ESL in Volunteer Based Programs, Paula Schlusberg and Tom Mueller, ERIC Digest1995. (EDO-LE-95-04)

A Guide for the Volunteer Tutor. Biles, J.; and others. Lutheran Children and Family Service: Philadelphia, PA, 1993.

# Suggested Volunteer Activities

1. **One-on-one tutoring**
   a. Pre-reading: A volunteer can take a non-literate student aside and work with directionality, same/different concepts, shape/letter recognition.
   b. Students with good oral skills, but illiterate, or low level reading skills: Such students need extra literacy teaching which the teacher may not have time to provide. Use Laubach teaching methods, the Lingman Literacy Kit, or just practice using whatever materials seem appropriate.
   c. Catch-up: A tutor can help a student who has been absent to catch up with his/her classwork. This might involve only one or two hours. The volunteer may work with a new student to help him/her catch up and become comfortable in the class.
   d. Testing: A volunteer can help the teacher test borderline students in the various competencies, such as TIME, MONEY, FAMILY, WEATHER, etc.

2. **Two or more students/small groups**
   a. Pre-reading: same as above
   b. Alphabet/numbers: matching exercises (upper/lower case, numbers to their value, etc.), sequencing, chain drills.
   c. Literacy: students of similar level can be tutored with Laubach materials.
   d. Literacy and or low level readers can be tutored with specific literacy materials such as
   . Longman Literacy.
   e. Pronunciation and/or phonics for short periods.
   f. Sight words, flash cards, within the competency areas: picture recognition, matching, selecting, inserting, etc.
   g. Syntax: sentence strips and sentence re-ordering.

3.**Large group** (while teacher works with small group or individua).
Keep activities simple, clear and structured.
Suggestions:

Number BINGO, teacher made or commercial
Alphabet BINGO
Word BINGO
Concentration
Prepared CLOZE exercise
A language experience activity (LEA) (i.e. make a sandwich)
Matching pictures and/or words
Book exercises
HANGMAN
TIC TAC TOE (i.e. on the board with words)
Reading, storytelling

4. **Act as the teacher's aide in the classroom**
   a. dialog modelling.
   b. role playing/simulating.
   c. accompanying the class on a field trip.
   d. circulating to help students as needed in class.

# English as a Second Language in Volunteer-Based Programs

by Paula Schlusberg, New Readers Press
Tom Mueller, Laubach Literacy Action
ED 385172. July 1995. ERIC Digest

In many parts of the United States, the demand for adult English as a second language (ESL) instruction outstrips the supply (Fitzgerald, 1995). Proposed and actual legislation at state and federal levels (which includes budget cuts and welfare and immigration reform) is expected to increase this imbalance and to place great strains on adult ESL providers. As programs struggle to provide needed services with shrinking funds, the role of volunteers in teaching adult ESL may be expanded.

ESL programs for adults use volunteers either as auxiliary or primary providers of instruction. When volunteers are auxiliary, they function as bilingual aides, as tutors to provide individualized attention, or as group leaders. Volunteer-based programs, on the other hand, provide all instruction through volunteer tutoring. This digest will focus on volunteer-based ESL instruction, looking at who offers this instruction, what is taught, how instructors are trained, what the benefits and challenges are, and what the future looks like.

## ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDING VOLUNTEER-BASED ESL

The two primary national volunteer organizations providing support to adult ESL programs are Laubach Literacy Action (LLA) and Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA). Other national organizations support volunteer ESL and basic literacy instruction as well. Among them are the National Southern Baptist Convention, the Mormon Church, and the Student Coalition for Action in Literacy Education (SCALE) which uses college students to provide volunteer ESL instruction for adults from the college or surrounding community. Many states (e.g., Virginia, Minnesota, Michigan, Indiana) have literacy councils that coordinate and provide technical assistance to various community-based organizations. At a grass-roots level, ESL instruction is most often provided by independent, self-supporting volunteer-based literacy programs affiliated with one of the national literacy organizations. Many also provide literacy instruction for native English speakers. Other volunteer ESL programs are provided under the auspices of community institutions-libraries, refugee resettlement agencies, YMCAs and YWCAs, religious institutions, housing projects, community centers, and social service agencies.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF VOLUNTEER-BASED ESL INSTRUCTION

Volunteer-based ESL instruction is marked by variety in instructional models used, content and skills taught, approaches and materials used, class settings, and learners served.

### Instructional Models

One-to-one instruction (one tutor working with one learner) was the original model for working with native English-speaking adults learning to read and became the accepted model for ESL as well. It remains popular, in many cases, because it minimizes a tutor's concerns about adequately meeting the variety of needs that a group would present. Increasingly, however, programs are moving to a small-group instruction model, where one instructor works with two to fifteen students. Small-group instruction provides obvious practical benefits but, more importantly, it provides opportunities for activities and approaches (such as problem-solving, collaborative activities, group projects, and other staples of adult ESL instruction) that cannot be implemented in one-to-one situations (Tenenbaum & Strang, 1992).

### Settings

The most common model is one where ESL instructors and learners meet at any one of a variety of community sites: local libraries, religious institutions, housing centers, community centers, schools or businesses. These institutions may run their own volunteer ESL programs or they may only provide space for instructors and learners who are affiliated with one of the national networks. This collaboration between a literacy program and a community institution may make support services such as transportation and on-site childcare available

to the learners. Volunteer programs may also be given space at workplace sites, in residential centers, at correctional institutions, or at learners' homes. These diverse settings make it possible to offer instruction to those who, for financial, medical, psychological, or family reasons, cannot attend school-based programs.

**Learners**

The adults served by volunteer-based programs reflect the diversity of populations seeking ESL instruction throughout the country. In large urban areas, volunteer-based programs are one of many types of programs providing instruction to adult ESL learners; in smaller towns and rural areas, however, volunteer-based programs are often the primary providers of instruction for refugees and immigrants. Individuals in the United States only temporarily-family members of university students, businessmen, or physicians from other countries-also turn to volunteer programs for instruction as do migrant workers whose itinerant lifestyle may preclude admission to programs that require regular attendance.

**Instructional Content**

Volunteer ESL instruction tends to focus on oral skills, although programs also work with learners who are developing initial literacy skills in English. To meet the specific needs of learners (e.g., survival English, citizenship preparation, family literacy), volunteers draw on a wide variety of materials. Some programs encourage the use of a particular core series; others provide a library of materials from which instructors can choose. Although many of their affiliates still follow the more traditional phonics-based approach to reading combined with an audio-lingual approach to oral skills, LLA is increasingly supporting integrated skills instruction through a communicative approach. Similarly, LVA encourages the use of a variety of techniques and approaches, tailoring them to learner needs. Instructors are encouraged to base lessons on authentic materials from the community or on materials provided by learners themselves, such as letters from a child's school, ads, a driver's manual, an immigration form, or work memos. Some programs also provide computer-assisted instruction.

## TRAINING FOR VOLUNTEERS

Although the details of volunteer instructor training differ from program to program, there are general characteristics common to most programs. Instructor training is usually done in small groups, rather than individually, and generally consists of a short pre-service workshop of 10-18 hours. The pre-service workshop typically focuses on practical issues such as effective teaching practices, needs assessment, lesson planning, hands-on peer practice, and materials selection. Theoretical presentations stress characteristics of adult and second language learners, and programs try to develop cross-cultural awareness in their instructors (Friedman & Collier, 1993; Reck, 1991).

Most programs match new instructors with learners immediately after the pre-service training and may not have provision for any type of follow-up mentoring or supervision. However, one current training model shortens the number of preliminary training hours and adds hours of supervised instruction or observation of instruction followed by additional workshop hours to complete the training.

While many programs use experienced volunteers to train new instructor volunteers, some combine volunteer and paid staff trainers. Programs also bring in adult ESL teachers or specialists from local colleges to give presentations on specific topics such as grouping strategies, correction techniques, and assessment activities.

## BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

Volunteer-based programs often serve communities by helping to meet the overflow of demand that adult basic education (ABE) and ESL programs cannot accommodate. In many communities, however, potential ESL learners turn to volunteer-based programs because there is no other program to meet their needs-that is, there is no ESL program that offers instruction at their level of proficiency, at a location they can get to, or on a schedule they can meet, or because they seek more individualized attention or a less traditional form of instruc-

tion. Often volunteers can more easily meet the needs of learners who are hard to place in adult ESL classes, such as those with high conversational but low literacy skills. The attention and encouragement provided by volunteer instructors can help build learner confidence and may be a factor in enabling learners to move on to more formal ESL classes. And, the relationship with the instructor may be one of the most important early contacts the immigrant has with Americans.

Volunteer-based ESL programs and programs with paid instructors confront similar difficulties-limited financial resources, high instructor turnover, lack of training standards, and the lack of a research base in adult education (Kutner, 1992). For volunteer-based programs, the training problems may be intensified if there is no paid, professional staff person to manage and train volunteers who have diverse educational backgrounds and varying degrees of experience teaching ESL. Many well-organized, established programs ease their administrative loads and reduce costs by assigning volunteers to tasks such as fund raising, recruiting volunteer instruc tors and learners, and public relations.

There are drawbacks inherent in the current configuration of most volunteer ESL programs. Instructional contact may be as little as 2-3 hours per week. Since volunteers and their learners often meet in relatively public sites rather than in space dedicated to instruction, instructional materials may be minimal and basic tools such as a blackboard or a tape recorder may not be available. Classes are often open entry, open exit and, like all adult ESL classes, may be multilevel. Finally, when instructors and learners work one-to-one, the learner may feel isolated and may have little opportunity for natural conversation in English. To offset this isolation, some volunteer organizations arrange for groups of learners to gather once a month with their instructors for conversational practice.

## CURRENT TRENDS

Volunteer ESL programs reflect the trend of learner participation and leadership found in basic literacy volunteer programs and ABE or ESL programs. ESL learners are represented on LLA's New Readers Committee and are starting to participate in local and national literacy conferences as well as in the operation of the programs in which they are studying. Programs are making efforts to attract and train instructors from learners' communities and to use former learners as new instructors. Increasingly, volunteers are young and have full-time, professional jobs in other fields. At the same time, there is growing professionalism among volunteer instructors, in seeking continual training and in participating in professional organizations such as Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and its state affiliates.

## CONCLUSION

Volunteer-based programs often make ESL language and literacy instruction available to learners who do not have access to, or perhaps would not benefit from, regular ESL programs. Although quality, on-going instructor training remains an issue, volunteer-based programs are beginning to look more like ESL programs staffed by paid instructors both in the focus on the learner and in the variety of curricula, instructional approaches, grouping strategies, and classroom activities used.

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Reck, D. (1991). Tutoring ESL: A handbook for volunteers. Tacoma, WA: Tacoma Community House. (EDRS No. ED 364 122)

Tenenbaum, E., & Strang, W. (1992). The major national adult literacy volunteer organizations: A descriptive review. Final report. Rockville, MD: Westat. (EDRS No. ED 359 370)

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# A Guide for the Volunteer

Volunteer's Objective:

To assist persons for whom English is a second language in learning or improving their English language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing, in that order, so that they can function in the community. Our curriculum covers life skills topics such as health, housing, transportation, employment, banking, shopping, etc.

- Be a friend: A comfortable and friendly atmosphere for learning should be established. Develop a rapport with students by showing respect and appreciation for their culture.
- Be flexible and patient: Adults have set patterns of learning shaped by previous experiences.
- Be tactful: Positive feedback is encouraging and essential in maintaining the students' confidence.
- Be enthusiastic: Always be optimistic. Encourage the students to overcome the difficulties in learning a new language.

**TIPS**

- Don't be afraid to show interest in your students' lives. This will help establish a good rapport; but use discretion.
- Provide situations in which students do most of the talking. Encourage students to interact with each other.
- Students need time to formulate answers to questions. Allow five to ten seconds between your question and their response.
- Use real language. Speak at a normal rate of speed and not too loudly. Speak clearly. Choose your vocabulary to suit the student's level of language proficiency.
- Appeal to all senses. Hear it, say it, see it, write it. Use visuals and manipulatives. Involve students with a physical response whenever appropriate.
- Don't hesitate to ask for assistance if you don't have an answer. Use a dictionary with the student; explain why even native speakers of English need to use it.
- Don't be reluctant to repeat and review. Repetition is a good tool for language learning.
- Follow the teacher's lesson plan to the best of your ability. Consult with the teacher if you have any questions.
- Report to the teacher what the student has or hasn't accomplished. It is important for the teacher to be kept well informed at all times.

*Adapted from H.E.L.P., Appelson, Miller, Tolhurst.*
*Volunteerism in Adult Ed., Borden*

## 4. Evaluating Your Teaching

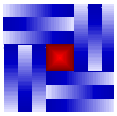
A good ESL instructor continually evaluates his or her teaching to ensure that students are learning effectively. Think of the section below, "Self-Evaluation for the ESL Teacher," as a checklist of key points to remember.

Share your ideas and experiences with others, ask colleagues for suggestions, and seek out opportunities to learn new information. You may want to consider asking a more experienced instructor to observe you and offer suggestions. Above all, it's important that both you and the students have a very positive and meaningful learning experience.

**SELF-EVALUATION FOR THE ESL TEACHER**

| | | Always | Often | Seldom |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | I know my students' names, and I greet each student as he or she enters the room. | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 2. | I provide a comfortable, risk-free environment. | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 3. | My lessons have a purpose, and I make sure my students understand that purpose. | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 4. | I plan my lessons to meet my students' needs and goals. | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 5. | My lessons directly relate to my students' lives. | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 6. | I give my students lots of opportunities to read, write, listen to, and speak English. | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 7. | I use a variety of activities that accommodate different learning styles (visual, aural, oral, kinesthetic). | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 8. | I use a variety of teaching materials (handouts, pictures, audiotapes, charts, objects, etc.). | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 9. | My lesson plans include a warm-up/review, presentation, practice, and application. | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 10. | I make sure my students understand what has been taught before I move on to the next topic. | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 11. | I model activities before asking my students to complete a task. | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 12. | I give positive feedback and encouragement to my students. | 2 | 1 | 0 |

NOTE: If you circled "Always" or "Often" most of the time, you are well on your way to providing a student-centered, interactive learning environment. If you frequently circled "Seldom," you may need to explore ways to involve your students in more communicative and dynamic activities.



# SECTION F

## CHOOSING A CURRICULUM: HOW DO I PUT IT ALL TOGETHER?

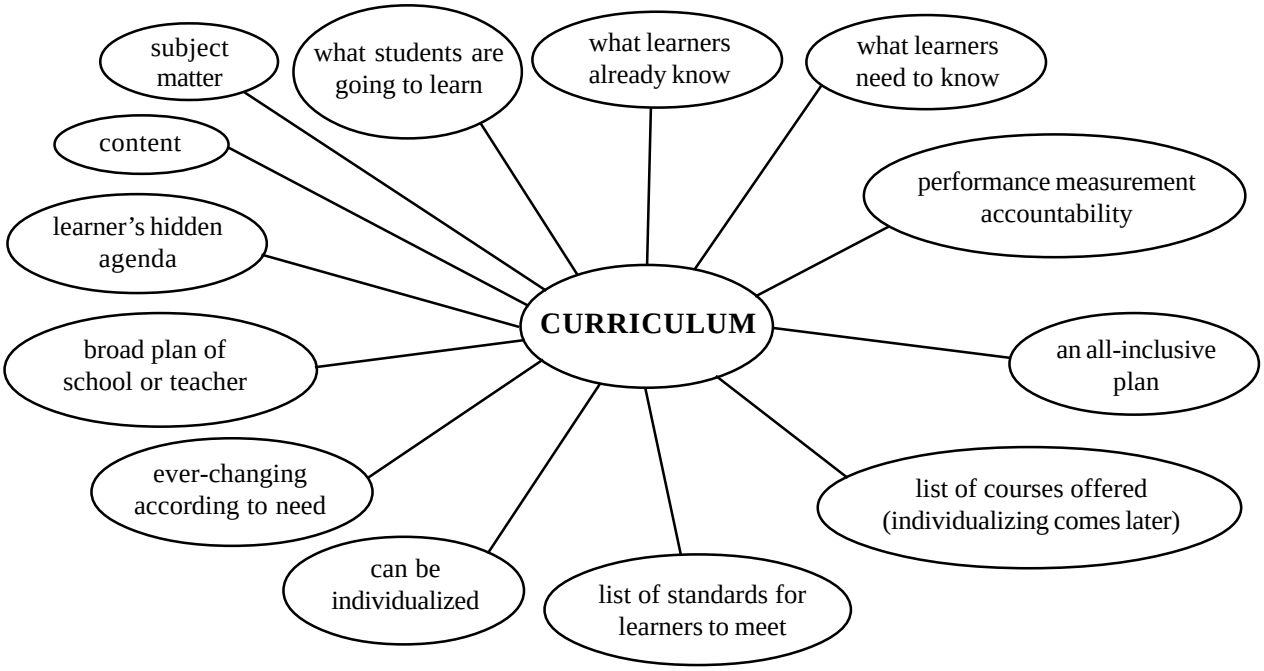
1. Curriculum Overview

2. Curriculum Resources

# 1. Curriculum Overview

*by Debra Tuler*

A curriculum is a plan or guide for instruction. It may also include suggestions for how to use it (such as sample lesson plans, suggested activities, and materials), when to do certain things (such as needs assessment or evaluation), how much time activities might take. There is no one consistent definition of 'curriculum', so included here is a visual of how the term is understood by adult educators:




There are three elements to a curriculum, which in some cases are made explicit and in others are left unarticulated:

a. ***Identified Philosophy*** – our assumptions and philosophy drive how and what we teach
b. ***Purpose*** – what you want students to walk away with, the activities that will get them there (lessons), and how you and they will know (assessment)
c. ***Scope and Sequence*** – students want/need to feel that they are developing skills, and development requires a sequence. Also, they like to have expectations set and made clear from the start, in other words, to understand the scope of what will be covered and expected of them.

Some of the curriculum resources included on the next page have a clearly articulated scope and sequence. Others do not require that you follow the sequence in which they are presented; rather, you can select activities to supplement other materials you are using.

Some curricula require that you be trained or participate in staff development activities before you can use them; others are self-explanatory.

In selecting a curriculum, consider the following:

1. Do I need to be trained before I can use it?
2. Does it include activities and materials that are appropriate for my students, in terms of level, skills addressed, and interest?
3. Can I use it as is, or do I use it as a resource and adapt/develop my own materials from it?

## 2. Curriculum Resources

The curriculum materials listed below are all available through the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center.

**ESL Literacy Kit: Literacy Exercises for Adult Beginning Readers**

Developed by Marie Roberts, Joanne Bury, Sara Ballenger, and Lynn Gibbons for the Fairfax County Public Schools, Adult English as a Second Language, Fairfax, VA, 1990.

Level: Literacy, beginning

Focus/specialty: The ESL Literacy Kit is a practical, hands-on guide containing worksheets, games, puzzles and other activities designed by classroom teachers to meet the needs of literacy level students and/or beginning level students. The kit includes practice with letter formation, numbers, and basic lifeskills topics. The focus is on developing reading and writing skills. Tutors or volunteers working with individual students or small groups will find the units and activities easy to implement and self-explanatory. The kit may be used to supplement an existing curriculum or to provide additional (homework) practice.

**Neighbor to Neighbor: An English as a Second Language Curriculum for Volunteers**

Elizabeth M. Bailey and Deborah L. Schaffer. Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP), Arlington, VA, 1994.

Level: Beginning

Focus/specialty: The *Neighbor to Neighbor* curriculum consists of eight lifeskills, modules, detailed lesson plans, tips on how to teach and use communicative teaching techniques, worksheets, and visuals for each module. The curriculum was designed to meet the needs of volunteers teaching at community centers throughout the county. Each module contains self-contained units which can be covered in one session or class and which work well for open-entry programs where learners (and volunteer teachers) may change frequently.

**The REEP Curriculum, Third Edition: A Learner-Centered ESL Curriculum for Adults**

Arlington Education and Employment Program, Arlington, VA, 1994.

Level: Literacy to advanced

Focus/specialty: The *REEP Curriculum* is a learner-centered, competency-based curriculum offering lifeskills units for up to eight instructional levels, including a civics/U.S. government unit. Each instructional level is defined in terms of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. The curriculum includes an extensive discussion of how to conduct a needs assessment for planning courses, units, and lessons, as well as how to integrate learner evaluation into instruction. Sample tools are provided for both. Each unit contains the objectives, functions and sample language, resources, and ways to integrate the objective or language with other units.

**Parents as Educational Partners: A School-Related Curriculum for Language-Minority Parents**

Laura Bercovitz and Catherine Porter. Adult Resource Center, IL. 1995.

Level: Intermediate to advanced

Focus/specialty: The PEP curriculum is designed for use in family literacy programs or other types of classes or programs serving parents. It is a competency-based, participatory curriculum including

eight topical units related to the U.S. education system. Topics include the U.S. school system, parent-teacher conferences, school health, school personnel, and others. Each unit contains some of the following components: teacher notes, visuals, reading passage activities, and cultural comparison activities. Reading passages are also translated into Spanish.

**A Basic Skills Core Curriculum for the Manufacturing Industry**

Linda Mrowicki, Project Director, Adult Learning Resource Center, Des Plaines, IL. 1991.

Level: Varies depending on curriculum developer's focus; useful for native and non-native English speakers.

Focus/specialty: This basic skills core curriculum is designed to assist programs or individuals in meeting the needs of employees and employers in the manufacturing industry. It includes an overview of the manufacturing industry today, discussion of a model for developing a basic skills workplace program, tips for customizing curriculum and writing lesson plans, and a section on assessment. In addition, core competencies and core basic skills for reading, writing, math and oral communication (in ESL) are presented.

**Teaching and Learning English as a Second Language: Curriculum Development Resources for Nursing Homes**

Continuing Education Institute of Needham, MA and Chinese American Civic Association of Boston, MA, 1991.

Level: Intermediate and advanced

Focus/specialty: This guide provides a detailed account of developing a collaborative workplace program to meet the needs of a growing healthcare industry, specifically addressing how to assist nursing homes in working with less educated or limited English speakers. The guide discusses the nursing home projects involved in starting the workplace programs and how to develop a curriculum, and includes sample lesson plans and student worksheets.

**Teaching and Learning with Internet-Based Resources**

Susan Cowles. National Institute for Literacy, Leader Fellowship Program Report. 1997.

Level: Beginning to advanced

Focus/specialty: This report includes curriculum materials (lessons and activities) for getting adult students on the Internet and using the web. It also includes a list of resources on the web. The activities make the information superhighway accessible to all students.

**Crossroads Cafe**

Published by Heinle & Heinle

Level: Multi-level

Focus/specialty: Crossroads Cafe includes videos (26 episodes in sitcom format), photo stories (based on the videos) and work texts. It addresses communicative competence in real-life situations. Also offers problem-posing.

**Computers in Action: Integrating Computer Technology into the ESOL Curriculum**

Based on a Curriculum Frameworks Project funded by a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Education, located at: http://easternlincs.worlded.org/docs/cia/notes.htm

Level: beginning to advanced

Focus/speciality: *Computers in Action* offers recipes for teachers who are looking for ways to integrate computer skills into the classroomThe approach was developed in the process of integrating technology into the curriculum and led to a book entitled**, *Learning Computers, Speaking English*.** Computers in Action is a series of stand- alone lesson plans for teachers using computers in the ESOL classroom while the book is for students who want to learn English and word processing. With this guide, computers are used as a tool for learning with the added advantage that the student learns to be more comfortable with technology.

**Tennessee Adult ESOL Curriculum Resource Book**

Pat Sawyer, Editor, A collaborative Project of Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Office of Adult Education and the University of Tenneessee, Center for Literacy Studies, June, 2001. Also, can be found at: http://cls.coe.utk.edu/lpm/lpm.html#esol where it can be downloaded from the PDF format.

Level: Literacy to High Advanced

Focus/speciality: The Tennessee ESOL Curriculum begins with a description of the National Reporting System, its correlation to the SPL's, then includes a comprehensive detailed description of each level by English Language, Civics and Workplace Competencies--exactly what learners should know and be able to do in each area at each level. Following the descriptions, there are almost 300 pages of lesson plans from which teachers can select those most appropriate for their learners to achieve the competencies. At first, the curriculum may seem overwhelming, but it is well-organized and user-friendly. It is an excellent resource.

# ESL Starter Kit Feedback Form

*We welcome your feedback as we continue to improve and update this kit.*

1. What is your overall impression of the kit?

2. How did you use the kit to assist you in planning and implementing programs?

3. What suggestions would you make for improving this kit?

4. What additional information would you include in this kit? Please be specific.

5. What did you like least about the kit?

6. What did you like most about the kit?

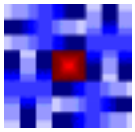
7. Other comments and suggestions:

(Optional): Name:_____ Date:_____

Phone Number:_____ Position:_____

Please mail or fax to:

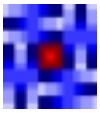
**Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center**
Oliver Hall Room 4080
1015 W. Main Street, P.O. Box 842020
Richmond, VA 23284-2020
FAX: (804) 828-7539
Phone: (804) 828-6521
(800) 237-0178



# SECTION G

## Integrating EL/Civics into the ESL Classroom: How do I connect my studnets and the community?

1. Integrating EL/Civics in the ESL Classroom
2. Civics Education for Adult Englsih Language Learners
3. Content Framework for the EFF Standards
4. Citizen/Community Member Role Map



# Integrating EL Civics into the ESL Classroom

Jane Roy

In 2000, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, awarded 12 demonstration grants to test ways of combining instruction in English and civics and established English literacy civics (EL/Civics) formula grants to states to teach English and civics to immigrants and others with limited English proficiency (U.S. Department of Education, 2000).

The federal definition of civics education is:

> "an educational program that emphasizes contextualized instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, naturalization procedures, civic participation, and U.S. history and government to help learners acquire the skills and knowledge to become active and informed parents, workers, and community members" (Tolbert, 2001).

This definition allows and encourages us to "think outside the box", beyond the conventional notions of citizenship education (Wrigley, 2001). It contains two key elements:

- *citizenship education* which teaches immigrants basic skills to pass the INS exam, and
- *civic participation* which is the way that community members interact with the social, political, and educational structures around them*; civic participation education* has the goal of assisting learners to understand how and why to become informed and active participants in their communities (Terrill, 2000).

*Equipped for the Future (EFF)* is the National Institute for Literacy's standards based system reform initiative. EFF was launched by asking adult learners to describe the knowledge and skills needed to fulfill their roles as parents, citizens, and workers. (Bingman & Stein, 2001) The EFF Content Framework was produced and includes three role maps which describe the broad areas of responsibility and key activities necessary to fulfill the three primary adult roles of effective citizen and community member, worker, and parent and family member (see the following pages).

For information on civic participation education and the Citizen /Community Member Role Map, consult the *The Change Agent*, Issue 6, February 1998, published by the New England Literacy Resource Center. It is online at http://www.nelrc.org/changeagent/pdf/issue6.pdf. Further information on EFF can be found at the Literacy Information aNd Communication System (LINCS) EFF Special Collection - http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/collections/eff/.

For further information on EL/Civics go to the websites listed below. Also read the following ERIC Q&A: *Civics Education for Adult English Language Learners*.

- The National Center for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE) Resource Collections: Civics Education for Adult English Language Learners - http://www.cal.org/ncle/REScivics.htm
- The National Center for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE): EL Civics Activities for Adults - http://www.cal.org/ncle/civics/

- The LINCS ESL Special Collection has resources for teachers and tutors related specifically to civics - http://literacynet.org/esl/tt-a1.html.
- The New England Literacy Resource Center's Civic Participation and Citizenship Collection - http://www.nelrc.org/cpcc/elcivics.htm.This site includes access to the Civic Participation and Community Action Sourcebook.
- The Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center's English Literacy/Civics page - http://www.aelweb.vcu.edu/favoritelinks_ELCivics.htm

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Wrigley, Heide Spruck, 2001, *EL Civics: In Praise of JITT (Just-in-Time-Teaching)*, Adult Education Newsletter, February 2001, Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages: Alexandria, VA

November 2000

ERIC

# *Q & A*

## Civics Education for Adult English Language Learners

National Center for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE)

by Lynda Terrill
**National Center for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE)**

Teaching about U.S. history and government and preparing immigrants to pass the U.S. citizenship test have been integral parts of curriculum and practice in adult immigrant education for more than a century. From classes sponsored by labor unions in the early 1900s to amnesty classes run by public schools, community-based organizations, and churches in the 1980s, English language and civics education have been paired (Silliman, 1997). Now, designated monies are being provided to states and individual programs for English Literacy/Civics Education. Because nearly 50% of all adults enrolled in federally funded education courses are English language learners, this program will have a significant national impact (U.S. Department of Education, 2000).

Some adult ESL teachers focus on the nuts and bolts of the naturalization process, teaching such topics as U.S. culture, holidays, and government. Others see it as a way for adults to learn English at the same time that they are learning to be comfortable and competent in a new environment (Terrill, 1994). Still others follow the participatory model of education and look to sociopolitical writings, such as those of Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), to guide learners to participate in making changes in social conditions (Auerbach, 1992, 1999; Peyton & Crandall, 1995). This Q & A defines key terms, discusses events that have shaped civics education, and offers suggestions, whatever the approach chosen, for integrating civics content with English as a second language (ESL) skills development.

### What is civics education?

For adult English language learners, *civics education* is a broad term that includes

- instruction on how to gain U.S. citizenship;
- instruction about U.S. history and culture, including lessons on diversity and multiculturalism; and
- instruction and guidance on becoming active participants in their new communities.

*Citizenship education* is a subset of civics education. The goal of citizenship education is to help adult immigrants learn enough procedural information, content, and language to complete the naturalization process, pass the citizenship exam, and become U.S. citizens.

Encouraging *civic participation* may also be a part of civics education. Civic participation can be defined as the way that members of a community interact with the social, political, and educational structures around them. *Civic participation education*, then, is instruction that has as its goal assisting learners to understand how and why to become informed participants in their communities.

A key element of civic participation education for adult English language learners is that learning needs to have real-life consequences. One of its purposes is for learners to become active in community life. For example, learners might collaborate to fight for a community improvement, learn about and participate in the American electoral system (if appropriate), or join the local Parent Teacher Association (PTA).

## What events have shaped civics education in this country?

The following national laws and initiatives have influenced conceptions of the need for civics education and the ways it is delivered:

- In 1906, a statute was enacted that required citizenship applicants to demonstrate ability in speaking English (Nixon & Keenan, 1997). This was during a period in U.S. history of unparalleled immigration (nearly 10% of the population was nonnative born). In response, community organizations such as settlement houses and labor unions organized classes in English and citizenship.
- Until the mid 1900s, immigration officials themselves decided who spoke English well enough to gain U.S. citizenship. Often, the sole requirement for citizenship was proof of lawful U.S. residency for five years. In 1950, a federal law mandated reading and writing skill levels that made it more difficult for immigrants to become citizens (Becker, 1993).
- In the late 1980s, adult ESL programs responded to the requirements of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986. IRCA granted limited amnesty and permanent residence to undocumented immigrants (many of whom were displaced by unrest in Central America) who followed a specific application process and received at least 40 hours of instruction. Programs developed materials and curricula that included elements of both English and basic U.S. history and civics. See, for example, the *Handbook for ESL/Civics Programming* (Arlington Education and Employment Program [REEP], 1989) and *ESL/Civics Integration: A Guide for Curriculum Development and Lesson Planning* (Stiles, 1990).
- In 1996, changes in federal law limited some rights that immigrants had previously held, such as access to food stamps and other government services (Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, PL #104-193). These changes have renewed interest among immigrants in seeking citizenship, as they can protect their interests more fully by becoming citizens (Mitchell, 1998).
- Although some of the 1996 measures have since been eliminated or amended (National Immigration Law Center, 1998), obtaining citizenship remains a goal for many adults learning English. Benefits that are available to U.S. citizens include the right to vote in elections, to hold a U.S. passport, to sponsor family members for immigration, and to receive full social security benefits when they retire. Citizenship status also allows easier access to public benefits such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and protects immigrants from being deported for committing a crime (Becker, 2000).
- In 2000, the U.S. Department of Education's English Literacy/Civics Education initiative allocated money to 32 states and 12 demonstration grant recipients to help adults learn English while also learning about civil rights, civic participation and responsibility, and obtaining citizenship (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). It is anticipated that curricula and resource materials on civics education will be developed and made available by these projects.

## What are some activities and approaches that integrate civics education with language learning?

Adult immigrants and refugees often express interest in American culture, government, and history. While the complexity of the language varies from level to level, significant content can be imparted at all levels at the same time learners are acquiring English.

### *Beginning levels*

Practitioners can help literacy learners understand about community, government, and history while doing hands-on activities, pre-reading activities, and activities that help them develop fine motor skills needed for writing. Learners can make collages representing their community with pictures cut from magazines, alphabetize names of states or label maps, practice sight word recognition of high office holders or of community institutions such as *library* and *INS*, or match pictures of these institutions or people with their names or titles.

Beginning learners can participate in a language experience activity (LEA) where they express their opinions about an important social or political issue. For example, a literacy level class in Virginia talked about their ideas on the eve of Desert Storm in 1991. Many of these adults had emigrated from war-torn countries and had strong feelings that they wanted to share in English with their classmates. With some assistance with verbs (*think, hope, feel, want*, etc.) and some modeling from the teacher and stronger students, the class was able to produce a powerful written statement about war. Initially, class members spoke and listened. Later, the group writing was used for reading, fill-in-the-blank, and dictation activities.

Simple games such as bingo or concentration can be played to reinforce any set of words that learners have been working with in a content unit. Community place names or names of states, presidents, or important Americans can be used instead of the more usual health, housing, and job vocabulary.

### *Intermediate levels*

Teachers can devise information-gap activities about American culture and history. For example, a teacher might write two paragraphs about the first Thanksgiving, controlling the level of vocabulary, structure, and content of each paragraph to address the English level of each individual. Partner A reads the first paragraph to Partner B. Partner B has the same text minus certain words or phrases. (The teacher would have deleted certain structural words such as conjunctions, adverbs, and auxiliary verbs, and content words such as *pilgrims, Massasoit*, and *Plymouth*.) Partner B listens, perhaps asking for clarification, and writes the missing words. Then Partner B reads the second paragraph to Partner A who must listen, understand, and write a different set of words or phrases. Learners absorb the civics content and practice language skills as they read silently and aloud, listen, write, and later compare notes.

For intermediate and advanced learners, the World Wide Web can provide access to real-life civics content and real-life use of English. For example, learners—alone, in pairs, or in small groups—can research different aspects of their local government, read the information, make notes, and conduct a debate or give a short oral presentation to the class. Topics on a local government Web site might include the fall leaf collection schedule, online access to the local library system, bicycle safety rules, or an explanation of the local government system and officials. Learners can choose issues that are important to them, access the information they need, hone technology skills, and be active participants in their community, while at the same time improving reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills.

## *Advanced levels*

Advanced English language learners are usually concerned about grammar, writing, and listening and speaking in complex or academic contexts. Attending and participating in local school board meetings, inviting local officials to speak to the class, and volunteering in community organizations are ways advanced learners can participate in the community while using and improving their communicative skills. Writing letters to the editor, e-mailing members of Congress or the president, and researching and writing an essay about an aspect of American history or culture are ways to expand literacy skills.

A recent approach to language education, *project-based learning*, appears to be particularly effective for civics education. A project generally integrates speaking, listening, reading, and writing; incorporates team work and problem-solving approaches; and encourages learners to engage in independent work that requires using English in authentic contexts. (Moss & Van Duzer, 1998; REEP, 1997; Weinstein, 1999). Projects can take place within one class meeting, over several weeks, or even become the focus of the entire class. Publishing learner writing in books or on the World Wide Web, running letter-writing campaigns, and researching and reporting on class-designated topics are all projects. The impetus to participate in the community can arise from a classroom discussion or brainstorming session, an issue in a class member's life or on the news, or an activity the teacher designs with learners to help them use English in a community context.

In the Family Literacy and Learning Program of the Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP), learners and teachers created an activity-and-coloring book about their community. Learners with diverse language skills accessed information about their community and shared it with others through the publication of the book and a "meet the authors" day at the local library (Greniuk, 1998). The intermediate-level class researched community information and designed the community book. Learners developed reading skills, telephone communication skills, and language functions such as asking for clarification and negotiating with one another. The beginning-level class copied and alphabetized important community resources (e.g., the hospital and the library) that the intermediate class had investigated. The children and adults in both classes illustrated the book. The entire family literacy program was able to learn important neighborhood information, acquire and practice real-life language skills, and offer a resource to their community.

In Dover, New Hampshire, an ESL class wrote and published a survival guide for adult immigrants that discusses such topics as the difficulty of making friends in the United States, the fact that Americans will often go to work when they are sick, and the importance of keeping to a schedule in this country. The class shared the book with native English speakers in an Adult Basic Education (ABE) class (Hutton, 2000).

A North Carolina educator has developed a course outline for beginning-level learners in a civics education program that uses photography. Learners take pictures in their communities to reflect their identity, the communities they belong to, places in the community they feel are accessible or not, and places where they feel comfortable and accepted or not. They will use these photographs to tell stories about how they can protect or exercise their rights as community members or citizens. The learners may also interview a person in their community whom they believe to be active or a leader (L. McGrail, personal communication, September 2000). Learners will not only practice communicative skills, but will also learn how to express opinions about important community issues.

## What resources are available for civics education?

Immigrants seeking citizenship face many challenges. These include frequently changing laws and procedures, bureaucratic and electronic delays, backlogs of applicants, and both the lack of English skills and the lack of time to learn. As a result, some adult ESL teachers, particularly those teaching in specially designated citizenship classes, may focus on developing the English skills and civics knowledge required to pass the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) citizenship test. INS maintains an informational Web site for the general public, (http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/); learners, however, may have difficulty understanding the English used on the site. Some resources, such as application forms, can be found on the site.

For suggestions for classroom activities and resources to prepare learners to take the citizenship test, see *Citizenship Preparation for Adult Learners* (Nixon & Keenan, 1997). In addition, the resources listed at the end of this paper will assist practitioners in offering civics instruction.

The National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) has recently funded an ESL and civics education special collection for the Web as part of its LINCS system. The site, which will be at http://literacynet.org/esl, will provide teacher resources.

## What is needed for English language/civics education to be successful?

The large number of English language learners in adult education programs, as well as new funding initiatives from the U.S. Department of Education, have heightened interest in the integrating of language development with civics education. Materials and resources will be identified and created. For this initiative to be successful, however, training for teachers will be needed both on what to teach and how to teach it.

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ERIC/NCLE Digests and Q&As are available free from NCLE, 4646 40th Street NW, Washington, DC 20016; 202-362-0700, ext. 200; email: ncle@cal.org; and on the Web at http://www.cal.org/ncle/DIGESTS.

Documents with ED numbers can be ordered from ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS) at 1-800-443-ERIC (3742) or 703-440-1400; fax: 703-440-1408; email: service@edrs.com; Web: http://edrs.com.

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## Content Framework for the EFF Standards

In order to fulfill responsibilities as parents/family members, citizens/community members, and workers, adults must be able to:

| Meet These Four Purposes | Accomplish These Common Activities | Demonstrate These Skills |
|---|---|---|
| **Access**<br>To information so adults can orient themselves in the world<br><br>**Voice**<br>To be able to express ideas and opinions with the confidence they will be heard and taken into account<br><br>**Independent Action**<br>To be able to solve problems and make decisions on one's own, acting independently, without having to rely on others<br><br>**Bridge to the Future**<br>Learn how to learn so adults can keep up with the world as it changes | • Gather, Analyze, and Use Information<br>• Manage Resources<br>• Work Within the Big Picture<br>• Work Together<br>• Provide Leadership<br>• Guide and Support Others<br>• Seek Guidance and Support From Others<br>• Develop and Express Sense of Self<br>• Respect Others and Value Diversity<br>• Exercise Rights and Responsibilities<br>• Create and Pursue Vision and Goals<br>• Use Technology and Other Tools to Accomplish Goals<br>• Keep Pace With Change | **Communication Skills**<br>• Read With Understanding<br>• Convey Ideas in Writing<br>• Speak So Others Can Understand<br>• Listen Actively<br>• Observe Critically<br>**Decision-Making Skills**<br>• Use Math to Solve Problems and Communicate<br>• Solve Problems and Make Decisions<br>• Plan<br>**Interpersonal Skills**<br>• Cooperate With Others<br>• Advocate and Influence<br>• Resolve Conflict and Negotiate<br>• Guide Others<br>**Lifelong Learning Skills**<br>• Take Responsibility for Learning<br>• Reflect and Evaluate<br>• Learn Through Research<br>• Use Information and Communications Technology |

## Content Framework for the EFF Standards

The EFF Content Framework includes three role maps. The EFF Role Maps describe what adults do when they are effective in their roles as parents/family members, workers, and citizens/community members. EFF developed the role maps, in 1996, by asking adults from many different walks of life to describe what they needed to be able to do to fulfill these roles.

Each role map includes the following parts:

- A key purpose or central aim of the role.
- Broad areas of responsibility that are the critical functions an adult performs to achieve the role's key purpose. The broad areas of responsibility provide a big picture of what adults need to do to be effective in the roles.
- Key activities that further define the broad areas of responsibility. Each key activity involves a category of activity, composed of a range of tasks performed in a variety of situations over time. The key activities describe what adults do in a generic way, leaving room for cultural and individual variation.

Later, role indicators were added that describe successful performance of key activities. The role indicators help clarify what knowledge and skills to look for to see whether an activity is being performed well.

- The role maps are a simple tool adults can use to assess their own skills and abilities, and to determine what knowledge, skills, and new understandings they need to develop - and why.
- The role maps provide a common language and a common framework that multiple customers of the adult learning system can use to organize and assess curriculum and instruction, and to chart student progress in gaining necessary knowledge and skills.

The development of the EFF Role Maps is more fully described in Section 5 of the EFF Research Report: Building the Framework, 1993-1997 (Merrifield, 2000).

Source: LINCS EFF Special Collection website: http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/collections/eff/eff_roles.html

## Citizen/Community Member Role Map

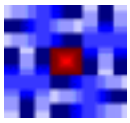
*Effective citizens and community members take informed action to make a positive difference in their lives, communities, and world.*

### road Areas of Responsibility

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |
| **ecome and Stay nformed**<br>*itizens and ommunity members ind and use nformation to identify nd solve problems nd contribute to the ommunity* | **Form and Express Opinions and Ideas**<br>*Citizens and community members develop a personal voice and use it individually and as a group* | **Work Together**<br>*Citizens and community members interact with other people to get things done toward a common purpose* | **Take Action to Strengthen Communities**<br>*Citizens and community members exercise their rights and responsibilities as individuals and as members of groups to improve the world around them* |

### ey Activities

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| • Identify, monitor, and anticipate problems, community needs, strengths, and resources for yourself and others<br>• Recognize and understand human, legal, and civic rights and responsibilities for yourself and others<br>• Figure out how the system that affects an issue works<br>• Identify how to have an impact and recognize that individuals can make a difference<br>• Find, interpret, | • Strengthen and express a sense of self that reflects personal history, values, beliefs, and roles in the larger community<br>• Learn from others' experiences and ideas<br>• Communicate so that others understand<br>• Reflect on and reevaluate your own opinions and ideas | • Get involved in the community and get others involved<br>• Respect others and work to eliminate discrimination an prejudice<br>• Define common values, visions, and goals<br>• Manage and resolve conflict<br>• Participate in group processes and decision making | • Help yourself and others<br>• Educate others<br>• Influence decision makers and hold them accountable<br>• Provide leadership within the community |



# SECTION H

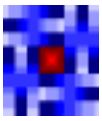
## Integrating Technology into the ESOL Classroom: How do I use computer resources?

1. Integrating Technology in the ESL Classroom

2. Using Software in the Adult ESL Classroom

3. Using the World Wide Web with Adult ESL Learners

4. Teaching ESOL Using Word Processing: A Communicative Approach



# Integrating Technology in the ESL Classroom

Jane Roy

Instructional technology includes educational software, such as, the Oxford Picture Dictionary CD-ROM; using computer programs, such as, Word or Excel; the Internet; and TV/video. It is playing an increasing role in the ESL classroom; however, there has been little research on the effectiveness of technology in classroom learning (Cromley, 2000; Rosen, 2000). The following information gives some guidance on using technology and highlights some issues to take into consideration.

Technology used in the support of teaching and learning falls into two main approaches:

- *Instructivist* where learners use computer-assisted instruction, such as drill and practice software, to acquire knowledge and skills. It can also include teaching learners how to use computers as tools; and
- *Constructivist* in which learners construct knowledge by actively connecting and assimilating new information into their existing knowledge structure through project-based or student-centered learning; it involves asking a question, researching it, publishing the results, and presenting them (Rosen, 2000).

Both approaches have value in the ESL classroom and teachers often use a combination of the two to enable learners to acquire a specific body of content and skills and to engage learning in meaningful and motivating contexts (Rosen, 2000). For an illustration of the use of both approaches, read the following article *Teaching ESOL Using Work Processing: A Communicative Approach* by Steve Quann & Dianna Satin.

Key elements of the successful use of technology in the ESL classroom include:

- customized learning to meet student needs and interest;
- students perform real-life tasks;
- student collaborate and interact with others (Cromley, 2000); and
- work in the lab should be a logical and necessary extension of the work in the classroom, rather than a separate class (Sladkova, 2001).

Challenges exist in introducing technology into a program and the process should therefore be carefully planned and supported. The hardware should be functioning and well maintained. Staff should be provided with support and development; ideally an instructional technology expert should work with teachers to help them learn new software applications, work with teachers on developing lesson plans using computers, and generate excitement about computers (Sladkova, 2001).

For commonly used ESL websites refer to pages B-7 and B-8 in the ESL Starter Kit. Also go to the Literacy Information aNd Communication System (LINCS) ESL Special Collection's teacher /tutor literacy resources on using technology - http://literacynet.org/esl/tt-a2.html and the student/learner resources - http://literacynet.org/esl/studentlearner.html.

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March 1998

# ERIC

# *Q & A*

## Using Software in the Adult ESL Classroom

National Center for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE)

by Susan Gaer
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In the last decade, the number of K-12 classrooms using computers and software has risen steadily. In these classrooms, computer use is so pervasive that, according to researcher Eric Plotnick (1996), "virtually every student in a formal education setting has access to a computer" (p.1).

The above statement cannot yet be made about adult education programs, especially programs for adults learning English as a second language (ESL) which are often underfunded and operate with limited resources (Florez, 1997). However, increasingly, adult ESL learners do have access to computers, whether it is in a language lab once or twice a week or in the classroom. For teachers of those learners the question now is not whether to use computers and software but how. This Q & A is an overview of types of ESL software with guidelines for the appropriate use of software in the adult ESL classroom.

### What types of software are available?

There is a variety of ESL software now used in adult ESL instruction. Some of these types are drill and practice programs such as the Oxford Picture Dictionary CD-ROM (1997); tutorials such as Typing Tutor 7.0 (1996); simulations and games such as Triple Play Plus (1995); problem-solving programs such as A Day in the Life (Penn State University, 1995); courseware (software that is developed as an entire course and has accompanying print materials and assessment tools) such as ELLIS (English Language Learning and Instruction System) (1997); and productivity tools such as word processing programs, databases, spreadsheets, graphics, and desktop publishing programs. There are also communications tools such as the Internet—a term used to describe the hundreds of thousands of computers that are connected by a network of wires and satellites all over the world—and video conferencing—using a video camera to connect, chat, and collaborate over the Internet. This article will not discuss the use of the Internet or video conferencing. Using the Internet in the classroom with adults learning English as a second language is a topic that needs to be explored in depth in its own forum.

## What kind of software is appropriate for adult ESL classrooms?

Some educational software is designed specifically for ESL. This includes ESL publisher software and courseware. ESL publisher software accompanies a textbook such as Oxford Picture Dictionary CD-ROM (1997) and Azar Interactive (1997). While this type of software is relatively easy to integrate into classroom objectives, quite often much of it is no different from the book it supplements, and it generally does not take advantage of the simultaneous sound, video, and text accessories available on computers. Courseware such

as Invest Destinations (1997) on the other hand, is designed to be used as a course rather than to supplement one. It uses all the accessories available on computers. However, most courseware is expensive and allows for little variety in the curriculum.

Some software programs are designed for use with K-12 school children but are appropriate for adult ESL learners such as the Living Books Series (1997) and Spell it Deluxe (1997). Others are designed for general information gathering such as Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia (1998).

As with any ESL materials, before using any software program in the classroom, it is essential to evaluate its potential usefulness for a particular class. For example, in a family literacy class, Living Books (1997) might be appropriate even though it is designed for children. In other situations, a selection of children's stories could be demeaning. Further, many software packages designed for K-12 schools utilize a large vocabulary and require extensive reading ability and familiarity with concepts that are appropriate for junior high students but not for adult ESL learners. However, just as authentic text is valuable in an ESL classroom, authentic software can also be used in the classroom. Authentic software can teach vocabulary and provide content information in a high-interest format. With content preparation, some general educational software packages, such as encyclopedias (Brittanica, Comptons, Microsoft Encarta, and World Book) health CDs such as Bodyworks 6.0 (1998) and travel CDs such as the National Geographic CD-ROM (1997) can be extremely valuable in an ESL classroom. For example, when using Microsoft Encarta with a unit on Martin Luther King, Jr., the instructor could prepare students with a vocabulary development worksheet including such terms as "racism" and "equal rights." The instructor could also copy photographs from the CD for use in eliciting vocabulary or experiences from the students.

**How do I select software for the classroom?**

In selecting software for use in the adult ESL classroom, teachers need to consider how software can help them meet their objectives. Some questions to look at in evaluating the software include:

1. What is the language difficulty level? Language difficulty can be assessed by familiarity of content to be learned, concreteness of the concepts being presented, and grammatical complexity of the language used.
2. Does the language and content reinforce my curriculum?
3. How easy is the software for the students to use? Is it easy to move from page to page or are the buttons hidden on the screen? Is it easy to recognize what particular task the student needs to do or must the student guess?

Teachers also need to look at what equipment they have and the amount of time they have to learn how to use the software. Most publishers and software companies have demonstration versions of software that they will send out for preview. Teachers can also attend conferences where publishers are exhibiting their software. Conferences usually have computer rooms with software available for preview.

If a computer system is on a network, it is important to talk to a network administrator before purchasing and installing any software. If software is installed incorrectly for that particular system, it could cause the entire system to crash or fail.

Finally, price and the ability to integrate the software into the curriculum must be considered. Publisher software, drill programs, problem solving programs, and productivity tools such as word processing programs are relatively inexpensive to buy and relatively easy to integrate into the curriculum. As was discussed above, courseware is usually expensive and allows little room for variety in the curriculum.

## What kind of technical expertise do I need?

To use the software effectively in the classroom, the instructor or administrator should understand the terms that are defined below. Information on these and other computer terms can be found on the World Wide Web at http://www.sjrcomputer.com/glbody.htm.

1. *Operating system* - An operating system is a software product that controls the way a computer looks and feels to someone using it. The operating system (abbreviated as OS) acts as an intermediary between the user and the computer's hardware. The basic operating systems at the time of publication of this digest include Macintosh OS, Windows 3.X, Windows 95, Windows NT, and DOS.

2. *Megahertz* - The speed of a computer is measured in millions of cycles per second, or megahertz (Mhz). Currently, clock speeds range from 100 to 200 Mhz. Generally, the higher the clock speed, the faster the computer will operate.

3. *RAM (Random access memory)* - Data may be stored or retrieved from this type of memory. When people ask "How much memory does the computer have?," they are usually referring to the amount of RAM inside the computer. RAM is most commonly stored on removable chips.

4. *Hard drive* - People often confuse hard drive space and memory (RAM). The hard drive is a device that stores information inside the computer. The hard drive can be thought of as a closet and the RAM as desktop space. The more room on the hard drive, the more information the computer can store for use when needed. The more RAM or memory the computer has, the more desktop space the computer has. Thus a computer with a lot of RAM can have several software programs open at the same time.

5. *Color monitor* - Monitor quality is measured in terms of how many pixels (tiny dots that make up an image) can be displayed on the computer screen. This quality is known as the monitor's resolution. The more pixels, the clearer the image on the screen. Earlier computers could handle only a few colors on the screen and were slow to retrieve images from the hard drive. Most new computers now have Super Video Graphic Adapter (SVGA) monitors that can display up to 256 colors and operate quickly. If an older computer is being used, it may not be able to operate some software programs that require the SVGA monitor.

6. *CD-ROM drive* - This is a computer device that reads visual and audio data stored on a compact disc. If the computer has a CD-ROM, it can play music just as an audio CD player does. The speed at which the information comes up on the screen depends upon the speed of the CD. Speeds run from the very slow rate (2x) to a rate more than 20x at time of publication of this paper.

7. *Sound card* - The sound card is a metal card inside the computer that allows the computer to make sound. A pair of speakers are attached to the sound card. Different computers use different sound cards, so the software used must be compatible with the sound card in the computer. If it is not, the user may be unable to have sound on the computer.

8. *Mouse* - A mouse is an input device that takes the place of some keyboard functions and can be used in addition to a keyboard. The mouse is used widely in most Macintosh- and Windows-based systems.

9. *Cursor* - The cursor is a blinking light or mark on the computer screen that indicates where the user is on the computer.

## How can I integrate the software into instruction?

The following example shows how the use of a software program could integrate with other instruction in the classroom. In a unit on grocery store shopping, the instructor might want to develop a lesson on using coupons. First, the instructor could use a chapter from the textbook introducing the topic. Then the students could do a unit from a software product on shopping and coupons such as Neighborhood Life (1996). After completing the software activity, the instructor might have students clip out coupons, go to the supermarket and find the products, then come back and develop a spreadsheet on the item, original price, coupon price, and total savings.

The grouping of the students in relation to the computer is important to integration of the software with the instruction (Hubbard, 1996). Software that supports different groupings is desirable as it is unlikely that there will be enough computers in the classroom so that each student has one. Pairing up to use the computers will probably be necessary. There is value in this pairing up, however, as this can encourage teamwork, problem solving, and collaboration among the students—communication skills that are needed in today's workplace.

Many classes might go to a computer lab for instruction. In these labs there can be almost any type of computer from state of the art to the early Apple IIs. Any type of computer can be used to help students learn. On the oldest models, the word processor is useful for student writing and sentence structure work. There might even be some drill programs available for individual work—something many students who crave formal grammar practice consider valuable. However, although computers can be used for individual and self-study work, their use is maximized by having students do collaborative work on them. At most, 15 minutes of solitary individual work should be used in a 50-minute period.

## How can I follow up the software activities?

Just as with any ESL lesson, a follow-up activity is crucial to helping students incorporate the language or skills learned to their everyday life. One follow-up activity is to discuss the language or vocabulary used in the software. Another is to ask students to evaluate the activity using a checklist or by writing a summary of the activity. If the software provided a simulation or a practice activity of a competency such as shopping in a supermarket or visiting the doctor, an actual field trip can be taken or a role play can be performed. If the objective was to practice a certain grammar point, a small quiz or written exercise can be developed to demonstrate student understanding of the concept. Another way of following up with software material is to use the concepts presented in the software as a basis for a group project or as the theme of an individual writing project. Students could research a topic of interest either on the Internet or in a software program such as the Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia, Deluxe Edition (1998) and write a summary of what they learn.

## How do I prepare my students to use the specific software?

After linking the software to program objectives, it is important to introduce the software to learners. Educators (Askov & Clark, 1991; Healey, 1995; Hubbard, 1996; Huss, Lane, & Willetts, 1990; Huss-Lederman, 1995) give suggestions for using software with adult ESL learners. Some of their suggestions are included below.

Since each software program has a different layout, students must become comfortable using each individual program. As many adult education programs are open entry/open exit, a method for continually updating new students about software use is needed. To do this, teachers can designate certain students to be responsible for training other students to use specific software. For example, one student might be an Internet expert while another might be in charge of showing others the typing tutorial. According to David Rosen, Director of the Adult Literacy Resource Institute in Boston, instructors may want to go so far as to train some students to install software. This will allow them the opportunity to get "comfortable under the hood" (personal communication, November, 1997).

In addition to preparing students for actually using the software, it is important—as has been mentioned above—to pre-teach the vocabulary and content. If, for example, a section of Community Exploration (1995) on the hospital has been selected to supplement a unit on health, the teacher can prepare the students for the vocabulary they are going to learn in that section.

When working in groups with software, as with other language learning activities, the teacher will probably want to model the steps for using the software. Students can write down the steps for using the program as the teacher models these steps. Roles may be given to each student in each group. For example, one learner may be a *keyboarder*, the person who types; another might be the *activity master*, the person who handles the paper that describes the steps of the activity; a third might be the *discussion gatekeeper*, the person who helps students talk about the activity in English; and a fourth might be the *timekeeper*, the person who is in charge of managing the group's time.

## Conclusion

Robert Bickerton, Director of Adult Education for the state of Massachusetts, has said that for every dollar spent on computers and software, another dollar should be spent on staff development (personal communication, January, 1998). If practitioners are to use software appropriately as described above, it is crucial that staff development activities focus on helping teachers master the technology, giving them time to familiarize themselves with a variety of software packages. Further, along with staff development, adequate technical support is essential.

As Mark Warschauer (1996) has pointed out, "As with the audio language lab 'revolution' of 40 years ago, those who expect to get magnificent results simply from the purchase of expensive and elaborate software systems will likely be disappointed. But those who put computer software to use in the service of good pedagogy will undoubtedly find ways to enrich their educational program and the learning opportunities of their students" (p. 11).

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National Center for ESL Literacy Education

# Using the World Wide Web with Adult ESL Learners

by Kathleen Flannery Silc
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Developed for the military and adopted by universities as a medium for research, the Internet—a network that links computers all over the world—is now used widely by businesses, educators, government staff, and individuals for information gathering, entertainment, commerce, and communication. Much has been written about the use of Internet technologies such as e-mail, listservs, bulletin boards, and newsgroups in English as a second language (ESL) and foreign language classroom (LeLoup & Ponterio, 1997; Warschauer, 1996). However, another feature of the Internet, the World Wide Web, is also an excellent source for authentic language learning experiences.

This digest presents reasons for using World Wide Web activities in adult ESL instruction, addresses the issue of preparing learners to use the Web, and suggests activities that use authentic learning experiences to enhance skills.

## Skills Developed through the World Wide Web

Websites cover a wide variety of topics and interests including health, entertainment, news, and sports. These sites provide information with which learners can interact in order to build basic language and employability skills.

*Language Skills*

A number of websites were created especially for English learners and contain exercises in grammar, vocabulary, writing, or reading (e.g., Lingua Center Grammar Safari http://deil.lang.uiuc.edu/web.pages/grammarsafari.html; Frizzy University Network (FUN) http://thecity.sfsu.edu/~funweb/; Weekly Idiom http://www.comenius.com/idiom/index.html; and Grammar Self Study Quizzes for ESL Students http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/quizzes/index.html). Other ESL sites provide practice in listening (e.g., Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab http://www.esllab.com; and Dave's ESL Cafe http://www.eslcafe.com/).

To develop reading skills, learners employ skimming and scanning skills to find the information they need. Hyperlinked menus—where readers click on highlighted words, phrases, or images and move to another section of the page or site—facilitate the use of these skills. Web reading includes both prose literacy (narrative) and document literacy (charts and graphs). Instructors can introduce learners to sites that may be relevant to course content and personal interests. Since most English language websites are written for English speakers, the language may be more appropriate for intermediate and advanced learners. However, if instructors choose websites that include graphics and pre-teach the vocabulary, even learners with limited English can take advantage of the Web resources.

Writing is a natural response to Web reading as learners respond to articles, request further information on topics, register complaints, and provide information about themselves. Websites prompt learners to complete forms, send e-mail messages to political representatives, request information on travel destinations, and write comments for bulletin boards and guest books. Engaging in these authentic tasks make writing meaningful. The large amount of information available on the Web requires learners to synthesize what they have read as they write reports and opinion pieces and make oral presentations. Individuals can also create their own websites as a way to publish texts and projects.

Studies have shown that computers can also facilitate oral communication between learners. Learners want to talk about their research and what they are learning. One study reported that communication occurred among students when they were using computers both individually or in groups (DeVillar & Faltis, 1991). The Web also makes it possible to listen to news broadcasts, historical speeches, and films. These sound files can easily be replayed as needed for comprehension.

*Employability Skills*

Employability skills are the skills needed to find, get, and keep a job. The SCANS Commission (Secretary of Labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills) names the following skills required for effective workplace performance—three foundational skills which include basic skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening, mathematics), thinking skills (creative thinking, reasoning, decision making, problem solving, representing information, learning how to learn), and personal qualities (individual responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management), and five workplace competencies (use of resources, interpersonal skills, information, systems, and technology) for solid workplace performance. (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991).

Many of these skills are addressed in well designed Web-based lessons. For example, effective use of the Web requires skills in problem solving, as learners need strategies to sort through the flood of information. The analyzing and evaluating of information that learners must do to separate the wheat from the chaff is similar to what employees do at today's workplace as they gather information from remote sources (Dede, 1996). Projects that require learners to use the Web to gather information about specific topics (e.g., health insurance) provide practice in many SCANS workplace competencies. If learners can work in teams on these projects, they will have experience working cooperatively, solving problems as a team, and coming to a consensus. Further, using the Web in the adult ESL classroom gives learners opportunities to "develop technology skills and experiences in contexts that are similar to those in which technology is used outside the classroom" (Ginsburg, 1998, p.42). Learners become familiar with technology as they use the mouse to point and click and navigate from screen to screen. Icons that were once unfamiliar now have meaning that will transfer to a variety of computer applications. As learners type information into online forms, they improve their keyboarding skills.

## Preparing Learners for Searching the World Wide Web

Preparation can turn an overwhelming experience into a manageable one. Learners should be introduced to the use of the mouse, the browser, and the modem or Internet connection. A lesson in how to use icons and a mouse will make learners feel more comfortable as they approach the World Wide Web. If they have used computers before for word processing, they may already be familiar with many computing conventions.

One of the greatest challenges of searching the World Wide Web is finding appropriate information. A lesson on Web searching will give learners more control over the process. This lesson should include brainstorming keywords and concepts, adjusting these terms as needed, using search engines such as Yahoo, HotBot, and Alta Vista. Learners can keep logs to see which keywords yield the best results for particular searches. (See Cowles, 1997, for lesson ideas on Web searching.)

Because Web-based materials are not necessarily accurate or truthful, Web searching can also help learners develop their critical literacy skills. Learners can be taught to consider the source and question the veracity of what they read, a critical lesson in an age when tabloids and even legitimate news outlets print stories that are not completely true. Guidelines and criteria for evaluating the accuracy and quality of the information at a given website can be found at Kathy Shrock's Guide for Educators (http://discoveryschool.com/schrockguide/) and in Cowles (1997).

Finally, learners should be prepared for the possibility that, because the Web is an uncensored medium, searching it can yield unwanted results. Sites containing pornographic photographs and videos may appear. If found, these sites can stimulate class discussions about freedom of speech, whether or not children should have unlimited access to the Web, and whether public libraries and schools should allow censorship.

## Procedure for a Web-based ESL lesson

Web-based activities can include electronic field trips to museums and historical sites; comparison shopping online; and finding information about health, home buying, and travel. However, as with any language teaching tool, there must be clear objectives, focused activities, and evaluation. There are three essential steps for Web-based activities:

- Prepare learners for the activity. Ask learners to define a problem and then identify possible sites or sources that may contain information that will help them to explore that problem. Be sure that learners have familiarized themselves with the use of search engines. Brainstorm keywords to be used in the search. Be sure that learners know how to use the browser and hardware (such as a CD-ROM drive) or software (such as Sound Card) that might be needed for audio or video. Establish how learners will record the information. Will they print pages, make notes, or complete a survey form? How much information will be enough?
- Perform the activity online. Locate the sources and gather the relevant information from each source.
- Process the information. Ask learners to organize the information collected from multiple sources. They may present this information in an agreed upon format. Have learners evaluate the information gathered as well as the information gathering process.

The following is an example of a Web-based lesson adapted from Bogarde (1995). Although written for K-12 learners, the lesson is also useful for adults, especially if the analysis and evaluation of both the product and the process is stressed.

## Sample Lesson: Monitoring the Weather

- To prepare learners, review weather expressions (e. g., hot, cloudy, rainy). Teach or review the formula for converting Fahrenheit and Centigrade temperatures. Choose the cities that the class will monitor and locate them on the map. Decide whether to monitor the weather daily, weekly, or monthly. Ask learners to suggest some Web sources for weather or brainstorm some keywords for finding weather sites through a search engine. Decide what information will be tracked (e.g., temperature, precipitation, or other conditions). Record the information on a chart in the classroom; groups may choose to keep individual charts for different cities.

- To perform the activity online, have individuals or groups search for weather sites that contain information on the selected cities and record this information.
- To process the information, learners can organize the information they have gathered and make bar charts and graphs that illustrate the temperature or rainfall for each city. Ask learners to evaluate the various weather sites they used. Were some better than others? Why? Ask learners what part of the activity they would have changed. Was the process appropriate for their product?

## Conclusion

The World Wide Web is an immense library of authentic materials for the language learning classroom. With careful planning, adult ESL instructors can use the Web in the adult classroom to help prepare learners for the workforce, to introduce them to American culture, and to help them improve their English language skills.

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# Teaching ESOL Using Word Processing: A Communicative Approach

**by Steve Quann & Diana Satin**

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At first, we introduced the use of computers to our English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes with little forethought. We saw computers simply as the means by which students could launch educational software, and as a tool they could use to create resumes and cover letters. As we sought ways in which to integrate technology into our courses, we found that while learners were mastering the basics of word processing, using computers helped them in many aspects of language development. Despite the range in our students' language abilities, common principles emerged in the value of computers to their education.

We began to integrate technology into ESOL when Steve taught an intermediate ESOL class in 1996 at La Alianza Hispana in Roxbury, MA. Fourteen recently purchased Pentium computers sat ready to be utilized in a newly created computer lab. Steve himself was not very comfortable with computers. He was learning Microsoft Word, having previously used WordPerfect, but he was enthusiastic about augmenting his classes and bringing new technology to his students. The majority of program participants came from either Latin America or Cape Verde, and had varied educational backgrounds and levels of computer experience. Most had attended high school in their homelands; a few students, although more advanced in their oral English, had had very little or no formal schooling.

Some students knew the basics of computing while one or two had never even touched a computer. Most of the learners required instruction in and practice with introductory computing skills: turning the computer on and off properly, using the mouse, and keyboarding. Steve realized that all students needed to become somewhat proficient in these areas before they could adequately utilize educational software, navigate the Internet, or do any basic word processing.

At first, Steve saw his role as computer instructor: teaching computer basics without integrating much, if any, language learning. Later, after he introduced the class to language-learning software, students initially were very excited, but the enthusiasm soon diminished markedly. He surveyed the class as to why they no longer wanted to go to the lab for as much time as they had before. The students responded that they felt that computers were interesting and helped in their practice of vocabulary and grammar. Yet, most said, they were coming to class primarily to interact with each other and not with a computer. Their ultimate goal was to speak English, and the more they went to the computer lab, the less opportunity they had to practice conversation.

## Pair Approach

Steve honored their wishes about reducing the time spent in the computer lab, but wondered how they could take advantage of the technology in less than one hour a week. He began to explore new ways to utilize the computers. Since there were not enough software CDs for everyone, students had already been sharing computers. If they continued to share computers, they could work on a language activity for pairs of learners that he would have normally used in the classroom. They could achieve their goal of interacting with each other rather than focusing on the technology.

One of Steve's first pair-approach activities involved a time-tested ESOL sentence-sequencing activity called a strip story. As used in the regular classroom, the teacher writes a brief story, putting each sentence on a separate line. The story is then cut into strips of paper, with one sentence on each strip. Next, the teacher puts students into groups and gives each group a complete set of the scrambled strips. Learners collaborate in creating a coherent story: they work on the skill of sentence sequencing while also practicing speaking.

Steve saw how learners could use the word processing program's Cut and Paste function to reorder the sentences. In the first part of the class, he taught the students how to use these functions. The learners then spent the rest of the time on the communicative aspect of the activity: working in pairs to decide the correct order of the sentences. This combined language practice with instruction in a computer function. Steve did some pre-teaching activities to introduce the concept of Cut and Paste. He brought in scissors, paste, and paper with sentences written on it, and had students cut off one line from the paper and change the order of sentences. This seemed to jump-start the learning process and helped students to understand the task. Halfway through the class, Steve realized that he should have started with a review of some of the prerequisite computer skills, such as clicking and dragging to highlight (select) text. This experience confirmed that it is just as important to do a well-thought-out "precomputer" activity before working on a new computer skill as it is to do a prewriting activity before working on a writing piece.

Steve also learned that it took more time than anticipated to demonstrate computer functions. At first he spent a lot of time running from student to student, helping each to get to the correct screen, while others waited in frustration or went ahead and perhaps got lost themselves. He realized that it is a good idea to make sure that each student moves together with the class, and to wait until everyone catches up before moving on to the next step. In other classes, he found that this was especially important during the earliest stages of computer use.

Steve's program had purchased a projection device, which he used to project the image of his computer screen on the wall, for his students to view. This allowed learners to interact with information in three different ways. They heard the explanation, saw the steps involved, and did what the Steve was doing as he gave instructions.

Although many students were anxious to learn word processing, Steve stressed that the primary focus of the class was not computing; learners were engaged in a cooperative language learning activity. They were working on an English project and learning computing as a tool. He encouraged students using computers by themselves to lean over and work with the classmate next to them.

A week after being introduced to Cut and Paste, Steve's class went back into the lab to create their own sentence-sequencing activity. Most of the class needed more practice. Nevertheless, they had achieved their stated objective of increased conversation, and they were also becoming comfortable with the basics of computing. By the end of the project, most students felt that they were learning to use a tool that would help them at work, home, and at school.

## Sentence Sequencing using Cut and Paste

***Language Objectives:*** Reading, sentence sequencing, discussion.

***Computer Prerequisite:*** Click to open documents on desktop, line return, highlight.

***Preparation***: Type at least five sentences, one sentence per line, into a word processing program, naming it *check*. (This can be a story, a recipe, directions, or a list of historical events on a theme or area of interest that the class is already prepared to read about.) Then reorder it and name it *scrambled*, saving both documents on a disk. Load both documents onto the desktop of each student's computer. Prepare an additional "short list" of words or sentences to use in your initial demonstration of cut and paste. Bring paper, scissors and paste.

***Activity*:**

- Introduce the vocabulary and concepts of Cut and Paste using real items such as scissors and paste.
- Review prerequisite knowledge such as highlighting/selecting text as well as the topic of the reading.
- On the computer, demonstrate how to Cut and Paste using your "short list" document.
- In groups of two or more, students open the file named *scrambled*.
- After reading, students discuss the appropriate order of the sentences and use the Cut and Paste function to reorder them.
- When each group is finished, students discuss with the whole class the order they chose and why.

At this point they can check the original document (the document named *check*). As a follow-up project and for those that finish early, have each student create his or her own paragraph, reorder it, and have the class put it in an appropriate sequence.

## Our Observations

Diana began to use this approach with her intermediate ESOL students at the Jamaica Plain Community Centers' Adult Learning Program (Jamaica Plain, MA). When less experienced computer users were paired with the more experienced, they could listen to the more advanced learner give instructions while applying them on the computer. The more advanced computer users could use English to communicate what they knew, practicing commands and bringing computer terminology into their working vocabulary. Students' incorporation of new vocabulary was evident in their improved ability to comprehend and follow instructions. Overall, those working jointly needed to ask Diana fewer questions about how to do the activity than did those working alone.

As learners worked together on the language aspect of the activity, they were also practicing grammar, vocabulary, and other communication skills. Students' overall fluency rose as they collaborated on group projects. A colleague who observed a class said he had never seen so much conversation in a group activity before. In both our classes, students' comfort and interest in working with computers grew. Learners' independent initiatives in the lab indicated their growth in confidence. Students no longer waited to be told to turn on the computer. Even before class started, they entered the lab, opened up programs, and began practicing their typing. People who initially were not confident working with computers were now more eager to engage in these activities.

The excitement and pride students feel is evident when they see the final draft of their writing projects come out of the printer. However, there are disadvantages to using word processing in a project. Students unskilled in typing are often hampered in their efforts to write their ideas down freely. Limited experience with keyboarding and with using word processing functions also can lead to frustration when learners attempt to make changes to their work.

## Developing a Curriculum

As we worked with our classes, we noticed that the students' overall knowledge of computing had a Swiss cheese quality to it: strong abilities and knowledge coexisted with surprising gaps. We had been using a predominantly constructivist approach to technology, in which the learners constructed knowledge by assimilating new experiences. The class decided on a theme, we introduced the computer skill necessary for a particular lesson, and then learners worked on discrete tasks, group activities, and writing projects. We had not considered the sequence of the computer skills needed to complete the task. For example, when learners were ready to create a final written product, we needed to teach such skills as how to make capital letters, format and edit documents, and save them. We spent an inordinate amount of class time on teaching the computer rather than language skills.

This showed us the value of incorporating an instructivist approach: sequenced, direct instruction. By teaching word processing skills cumulatively, and in a sequence that made sense, students could fill the holes in their knowledge of word processing. We developed a good idea of what computer skills the students already possessed at a particular time, and knew what computing activities they would be able to handle. We could then take the ESOL curriculum for each of our classes — including appropriate content, grammar, and language competencies — and integrate them with computer topics that ranged from the names of the parts of the computer to the basics of word processing techniques.

## Low Literacy Levels

We had initially thought that the integration of computers should await students' mastery of survival-level English. However, as more and more beginning learners asked for computer training, we began to adapt the lessons to their language needs. By adjusting the vocabulary and grammar structures, we found we could accommodate different levels of language proficiencies.

Diana accepted the position of Computer Instructor for beginning level ESOL at the school where she taught ESOL. Her students, from all over the world, comprised a range of abilities in reading, writing, speaking and listening. She wanted to use our approach to shape her course, so she began to adapt the book we had written — *Learning Computers, Speaking English: Cooperative Activities for Learning English and Basic Word Processing* (Quann & Satin, 2000) — for the language needs of very low level learners. She gave some thought to lessons that incorporated more basic language skills.

Before developing a plan for the course, Diana spoke to the ESOL teacher of one of the low-level classes to determine on which language skills students in those levels needed to work. The teacher mentioned that learners often confuse several similar-sounding letters: I, E, and Y; and C, S, and Z. In keeping with our idea of fostering communication among students, Diana developed a lesson that helped students learn about single clicking and to differentiate letters at the same time. For another lesson, she used a modified version of the Total Physical Response approach, in which she gave instructions, demonstrating as she spoke, and

the students mimicked her actions on their computers. See the box for the instructions she gave and modeled.

When students did not understand what to do, a student who spoke their native language explained the instructions in that language. The assistant computer instructor and Diana circulated and assisted pairs with computer functions or language when necessary. Students sitting next to each other leaned over to see their partners' screen to read the name of the letter while the student sitting at the computer repeated the name and clicked on the folder.

After trying this lesson out in three computer courses, Diana saw that it helped students learn to control the mouse better. Students said that they appreciated learning to discriminate the names of the letters and could communicate using them better than they had before. This indicated to us that learners, including those at a low literacy level, value the usefulness of both the language and the computer aspects of a lesson, and are able to succeed using technology in the classroom.

## Conclusion

Our experience demonstrated that much of what we consider to be good pedagogic practice in the regular classroom can be adapted to the teaching of ESOL using word processing. As in any learner-centered classroom, we found it helpful to assess the language and computing needs, as well as the interests, of students before beginning. We learned that considerable thought has to go into teaching the progression of skills in computer use and word processing, and that we must carefully analyze which prerequisite computer skills students must know before they can engage in a new project. Going to the computer lab only once a week demonstrated to us the need to reinforce recently learned computer skills. Working in pairs helped students to feel comfortable in meeting the challenges inherent in learning new computer functions, and provided a wonderful opportunity for language practice. Most significant was our successful use of communicative language-learning activities in the computer lab, through both instructivist and constructivist approaches. It made sense to spend time on communication activities that help in the teaching of a particular computer function before embarking on a project. Doing this, students are not simply taught a computer skill to complete a project, but also learn English in the process.

We believe that the useful integration of technology into ESOL instruction requires the advancing of learners' computer and language skills simultaneously. This empowers students to achieve both their educational and career goals and helps them feel more a part of our increasingly technologically oriented society.

## Letter Discrimination using Single Click

***Language Objectives:*** Letter discrimination

***Computer Prerequisite:*** Names and functions of computer parts, turning on the computer, the desktop, what a folder is, moving the mouse.

***Preparation:*** Bring enough disks for each student pair. Create a folder and name it **ABC**. Within that folder, create six more folders, each named with a different letter that students confuse. (See illustration.)

Have students form pairs and take turns sitting at the computer.


***Activity:***

- Give each student pair a disk. Have them locate the floppy disk drive (drive A on most PCs, A:\ drive using DOS) and insert the disk.
- Students click on the My Computer icon on the desktop to select it, and push the Enter key once to open it.
- Explain that this is called a window, and that it's the same as opening a window so they can see what's inside the house, the same as opening a book to see what information is inside.
- Students click on the icon that represents the floppy disk drive, and push the Enter key. Point out that this opens another window.
- Students click on the folder named **ABC**. Then press the Enter key. Tell students that this opens another window.
- In that folder students will see folders with letters under them.
- One partner reads a letter and the other one repeats the name of the letter and clicks on it. Take turns.
- Students close the windows by single clicking on the **X** in the top right corner of the window.

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