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ABSTRACT

The kit is intended for teachers beginning to teach English as a Second Language (ESL). The first part offers some ideas for testing, registering, and placing students according to their needs and goals. A sample registration form, placement test, list of commercially-available tests, and sample needs assessments are included here. The second section contains several lists of resources, including professional associations, community resources, and useful Internet sites. The third section presents information on how adults learn, descriptions of various kinds of language instruction, and tips for effective teaching. Section four focuses on integrating the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) and includes sample lesson plan forms and suggestions for realia use in the classroom. The fifth section offers ideas on classroom management, especially in the multi-level class, on working with students with special needs, and using volunteers. The final section gives an overview of curriculum development and lists curricula already developed. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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# The ESL Starter Kit

The Virginia Adult Education & Literacy Centers

July 1998

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This **ESL Starter Kit** is published in a three-ring binder format to facilitate use as a hands-on systematic tool and to accommodate updates. Think of it as work-in-progress which will be evaluated and re-designed as ideas from the field are submitted which give new insights into successful ESL programming.

A feedback form is available. After reading and/or using the **ESL Starter Kit**, you are encouraged to evaluate it carefully and submit suggestions for improvement by using this form or sending the information in another useful format.

You may also call in your feedback, using the toll free number listed below.

Copies of this kit are available from:

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We wish to extend our thanks to Michelle Williams, an ESL Instructor at the Adult Career and Development Center in Richmond, for her contribution, and to Barbara Marshall for her vision of this project and facilitating its creation.

## 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.

The first part 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 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 the fourth section. Some sample lesson plan forms are included. This section also offers suggestions for realia that can be useful in the adult ESL class.

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

The final section of the Kit offers an overview on curriculum development, along with a reference list of curricula already developed.

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

For programs that are just starting up, there are a few resources we recommend. These resources include

- **The ESL Literacy Kit** developed by Fairfax County Public Schools for use with literacy or beginning classrooms (a limited number of copies is available on a first come, first served basis from the Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Resource Center); and
- **The New Oxford Picture Dictionary** and **The ESL Teacher's Book of Lists** (ordering information included with the Kit).

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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## **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 as a second language (ESL) 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 ESL 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.

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. And successful communication is a large part of what our job is all about.

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## 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.

## 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, Maryann Datesman, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Prentice Hall, 1997.

***Beyond Language : Cross-Cultural Communication***, Deena R. Levine, Mara B., Ph.D. Adelman, 2nd Edition, Regents/Prentice Hall, 1993.

***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, 1990.

***The Culture Puzzle : Cross-Cultural Communication for ESL***, Levine, Baxter, McNulty, Prentice

***Culturgrams : The Nations Around Us : The Americas and Europe (Vol 1)***, Ferguson Publishing, 1997.

***Culturgrams 97-98 : The Nations Around Us : Africa, Asia, and Oceania (Vol 2)***, Ferguson Publishing, 1997.

***Do's and Taboos Around the World***, Roger E. Axtell (Editor), 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, John Wiley & Sons, 1993.

***Face to Face: the Cross-Cultural Workbook***, Virginia Vogel Zanger, Newbury House Publishers, 1985.

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

***Understanding Arabs: A Guide for Westerners (The Interact Series)***, Margaret K. Nydell, 2nd Revised Edition, Intercultural Press, 1996.

## **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.



### 3. Assessing Your ESL Learners

by Cheryl L. Greniuk

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

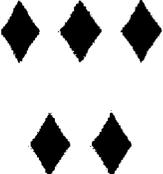
Once the student is in the program or class, *on-going assessment* is critical to ensure that learners know where they are making progress and in what areas they still need improvement. On-going assessment may be formal (e.g. a written test) or informal (e.g. teacher observation, checklists, etc.). In 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

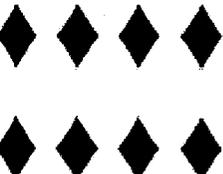
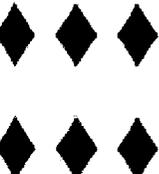
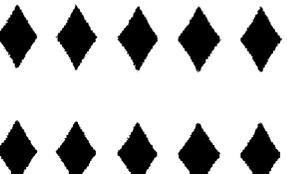
A *final assessment* should take place at the end of the class or program. The final assessment should again include both an evaluation by the teacher, as well as a student self-assessment. The final assessment may include testing, writing samples, portfolio review, or teacher observations. The final 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-6.

Sample placement test for lit. level

	1 <b>5</b> 7   8   6   4
---	--------------------------

Circle the correct number.

	4   2   5   3   9   0
	8   6   4   2   5   7
	2   3   5   1   0   4
	8   2   3   9   5   6
	7   6   9   10   1   8

Sample placement test for lit. level

YOU	YOUR	YOU	UOU	YUO
-----	------	-----	-----	-----

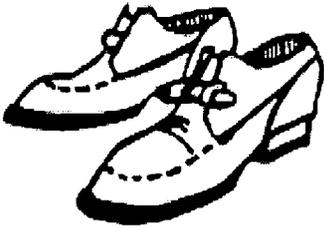
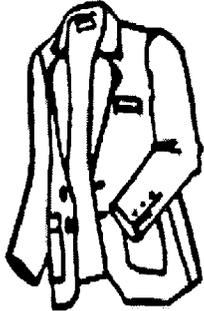
Circle the same word.

NO	ON	HO	MO	NO
HOW	WHO	WOW	HOW	HUM
SHE	HES	SEE	SHE	CHE
WHAT	WANT	WENT	WHEN	WHAT
THANK	THANK	THINK	TANK	THAN

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Sample placement test for lit. level

Circle the word that matches the picture.

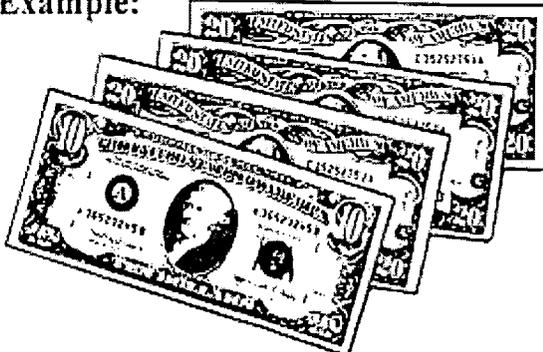
 <p><b>COAT</b> SHIRT JACKET</p>	 <p>SLACKS SHIRT SKIRT</p>	 <p>SWEATER SHIRT SKIRT</p>
 <p>DRESS SKIRT COAT</p>	 <p>SHOES SHIRT SWEATER</p>	 <p>SKIRT BLOUSE JACKET</p>

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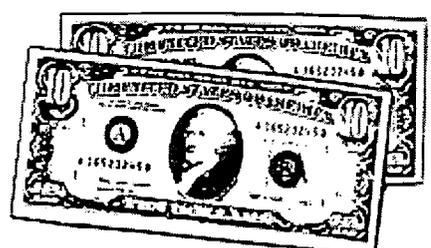
Sample placement test for literacy level

How much? Circle the correct words.

Example:



Seven Dollars  
 Seventy Dollars



Ten Dollars  
 Twenty Dollars



Fifty Dollars  
 Fifteen Dollars



Fourteen Dollars  
 Forty Dollars

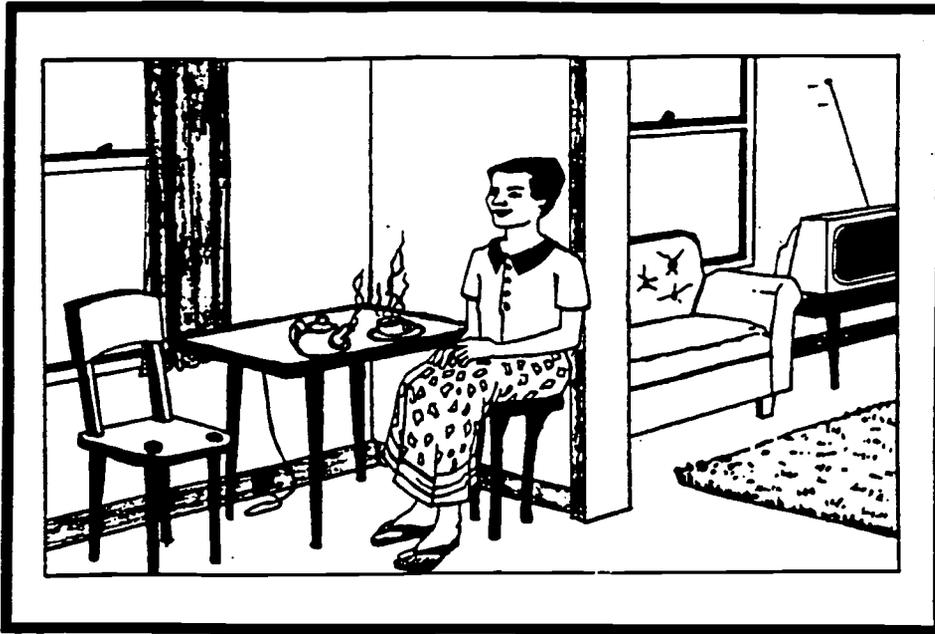


Two Dollars  
 Twelve Dollars



Five Dollars  
 Fifteen Dollars

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**My name is Mary Hall.  
I am 32 years old.  
I am a housekeeper in a hotel.  
I am single. I live in an apartment.**

**Answer the questions.**

- |                                   |   |                                 |
|-----------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| <b>Is her name Mary Hall?</b>     | <input checked="" type="radio"/> <b>Yes</b> | <input type="radio"/> <b>No</b> |
| <b>Is Mary Hall 23 years old?</b> | <input type="radio"/> <b>Yes</b>            | <input type="radio"/> <b>No</b> |
| <b>Is Mary a housekeeper?</b>     | <input type="radio"/> <b>Yes</b>            | <input type="radio"/> <b>No</b> |
| <b>Does Mary work in a home?</b>  | <input type="radio"/> <b>Yes</b>            | <input type="radio"/> <b>No</b> |
| <b>Does Mary live in a hotel?</b> | <input type="radio"/> <b>Yes</b>            | <input type="radio"/> <b>No</b> |
| <b>Is Mary single?</b>            | <input type="radio"/> <b>Yes</b>            | <input type="radio"/> <b>No</b> |

Sample placement test for lit. level

**P i c t u r e**

**P h r a s e s**



- at home
- at work**
- at school

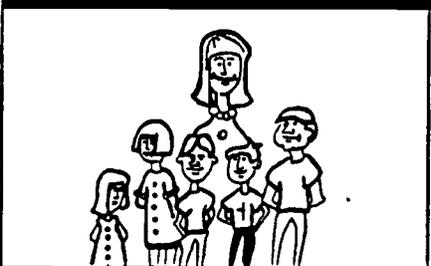
write: at work

**Circle the correct phrase and write it on the line.**



- old
- sad
- angry

write: \_\_\_\_\_



- no female
- no son
- no father

write: \_\_\_\_\_



- their boxes
- her bathroom
- his bedroom

write: \_\_\_\_\_



- He is a teacher.
- They are students.
- She is a student.

write: \_\_\_\_\_



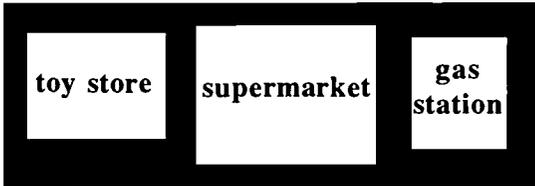
- She is washing dishes.
- The woman is eating eggs.
- Mother is cooking breakfast.

write: \_\_\_\_\_

Sample Placement Test

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**PART A: Look at the picture. Fill in the blank with the correct answer.**

<p><u>Example</u></p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><b>SIZE L</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">OUR PRICE <b>\$8.99</b></td> </tr> </table>	<b>SIZE L</b>	OUR PRICE <b>\$8.99</b>	<p><u>Example</u> The price is <u>\$8.99</u></p>																							
<b>SIZE L</b>																										
OUR PRICE <b>\$8.99</b>																										
	<p>1. No _____ turn.</p>																									
<p><b>Rx Pharmacy</b>          3456 Main Street          #2417131                      Refills 1                      Dr. Lee          S. Smith          123 N. Oak St. Arlington, VA 22200          Take 2 tablets 2 times a day with meals.          Ecophan                      10mg                      Qty 40</p>	<p>2. Take _____ pills every day.</p>																									
<p><i>Work Schedule</i>    Name: <b>M. Jones</b>    Week of 6/2/95</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th style="text-align: center;">MON</th> <th style="text-align: center;">TUE</th> <th style="text-align: center;">WED</th> <th style="text-align: center;">THU</th> <th style="text-align: center;">FRI</th> <th style="text-align: center;">SAT</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Start</td> <td style="text-align: center;">8:30</td> <td style="text-align: center;">8:30</td> <td style="text-align: center;">9:15</td> <td style="text-align: center;">9:15</td> <td style="text-align: center;">7:45</td> <td style="text-align: center;">7:45</td> </tr> <tr> <td>End</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4:00</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4:00</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5:15</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5:15</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2:45</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2:45</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	Start	8:30	8:30	9:15	9:15	7:45	7:45	End	4:00	4:00	5:15	5:15	2:45	2:45	<p>3. Mr. Jones worked _____ days.</p>				
	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT																				
Start	8:30	8:30	9:15	9:15	7:45	7:45																				
End	4:00	4:00	5:15	5:15	2:45	2:45																				
	<p>4. The toy store is _____ to the supermarket</p>																									
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>LIBRARY</b></p> <p>MON - WED    8:30 - 6:00          THUR - FRI    8:30 - 9:00          SAT                      9:00 - 9:00          SUN                      Closed</p>	<p>5. On Thursday, the library closes at _____.</p>																									
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>METRO SCHEDULE</b></p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th style="text-align: center;">Court House</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Clarendon</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Quincy</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Ballston</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>5:36</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5:38</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5:40</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5:42</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5:46</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6:06</td> <td style="text-align: center;">6:08</td> <td style="text-align: center;">6:10</td> <td style="text-align: center;">6:12</td> <td style="text-align: center;">6:16</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6:36</td> <td style="text-align: center;">6:38</td> <td style="text-align: center;">6:40</td> <td style="text-align: center;">6:42</td> <td style="text-align: center;">6:46</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7:08</td> <td style="text-align: center;">7:12</td> <td style="text-align: center;">7:14</td> <td style="text-align: center;">7:16</td> <td style="text-align: center;">7:20</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Court House	Clarendon	Quincy	Ballston	5:36	5:38	5:40	5:42	5:46	6:06	6:08	6:10	6:12	6:16	6:36	6:38	6:40	6:42	6:46	7:08	7:12	7:14	7:16	7:20	<p>6. You leave the Court House at 6:38.          You arrive at Ballston at _____.</p>
	Court House	Clarendon	Quincy	Ballston																						
5:36	5:38	5:40	5:42	5:46																						
6:06	6:08	6:10	6:12	6:16																						
6:36	6:38	6:40	6:42	6:46																						
7:08	7:12	7:14	7:16	7:20																						
<p><b>Total:</b> _____</p>																										

**PART B:** Read the paragraph below. Write the correct words from the box in the blanks.

like	from	and	want	I
am	live	to	my	is

My name is Maria. I am from Peru. My husband and \_\_\_\_\_ have one son. We \_\_\_\_\_ with my brother \_\_\_\_\_ sister. Our apartment \_\_\_\_\_ small. Someday I \_\_\_\_\_ a house of \_\_\_\_\_ own.

**PART C:** Read the story below and answer the questions.

My name is Mohamed. I came to the United States 2 years ago. I work in a gas station. In the evening, I study computers at an adult school. When I finish my studies, I will look for a new job.

I live in a small apartment with my two cousins. We work hard during the week. On weekends, we like to play soccer. Sometimes we go to a movie with our friends. Life is not easy, but we have fun, too.

Check (✓) Yes or No.

YES

NO

- |  |      |      |
|--|------|------|
| 1. Mohamed came to the U.S. 2 years ago. | ---- | ---- |
| 2. He works in a train station.          | ---- | ---- |
| 3. In the evening, he studies English.   | ---- | ---- |

Write the answer.

4. Who does Mohamed live with? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What do Mohamed and his cousins do for fun? \_\_\_\_\_

**PART D:** Write about you.

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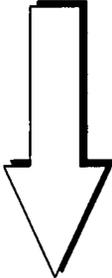


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**RECOMMENDED ESL TESTS FOR ADULTS**

	<b>LISTENING/SPEAKING</b>	<b>READING</b>	<b>WRITING</b>
<b>LITERACY LEVEL</b>	BEST ORAL INTERVIEW ESLOA NYS PLACE	BEST LITERACY	NATIVE LANGUAGE WRITING SAMPLE  DICTATION
<b>BEGINNING</b>	BEST ORAL INTERVIEW ESLOA NYS PLACE	ATEPL BEST LITERACY CELSA	WRITING SAMPLE Use <u>ESL Composition Profile</u> to score  
<b>INTERMEDIATE</b>	BEST ORAL INTERVIEW ESLOA NYS PLACE	ATEPL BEST LITERACY CELSA	
<b>ADVANCED</b>	ESLOA NYS PLACE	CELSA 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 from: 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  
1118 22nd Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20037  
(202) 429-9292

Adult Learning Resource Center 1855 Mt. Prospect Road Des Plaines, IL 60018  
(708) 803-3535 FAX: (708) 803-3231

**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: The Adult, Family & Alternative Education Team  
Attn. Dr. Patricia Mooney-Gonzalez  
Education Building, Room 307  
Albany, New York 12234  
(518) 474-8920

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Adult Learning Resource Center 1855 Mt. Prospect Road Des Plaines, IL 60018  
(708) 803-3535 FAX: (708) 803-3231

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**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  
1187 Coast Village Road Suite 1 - #378  
Montecito, CA 93108-1291  
FAX: (805) 899-1290  
<http://www.cappassoc.com/actt/actt.htm>

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**ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE ORAL ASSESSMENT (ESLOA)**

This test was designed to help tutors measure a student’s ability to speak and understand English. The test is divided into four levels of English proficiency. Level I assesses aural comprehension. Level II assesses basic survival vocabulary. Level III and IV assess ability to answer questions using selected verb tenses. Administration time varies according to student level. Survival topics and grammar structures are suggested for student lessons at each level.

Ways to use: Placement  
Achievement

Order from: Literacy Volunteers of America, Inc.  
5795 Widewater Parkway  
Syracuse, NY 13214  
(315) 445-8000

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Adult Learning Resource Center 1855 Mt. Prospect Road Des Plaines, IL 60018  
(708) 803-3535 FAX: (708) 803-3231

<b>CASAS TESTS</b>
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**ESL Appraisal Test:** This test assesses an individual's 'ability to apply basic listening and basic reading skills in a functional context.' The test is made up of four parts: Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking/Listening. The listening and reading sections each consist of 20 multiple choice questions. The writing test involves writing two sentence from an audio tape, and the speaking/listening section consists of a 5-item one-on-one interview.

**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.

Ways to Use: Placement  
Achievement

**Order from:** CASAS  
8910 Clairemont Mesa Blvd  
San Diego, California 92123-1104  
(619) 292-2900 ext. 310, or (800) 255-1036 ext. 310  
Fax (619) 292-2910

## 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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Isserlis, J. (1992). What you see: Ongoing assessment in the ESL/literacy classroom. "Adventures in Assessment", "2", 41-48.

Lytle, S.L., & Wolfe, M. (1989). "Adult literacy education: Program evaluation and learner assessment." Columbus, OH: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education. (ED 315 665)

Solorzano, R.W. (1994). "Instruction and assessment for limited-English-proficient adult learners" (Technical report TR94-06). Philadelphia, PA: National Center on Adult Literacy. (ED 375 686)

Sticht, T.G. (1990). "Testing and assessment in adult basic education and English as a Second Language programs." San Diego, CA: Applied Behavioral & Cognitive Sciences, Inc. (ED 317867)

Wilde, J. (1994). Next steps: Using the results to refine the project. In D.D. Holt, "Assessing success in family literacy projects: Alternative approaches to assessment and evaluation" (pp. 119-133). Washington, DC and McHenry, IL: Center for Applied Linguistics and Delta Systems.

Wrigley, H.S. (1992). "Learner assessment in adult ESL literacy." ERIC Digest. Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education. (ED 353 863)

Wrigley, H.S., & Guth, G.J.A. (1992). "Bringing literacy to life: Issues and options in adult ESL literacy." San Mateo, CA: Aguirre International. (ED 348 896)

### **RESOURCES**

"Adventures in Assessment: Learner-Centered Approaches to Assessment and Evaluation in Adult Literacy." (This journal is available from SABES Central Resource Center, World Education, 210 Lincoln Street, Boston, MA 02111.)

"Annotated Bibliography on ABE/ESL Assessment." (1992). (Davis & Arter). (ED 367 191)

"English as a Second Language Model Standards for Adult Education Programs." (1992). (Available from Bureau of Publications, California Department of Education, P.O. Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95812-0271.)

"Reviews of English Language Proficiency Tests." (1987). (Alderson, Krahnke, & Stansfield). (Available from TESOL, 1660 Cameron Street, Suite 300, Alexandria, VA 22314.)

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The National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE) is operated by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) with funding from the U.S. Department of Education (ED), Office of Vocational and Adult Education and the National Institute for Literacy, through the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, under contract no. RR93002010. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the Institute or ED.

## **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, has also published ESL entry-level descriptions in functional skills, which are tied to the Student Proficiency Levels (SPL) and the CASAS test. Many adult ESL programs 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 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 Crognat of the Center for Applied Linguistics, please contact the Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Resource Center.)

### 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.

## **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

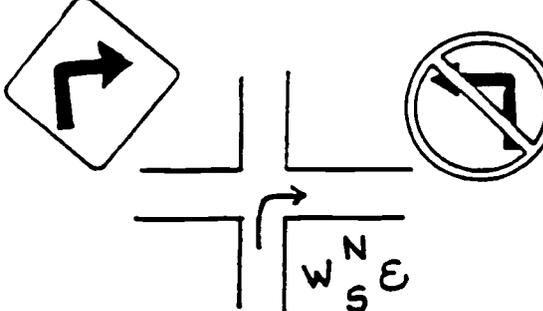
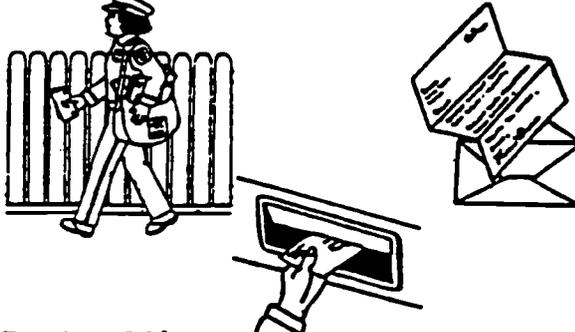
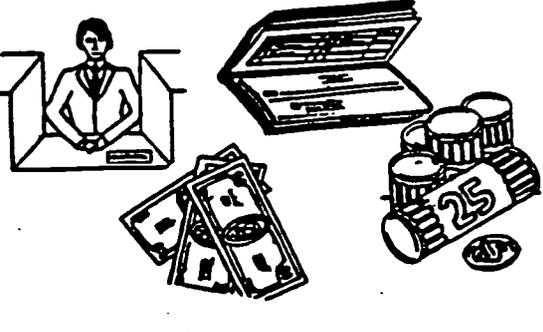
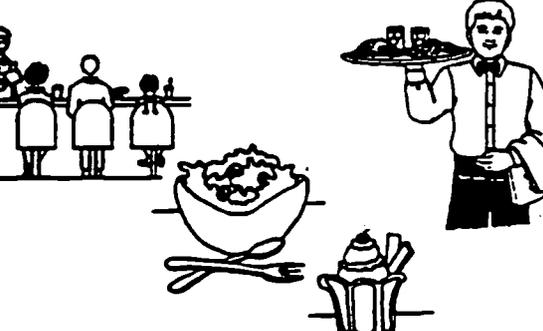
## **Suggested Ways of Gathering Student Information**

- 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

I need English for:	
 <p><b>Directions/Signs</b> _____</p>	 <p><b>Social Language</b> _____</p>
 <p><b>Post Office</b> _____</p>	 <p><b>Money/Banking</b> _____</p>
 <p><b>Emergencies</b> _____</p>	 <p><b>Food/Restaurants</b> _____</p>
 <p><b>Recreation</b> _____</p>	<p><b>Other:</b></p>

**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 high school diploma

\_\_\_\_\_ get a better job

\_\_\_\_\_ get a GED

\_\_\_\_\_ reading

\_\_\_\_\_ speaking

\_\_\_\_\_ writing

\_\_\_\_\_ other: \_\_\_\_\_

HOT TOPICS

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

\_\_\_\_\_ finding a job

\_\_\_\_\_ community (bank, post office, library)

\_\_\_\_\_ on the job

\_\_\_\_\_ shopping for food and clothes

\_\_\_\_\_ housing

\_\_\_\_\_ transportation

\_\_\_\_\_ health

\_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_

I have problems with (check all that apply)

\_\_\_\_\_ pronunciation

\_\_\_\_\_ writing

\_\_\_\_\_ grammar

\_\_\_\_\_ American culture

\_\_\_\_\_ reading

\_\_\_\_\_ conversation

\_\_\_\_\_ other: \_\_\_\_\_

**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 Greniuk

Once you have learned about the needs of your learner, you can begin to explore a variety of program models for meeting the learner's 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.

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## 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

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 insights. 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 understanding 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 programs. 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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## Adult ESL Literacy: Findings from a National Study

by Heide Spruck Wrigley  
ED365169 Sep 93. ERIC Digest

The 1990 Census reports that 25.5 million adults in the United States speak a language other than English. Of those, over 5 million indicate that they speak English “not well” or “not at all.” As the National Adult Literacy Survey (Kirsch, Jungeblut, Jenkins, & Kolstad, 1993) indicates, the number of immigrants who have difficulties with English literacy is significantly higher than the Census figures. Many immigrants have had only a few years of schooling in their home countries, and many have not had the opportunity to develop strong literacy skills in their native languages. Although they may have acquired some conversational skills in English, they often lack the reading and writing skills necessary for access to training, job mobility, or success in regular ESL classes. When immigrants who fit this profile seek services, they are often classified as “ESL literacy students.”

Recognizing that large numbers of adults enrolled in basic literacy programs are immigrants who speak English as a second language, Congress created the National English Literacy Demonstration Program for Adults of Limited English Proficiency. Under this program, the Department of Education in 1989 commissioned a two-year national study from Aguirre International in San Mateo, California, to identify effective and innovative instructional approaches, methods, and technologies used to provide literacy instruction for adult ESL literacy students. This digest summarizes some of the study’s findings, including profiles of learners in the programs studied, major issues the programs face, and funding and staffing concerns. It provides information for educators and decision makers interested in the challenges faced by adult ESL literacy programs and suggests directions for change. (See Wrigley, 1993b for a description of curriculum and instruction in these programs.)

### RESEARCH METHODS

The purpose of the study was to identify program issues and describe innovative approaches in adult ESL literacy programs to help practitioners, policy makers, and researchers improve instructional services for ESL learners with limited literacy skills. Aguirre staff conducted a literature review in adult learning, second language teaching, and literacy education; examined ESL literacy curricula; and reviewed program models across the country. Criteria for educationally sound programs were established, and using these criteria, 123 programs were nominated for case studies. Of these nominations, 9 programs were chosen for further study through on-site observations and interviews with teachers, students, and administrators. The following is adapted from the two major products of the study: the Project Technical Report (Guth & Wrigley, 1992) and a handbook, “Bringing Literacy to Life,” for teachers, administrators, and researchers (Wrigley & Guth, 1992).

### LEARNER PROFILES

Adult ESL literacy learners are by no means a homogeneous group in terms of their literacy backgrounds. While most have had only a few years of schooling, some come from literate societies, such as Mexico and El Salvador, while others, such as the Hmong, come from pre-literate societies where print is not common. Still others may have some experience with reading, but may not be familiar with the Roman alphabet.

Increasingly, program staff have come to recognize that ESL literacy learners, despite being classified as limited English proficient (LEP), bring a wealth of experience and background knowledge to the classroom. Teachers in the Aguirre study reported that these experiences and knowledge allow learners to handle successfully the language and literacy demands of their everyday lives: securing housing, enrolling their children in school, building strong families, accessing social services, and finding jobs. As the amnesty programs have shown, thousands of ESL learners, classified as low-literate, have successfully filled out immigration papers and negotiated their way through the complex legalization process (Wrigley, 1993a).

Often the extent to which immigrant adults are considered resourceful and educated by program staff depends on the level of support they receive from social networks—family, friends, and community groups (Fingeret, 1983). Those adults who are part of established immigrant communities tend to fare much better than those who do not share the language and cultural background of their neighbors. When cut off from social support, adults who do not have the English language and literacy skills needed to access services and voice their needs often face difficult challenges.

Many ESL literacy programs are designed to help learners acquire the English needed to face these challenges.

### PROGRAM ISSUES

Diversity is the hallmark of ESL literacy programs. They are found in many settings, such as within adult education programs and community colleges, in community-based organizations, and they increasingly appear at worksites and in union halls, libraries, prisons, churches, and housing projects.

ESL literacy programs may include the following types of instruction: basic literacy, general ESL, family literacy, workplace literacy, or community-oriented literacy sometimes offered in the native language. The types of literacy stressed often depend less on the greatest need in the community than on the availability of funding; the growth of workplace and family literacy programs can, at least in part, be attributed to the categorical funding that has become available in support of these topics in recent years.

Successful ESL literacy programs share the features and practices that characterize successful language learning programs. The curriculum is based on a needs assessment that identifies both the educational needs of immigrant groups in the community and the particular needs of those attending the program. Learner needs, program goals, and funding mandates are negotiated and combined into a coherent framework. Program mission, curriculum content, and learner assessment are evaluated and adjusted periodically. Making principled decisions about program goals and implementation is often easier for programs receiving money targeted for a specific effort such as family literacy or ESL for the homeless than it is for those that are merely adding an additional literacy class to an existing program, because targeted efforts allow programs to begin with a clearly articulated philosophy of literacy teaching.

### FUNDING AND STAFFING CONCERNS

Funding for ESL literacy instruction comes from federal and state sources, corporations, or foundations. Most ESL literacy programs are dependent on short-term (1 to 3 years) funding, which threatens their stability and continuity. Most depend on multiple funding sources, with different components running on different schedules and requiring their own final and interim reports. As a result, program resources are continually strained as administrators spend most of their time either filling out required forms or writing new proposals, and as teachers struggle to adapt the curriculum to the requirements of the various funding sources.

Quality programs require leadership, and most of those studied depend on the guiding light of a charismatic program director who secures funding, procures resources, motivates staff, coordinates services, and works well with policy makers and funders. Most programs are staffed by part-time teachers or volunteers. Given budget constraints, administrators often must decide between serving more students and spending money on developing a professional workforce with access to full-time positions. While none of the programs studied had made a commitment to hiring only full-time staff, some use a combination of full-time staff who receive benefits, contract teachers who work full time and receive few benefits, and part-time teachers who only teach a few hours and receive no benefits. In some programs, directors try to create full-time positions by offering teachers a combination of assignments. In these programs, staffing represents a patchwork of expertise held together by a shared commitment to quality education.

There is much concern about “ESL professionalism” as state directors, district administrators, and teachers debate who is qualified to teach ESL (Crandall, in press). Two major positions have emerged: Some educators maintain that adult education teachers will not be treated like professionals unless strong prerequisites for teaching, such as a TESOL certificate or a masters degree in ESL, are established. Others criticize the politics of requiring credentials alone and maintain that experience in teaching and working with the community, as well as proficiency in learners’ native languages, should be of equal importance (see Auerbach, 1992).

Despite the astounding dedication of ESL program directors and teachers, many are close to burnout, and some are seeking more secure jobs outside of the literacy field. Many teachers stay in the field because they can work with other creative teachers and are allowed a fair degree of autonomy in the classroom. Most remain committed to literacy work because they see themselves as guides, coaches, and facilitators who make

access to literacy possible for immigrants for whom all other doors to education have been shut.

### CONCLUSION

ESL literacy learners come to classes to learn English and strengthen their literacy skills so they can create a better life for themselves and for their children. For many, ESL classes are the first chance they have had to formally learn English and develop school-based literacy.

If programs are to provide quality ESL literacy services to this group, leadership and guidance are needed within programs, as well as from the agencies charged with supporting them. A strong staff is indispensable and should include a director who understands both ESL and literacy issues, facilitators or aides able to translate when misunderstandings occur, a curriculum developer who can link curriculum and assessment, and teachers who know how to bring literacy to life. Yet for many programs, working with a strong, knowledgeable staff is a difficult dream to achieve without dependable funding.

The tenuous nature of the programs studied makes it clear that administrators, teachers, learners, and other stakeholders must make their voices heard before significant change will take place. Funders must be made aware that short-term funding cycles offering small amounts of money strain the resources of programs and thus are not cost-effective. Programs need support for providing continuous services that extend from initial to advanced literacy and for collaborating with other educational providers.

ESL practitioners cannot address the multiple needs of ESL literacy students alone. To effect change, ESL programs and language minority communities must work together to document the need for literacy services and provide evidence of the success that ESL literacy programs can achieve.

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## **SECTION B**

### **ACCESSING RESOURCES: WHERE DO I FIND IT?**

1. Community Resources
2. Professional Associations for ESL Teachers
3. Virginia Adult Education & Literacy Centers
4. Internet Sites of Interest
5. ESL Periodicals
6. Publishers of ESL Materials

There are many resources 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 lots of places to start.

## **1. Community Resources**

### **CAREERS**

- Virginia Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation/Virginia Department of Commerce Licensing Division (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

### **CONSUMER SERVICES**

- Virginia Department of Consumer Affairs (800) 552-9963
- Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (804) 786-2042

### **CRISIS INTERVENTION**

- Local social services and comprehensive substance abuse and mental health

### **EDUCATION**

- Virginia Department of Public Affairs of Virginia Department of Education (804) 225-2020
- Head Start Region III (215) 596-0361
- ERIC (800) 538-3742 - Pamphlet - "How Can I Be Involved In My Child's Education?"
- Virginia Cooperative Extension - Call local office
- Virginia Department of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (800) 552-7917
- Virginia Department of Visually Impaired (800) 622-2155

### **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

- Local Department of Social Services or Statewide Human Services Information and Referral (800) 230-9677
- Food Stamps and Fuel Assistance (800) 552-3431
- Child Support Enforcement (800) 468-8894

### **GOVERNMENT SERVICES**

- Virginia Council on Human Rights (800) 633-5510
- 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) 487-2531
- 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
- The Asian American Drug Abuse Program (213) 293-6284 ask for “Help Your Child Succeed” available in Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Cambodian and Tagalog
- Asian Community Mental Health Services (510) 451-6729 ask for Pamphlet - “Drugs Are All Around Us... Help Your Child Avoid Them”
- March of Dimes - Information on pregnancy and birth defects (888)-MODIMES

**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
- Global Nomads International (202) 466-2244

**PROTECTIVE SERVICES**

- Division of State Labor Law Administration (Minimum wage, child labor, etc.) (804) 786-2387

**RECREATION**

- Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Recreational Facilities in Virginia (804) 786-5492

**SENIOR CITIZEN SERVICES**

- Virginia Department of Aging (804) 225-2271
- State Long-Term Care Ombudsman (800) 552-3402

### **TRANSLATION**

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

### **TRANSPORTATION**

- Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles  
Vehicle Services Info. (804) 367-0523  
Driver Services Info. (804) 367-0538
- American Automobile Association (AAA)
- Virginia Department of Transportation (Highway Helpline (800) 367-ROAD)
- Call local Transit System, also ask for Special Services for riders needing assistance

## 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](mailto: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 affiliate**  
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.

### 3. Virginia Adult Education & Literacy Centers

Oliver Hall Room 4080  
1015 West Main Street  
P.O. Box 842020  
Richmond, VA 23284-2020  
(800) 237-0178

The **Resource Center** operates a specialized, multimedia lending library for all adult education practitioners in the state of Virginia. The Resource Center also collects and disseminates local, state, and national resources, including learner, teacher, and program-generated materials. To access this information, call the toll-free number listed above or visit the library in person between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Resource Center personnel can mail packages of pertinent materials or connect the practitioner to alternative expert services.

The **Center for Professional Development** offers workshops and support on a wide range of adult education topics, including ESL. To obtain a catalogue of offerings, call the toll free number above or consult the website where there is also a full listing.

The Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Centers also maintain Web pages that contain full text documents, contact information, and links to Web sites of interest to ESL teachers. These pages may be accessed at the following address: <<http://www.vcu.edu/aelweb/>>.

## 4. Internet Sites of Interest

### 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 for ESL

**[http://lc.byuh.edu/cnn-n\\_page.html](http://lc.byuh.edu/cnn-n_page.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.

### Crossroads Cafe

**<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OUAE/xroads.html>**

### Dave’s ESL Cafe

**<http://www.eslcafe.com/index.html>**

Arguable one of the most user friendly sites on-line, 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.

### An Elementary Grammar

**<http://vweb1.hiway.co.uk/ci/intro.html>**

This site includes an EFL book list, a list of on-line dictionaries, explanations of difficult grammar concepts, and examples of grammar principles.

### 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://www2.gol.com/users/language>**

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.

### English Language Practice Pages

**<http://www.edunet.com/english/practice.html>**

Although this is a British site, it provides suitable practice pages for students learning American English. Sample tests are provided, as well as a six unit course from the National Extension College UK for those considering a career in ESL/EFL. There is also a small section on confusing words used in business English.

### ESL Bilingual and Foreign Language Teachers--Lesson Plans and Resources

**<http://www.scun.edu/~hcedu013/eslplans.html>**

This site has links to many other Web pages of interest to teachers. Some include helpful lesson plans and other materials for use in the ESL/EFL classroom.

Grammar for English Language Learners

**[http://www.tcom.ohiou.edu/OU\\_Language/english/grammar.html](http://www.tcom.ohiou.edu/OU_Language/english/grammar.html)**

On-line grammar exercises and activities are the main attraction at this site. There is also a section on "Special Problems in Grammar" which is also very helpful. Other information on grammar references and grammar help services are included.

Internet TESL Journal

**<http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/>**

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.

Language Teaching Software from Creative Education Resources

**<http://www.net-shopper.co.uk/creative/education/languages/martin/>**

This site includes a "clozemaker" program which allows the teacher to design on-screen cloze exercises for students.

NCLE

**<http://www.cal.org/ncle>**

The National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education features ERIC Digests on-line. These materials cover a wide range of topics on ESL literacy education.

Resources for Teachers

**<http://weber.u.washington.edu/~eslinfo/Lists/teacher.html>**

An on-line writing lab for students is maintained at this site. There is also a list of organizations for ESL teachers and a page of teaching resources.

Sara and John's TEFL Pitstop

**<http://lingolex.com/jstefl.htm>**

Games, feedback forums, book samples, and a virtual staff room are some of the helpful stops at this site. There are also request and contributions sections.

TESOL

**<http://www.tesol.edu>**

The "Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages" Web site 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 on-line exam. This site provides information about ordering the test, who should take it, and how these students can prepare for it.

Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Centers

**<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.

Virtual 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.4w.com/hoel/>

#### *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 19<sup>th</sup> 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.

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

#### *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. Four issues yearly.

Address: 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.

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

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

## ELECTRONIC PUBLICATIONS

### ***English as a Foreign Language Magazine***

<http://www.u-net.com/eflweb/home.htm>

Articles in this magazine are written by EFL\* teachers. Features include a notice board for questions and answers, a virtual book shop, product reviews, and updates on events and conferences.

### ***TESL-EJ***

<http://www-writing.berkeley.edu/TESL-EJ/ej09/toc.html>

This academic journal is for both teachers of English as a second language and teachers of English as a foreign language\*. Features include textbook reviews, teacher resources, and professional articles.

### ***The Internet TESL Journal***

<http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/>

This journal contains teaching techniques, projects, links, research papers and articles.

### ***The Language Teacher Online***

<http://langue.hyper.chuba.ac.jp/jalt/pub/tlt>

Games for the ESL classroom, reviews of materials, and opinions and features columns are featured.

\*ESL refers to English language instruction in an English speaking country to non-native English speakers. EFL refers to English language instruction to non-native speakers in a country where English is not the primary language.

## 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/abe>

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

**Prentice Hall Regents**  
200 Old Tappan Road  
Old Tappan, NJ 07675  
1-800-223-1360  
<http://www.phregents.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*.

## 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 ESL Learner

Getting to know your ESL 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

## **WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT ADULT LEARNERS**

*from the Spanish Education Development Center, Washington, D.C.*

### **1. Diverse Roles and Life Responsibilities**

Because adult learners, unlike children, have many life responsibilities and roles (including work, parenthood, extended family, social and spiritual life), they need a different classroom structure than do children. Their busy schedules preclude going to class at certain hours or completing homework every night. Teachers of adults have to understand irregular attendance and to plan class activities as a unit within each class meeting. In this way, students who can not complete homework or come to class every night will still be able to take advantage of learning opportunities.

Since adults are interested in so many different domains outside the classroom, it is essential to bring these interests to the class in the form of relevant curricula and individualization of learning activities. Students' own experiences can be used in lessons both to help individualize and to make curricula more relevant.

### **2. Relevance of Curriculum to Students' Lives**

Because adults become impatient when they don't perceive an immediate application for what is being taught, they should be given opportunities for input into the curriculum regarding their most urgent needs. Understanding the relevance of activities to their daily lives will also encourage students to persevere, as will feedback from the teacher.

### **3. Learning is Voluntary**

Because adult learning is voluntary, teachers need to keep up student interest in the classes. Interest in the course will remain high if students actively participate. Homework assignments, if any, should be given as "suggested" rather than "required" work. Because adults have varied reasons for taking classes, (they may be goal-oriented, activity-oriented or socially-oriented), teachers need to cultivate an informal and entertaining teaching style. Learning goals with different types of activities for learning, practicing, recycling and reviewing help students maintain their interest.

### **4. Different Learning Styles**

Because adults (like children) have a variety of different learning styles, teachers should match these with a variety of teaching styles. Teachers should provide activities for all of the senses, for the entire class, for small groups, and for pairs. They should individualize activities by grouping students and utilizing volunteer support. Students also can share their learning strategies with each other.

## 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 you. 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  
C-4

## 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)

*Used with permission of author*

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
<b>DEFINITION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A traditional approach that considers grammatical structures and vocabulary items to be the primary focus of language instruction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A topical/functional approach that considers meaningful communication to be the primary focus of language instructions.</li> </ul>
<b>CHARACTERISTICS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>teacher centered</li> <li>grammar based</li> <li>abundant drill/translation practice</li> <li>controlled, predictable learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>student centered</li> <li>communication based</li> <li>abundant student ↔ student interaction (pairs, small groups, whole class)</li> <li>variable rate acquisition</li> </ul>
<b>OUTCOMES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>knowledge about the target language</u></li> <li>ability to complete drills/ translations; ability to respond to structured questions in classroom (linguistic competence)</li> <li>limited but readily measurable language learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>oral proficiency in the target language</u></li> <li>ability to communicate in real-life situations (communicative competence)</li> <li>flexible acquisition rates varying with student interest and aptitude</li> </ul>
<b>METHODS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grammar Translation Method</li> <li>Audio-Lingual Method</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicative Approach</li> <li>Total Physical Response (TPR)</li> <li>Direct Method</li> </ul>

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

STRUCTURAL	COMMUNICATIVE
<p><b>Grammar Translation Method</b> Focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• memorization of grammar rules and vocabulary</li> <li>• reading and writing skills</li> <li>• literature in the target language</li> </ul> <p>Goal: to learn grammar rules and vocabulary; to be able to read in the target language</p>	<p><b>Communicative Approach</b> Focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• oral communication as primary skill</li> <li>• conversational ability more important than correct grammar</li> <li>• small group and pair activities</li> </ul> <p>Goal: to become communicatively competent; to be able to use the language appropriately</p>
<p><b>Audio-Lingual Method</b> Focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• repeated language patterns</li> <li>• grammar learned through sentence substitutions and dialogues</li> <li>• controlled spoken language</li> </ul> <p>Goal: to overlearn the target language in order to use it automatically</p>	<p><b>Total Physical Response Approach</b> Focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• listening comprehension as primary skill</li> <li>• physically active learning situations</li> <li>• language learning games</li> </ul> <p>Goal: to provide a low-stress means to communicative language learning</p>
	<p><b>Direct Method</b> Focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• speaking and listening as primary skills</li> <li>• use of actions and visual aids to clarify meaning (allows no translation)</li> <li>• no formal instruction of grammar</li> </ul> <p>Goal: to communicate and think in the target language</p>

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

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## Eight Approaches to Language Teaching

ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics

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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

### 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.

### 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.

**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.

### 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.

### 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.

### Suggestopedia

**Goals:** To learn, at accelerated pace, a foreign language for everyday communication by tapping mental powers, 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

presented 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.

### **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.

### 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.

### **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.

*Adapted from Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching by Diane Larsen-Freeman. Copyright 1986 by Oxford University Press, Inc. Adapted by permission.*

## Current Terms In Adult ESL Literacy

by Ana Huerta-Macias

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“Whole language,” “learner-centered,” and “participatory” are terms often heard in discussions of language and literacy learning. They may be used as catchwords without a clear articulation of the underlying concepts to which they refer and of the forms they take in actual literacy programs. This digest defines these concepts and discusses their application to adult learning in ESL literacy programs.

### THE WHOLE LANGUAGE APPROACH

Ken Goodman is one of the educators most often associated with the term “whole language” and one of the earliest and principle advocates of the whole language approach as we know it today. Goodman (1986) described whole language as a “top-to-bottom,” rather than a “bottom-up,” view of language learning, a view that does not break language into bits and pieces. Language is taught in real and natural contexts, and thus, language learning is easier and more interesting and relevant to the learner. Rather than depend on basal readers, textbooks, and workbooks that often stress decontextualized language exercises, whole language teachers build on learners’ existing knowledge and work with learners on authentic reading and writing activities, such as reading trade books, writing letters, or developing and working on extended writing projects. Learners, therefore, develop control over the mechanics of language through real reading and real writing.

Whole language, however, cannot be reduced to a set of activities or strategies, but instead involves basic assumptions about how students learn. Whole language practitioners believe that language is a social process that is learned as we interact within a given context; that students bring knowledge to the classroom that should be valued, respected, and built upon; that language learning involves risk, and students should be encouraged to try and try again if they fail; and that form follows function in language development and not vice versa.

The whole language movement originated with elementary educators. How can these principles apply to the teaching of adults learning English? A teacher in an adult literacy program can incorporate a whole language approach first by recognizing that most adults already know a great deal about how language works. Even though they may not be able to read or write proficiently in English, adult ESL students come to literacy programs with many years of experiences that have developed their world knowledge, oral language, and reading and writing and have shaped their views of what literacy is and how and why it is learned.

One of the first steps a whole language teacher should take is to share with learners his or her views on how language is learned. The notion that literacy is functional and contextual should be emphasized, as many adults come to the classroom with the notion that literacy is an academic hurdle to overcome rather than a tool for larger goals or everyday needs. Finally, learners should be encouraged to take risks and develop their literacy in ways that are relevant to their personal situations. This elaboration of assumptions about whole language opens the way for the teacher to introduce activities such as journal and letter writing, the language experience approach (see Taylor, 1992), and story writing and publishing, rather than focusing on drills and grammar exercises.

Some educators have learners write personal stories reflecting their experiences—sorrows, joys, problems, and memories—and publish them to use as a basis for additional reading, writing, and discussion activities (see Peyton, 1991, for examples).

Authentic reading that is meaningful and of interest to learners is also part of the whole language approach. As Smith (1983) points out, “The only way to make learning to read easy is to make reading easy” (p.23). By this he means that students learn to read only by reading and focusing on meaning and not primarily focusing on words, pronunciation, speed, or accuracy.

Because standardized tests are not a major part of the whole language classroom, teachers in whole language literacy programs use alternative measures of evaluation that are integrated into the daily classroom activities and thus reflect the use of language in real contexts. Such measures include, for example, the holistic examination of learner stories, learner self-observation forms, and journals. Comprehensive reviews of alternative

measures of evaluation in adult ESL and family literacy programs may be found in Holt (in press) and Wrigley (1992).

### **THE LEARNER CENTERED APPROACH**

In a learner-centered approach, “learners are closely involved in the decision-making process regarding the content of the curriculum and how it is taught” (Nunan, 1988, p.2). Jurmo (1989) points out that there are different levels of learner participation. A learner may participate by simply signing up for a course and being physically present. What is aimed for, however, is the highest level of participation, in which learners have considerable control and responsibility for classroom activities.

A learner-centered approach, also referred to as a student-centered or worker-centered approach, involves collaboration between teachers and learners; through ongoing dialogue, they determine the content of the curriculum and the learning objectives. This approach focuses on learners’ real-life needs; learner responsibility in setting personal and realistic goals and determining the steps toward achieving those goals; flexibility—as students progress and reflect on their learning, content and goals may be modified; and learner self-assessment.

Learner-centered curriculum development thus differs from traditional curriculum development methods, in which the planning process takes place in advance without student input, and a lockstep order for instruction and evaluation is followed. A learner-centered curriculum complements and extends the whole language approach. It incorporates the notion that literacy is functional and contextual, and it uses learners’ background knowledge and experiences as a starting point for curriculum development. It extends whole language beliefs by emphasizing that language learning is a collaborative effort between teacher and learner, characterized by ongoing dialogue to determine the content and learning objectives for the course.

Huerta-Macías (in press) provides an example of a learner-centered orientation in an adult literacy program. A preprogram meeting and individual interviews were held at each program site with those families who had enrolled, to learn about their goals, needs, and interests. The curriculum themes were then designed around the expressed desires of the participating families. This curriculum and the learning activities were modified at several sites during the course of the project, as a result of ongoing dialogue between staff and families and of specific circumstances that developed. At one site, for example, a lesson on plants evolved into a discussion and corresponding learning activities on the medicinal use of herbs and plants, a subject about which the parents knew a lot and which was interesting and relevant to them. At another site, a lesson on personal hygiene was developed because several cases of hepatitis broke out during the project.

### **THE PARTICIPATORY APPROACH**

The participatory approach was popularized by the work of Paulo Freire, an educator who developed the approach while working with peasant groups in Brazil (see Spener, 1990). Freire stressed in his writings that the prior experiences, knowledge, strengths, and community concerns of the learners must be the starting point for literacy instruction. Freire also stressed the use of literacy development for personal transformation and social action. A participatory approach not only develops words and themes meaningful to learners, but also extends those themes and activities into action that will better the learners’ lives.

The term “participatory” is often used interchangeably with “learner-centered.” Indeed, the participatory approach is also a learner-centered approach in that the content and learning objectives are determined through ongoing dialogue between teacher and learners. The participatory approach, however, goes beyond a learner-centered approach because it advocates literacy as a vehicle for personal transformation and social change. Learners discuss issues in class that are significant to them and determine ways of dealing with these issues in real life. Learners are seen as agents for change, for bettering their lives and the lives of those close to them. This may involve a parent using literacy to help a child with her schooling or to advocate for the child within the school. Thus, the participatory approach extends the themes discussed in class to action outside the classroom.

Educators have elaborated extensively on the participatory approach to literacy. Auerbach (1992), for example, writes about the importance of social context as a resource that informs literacy development. She notes that if educators define literacy broadly, to include a range of activities and practices that are integrated into the fabric of daily life, the social context becomes a rich resource that can inform rather than impede learning.

Fingeret (1989) defines participatory literacy education as a philosophy and a set of practices “based on the belief that learners—their characteristic, aspirations, backgrounds, and needs—should be at the center of literacy instruction.... Learners help to define, create, and maintain the program” (p.5). For example, a teacher may learn from a Hispanic family that their children have been raised to value cooperative, rather than individual, work. Thus, rather than viewing the child’s hesitancy to engage in competitive behavior in the class in a negative light, the teacher appreciates this cultural difference and provides more opportunities for this child to engage in group work within the class.

An example of the application of a participatory approach to curriculum development in a family literacy program can be seen in Auerbach (1992), who describes a program in Boston. The process, which she stresses is cyclical and not linear, includes listening activities to find student themes; exploration of themes through a variety of activities such as photo stories, oral histories, and language experience stories; extending literacy to action inside and outside of the classroom; and an evaluation process that includes learners reflecting on their own progress.

## CONCLUSION

Whole language, learner-centered, and participatory approaches to literacy instruction are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they are complementary and share basic philosophies. All three approaches advocate that the learner should inform literacy instruction, that learners and their background knowledge and experiences should be respected and valued, and that learning activities should be relevant to learners’ personal situations. The three approaches also differ. Whole language works from whole to part and emphasizes function over form; learner-centered is concerned with collaborative decision-making about the curriculum; and participatory focuses on literacy as a vehicle for personal and social change.

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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 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

Preparing food (sandwich, French toast, salad, popcorn)

Making cards (thank you notes, get well cards, holiday cards)

Class projects (simulations, bulletin boards, skits)

### In the community

Taking field trips (to the bank, market, malls, library, city hall)

Mapping the school or the neighborhood.

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 themselves 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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*Special thanks to Susan Huss and Peggy Seufert-Bosco for their helpful comments on this digest.*

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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 had 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.

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## 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
- lower resistance
- 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.

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## LESSON PLANNING FORM

**TOPIC** \_\_\_\_\_

**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 \_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON PLAN

### I. WARM UP / REVIEW / RETEACH

- a. \_\_\_\_\_ warm up
- b. \_\_\_\_\_ students practice previously studied material

**Method:** \_\_\_\_\_ realia, \_\_\_\_\_ visuals, \_\_\_\_\_ written materials, \_\_\_\_\_ activity, \_\_\_\_\_ other

### II. PRESENTATION

- a. \_\_\_\_\_ establish purpose for lesson
- b. \_\_\_\_\_ provide information
  - \_\_\_\_\_ visuals / realia                      \_\_\_\_\_ describe or explain
- c. \_\_\_\_\_ model new learning
  - \_\_\_\_\_ provide examples                      \_\_\_\_\_ work with the language needed
- d. \_\_\_\_\_ 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

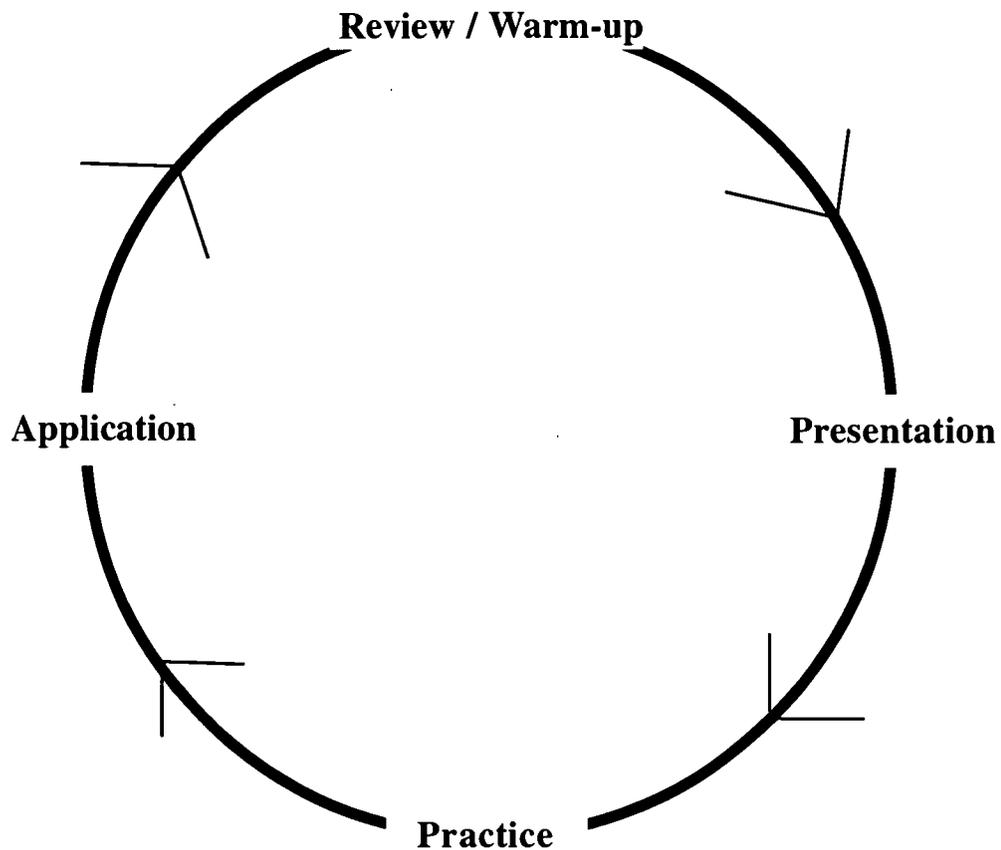
### III. PRACTICE

- 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**

<b>I. WARM-UP, REVIEW, RETEACH</b>	
<b>II. PRESENTATION</b>	
<b>III. PRACTICE</b>	
<b>IV. APPLICATION</b>	

Source: Illinois Adult Learning Resource Center

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

*By Joanna Escobar, Illinois State Board of Education and Denise McKeon, Bilingual Education Service Center, Washington, DC.*

### 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 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 means 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 life-giving 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 personal loss of self-esteem, peer respect, and the 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 say one of the characteristics will result in lessened 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 as 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 several disguises and 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 had 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, 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 pattern to be used in describing 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 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 expressiveness, 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 student communication is a function of one basic process: selection. Now that the student possesses a repertoire of language, every student-initiated question asked, 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 is a matching of creativity and imagination to functional language patterns.

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

- e) directed discourse: is a use of structured situation to encourage students both to choose and use language that is appropriate to a specific situation and the same time to help students safely encounter situations which, up to this time, 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 characteristic 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 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!

The 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.

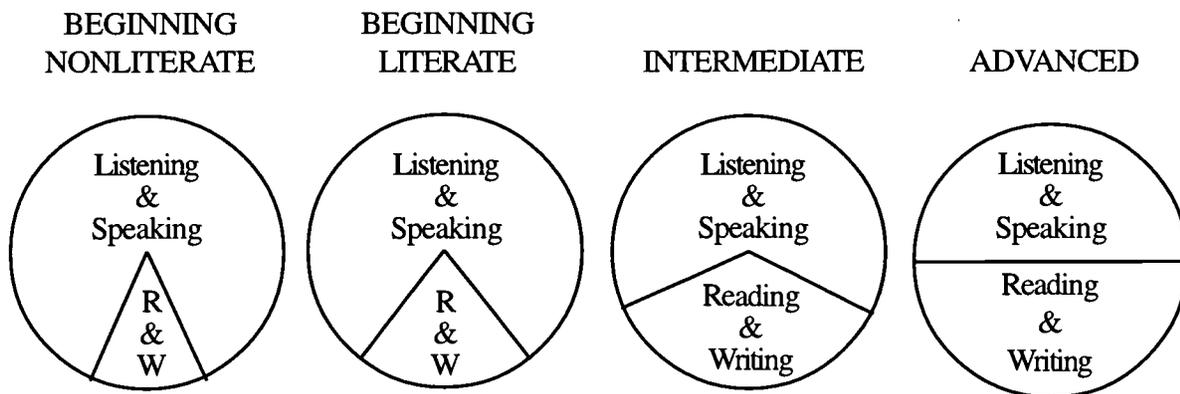
### **PHASE IV - REVIEW, RECOMBINATION, OR RETEACHING**

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 Education and Literacy 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

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Illinois Adult Learning Resource Center

## 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.

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

### **Sample Reading Assessment**

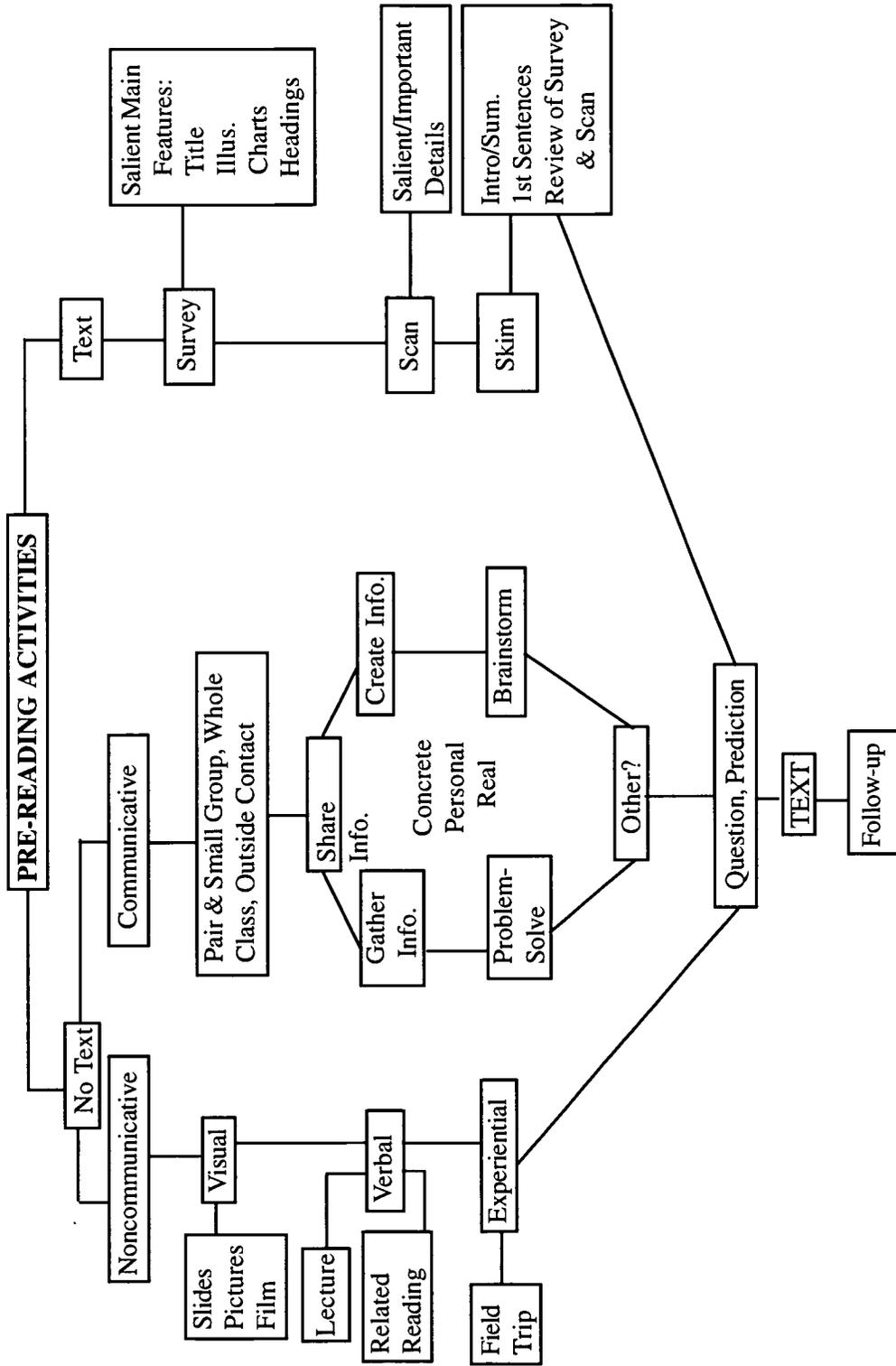
#### ***Circle True or False:***

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 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:

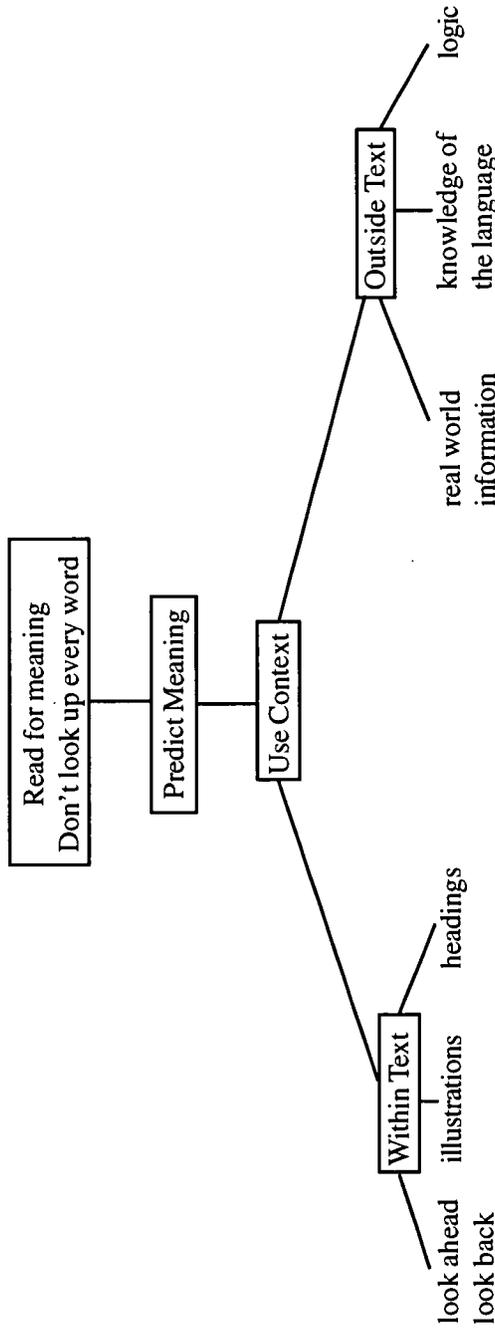
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Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Center for Professional Development, ESL Basics, Jan. 1996.



**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 hierarchy 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
<b>One:</b>  Mechanical skills	Discrimination of shapes, letters, numbers  Directionality and spacing	Preliterate  Nonliterate  Non-Roman alphabet	Same/different, matching, tracing, copying
<b>Two:</b>  Connecting written language with oral language	Developing a base of written English  Using print to reinforce oral language practice	Starts from Stage 1  Semi-literate  Literate in own language, but no knowledge of English	Dialogues  Sight Word Exercises  Language Experience  Total Physical Response
<b>Three:</b>  Reading for new information	Obtaining NEW meaning  Sampling, predicting, confirming/rejecting strategies	Starts from Stage II  Transferable native language reading skills and some knowledge of English	Short simplified reading passages with new information  Pre-reading exercises  Silent Reading  New vocabulary from context
<b>Four:</b>  Reading for different reasons	Utilizing different reading strategies for a variety of materials	Starts from Stage III  Transferable reading skills in native language and good knowledge of English	Surveying  Scanning  Skimming
<b>Five:</b>  Independent Reading	Selecting appropriate strategies for a variety of materials	Starts from Stage IV	Self-selected material

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## 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.

### 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

## 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.

## 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 or 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.

### **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 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:

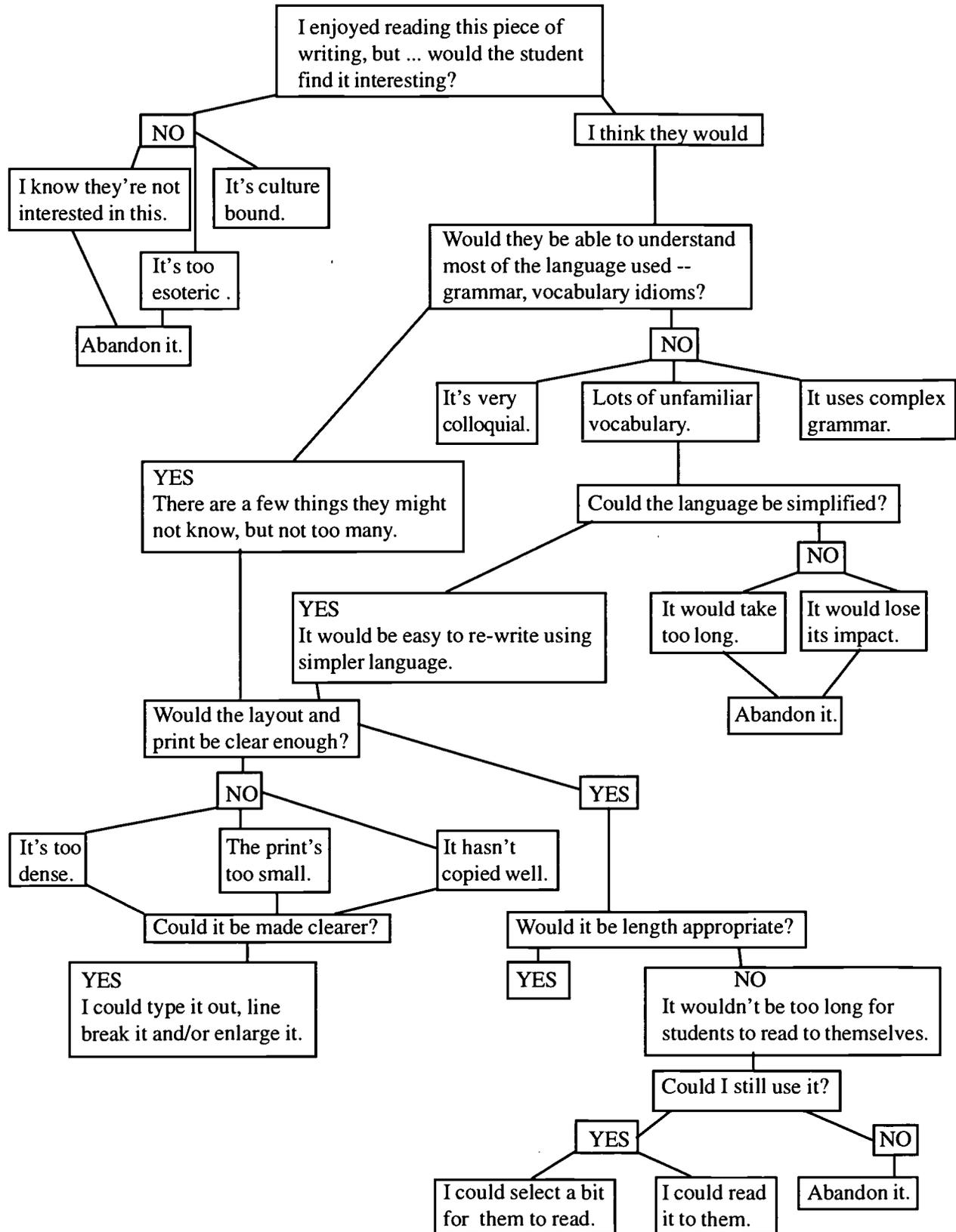
- Do the readings challenge readers to think?
- Are the readings authentic, relevant, and age appropriate?
- Is there continuity between readings?
- Are there several readings on each theme?
- Is the text long enough to provide for a variety of topics and for student selection but not overwhelming?
- 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

Elsa Auerbach, University of Massachusetts, Boston



# Teaching ESL Writing

<b>Controlled</b>	Forms
	Charts
	Grammar Practice
	Dictation
.....	
<b>Semi-Controlled</b>	Interviews
	Model Paragraphs
	Pictures
	Sequencing
.....	
<b>Free</b>	Story Completion
	Giving Opinions
	Giving Advice
	Dialogue Journals

## 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, 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 tasks are 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 other 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 faces, 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 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”. Do that 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 and 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 interesting 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 interesting. 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, 911 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 publications 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 to a large enough size 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*.

### 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 way to preserve them 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 on. 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, "This 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 rolls after each answer, but if they are pretty proficient in this skill, they should not switch rolls until all the cards on the table have been used. Whoever ends up with the most correct answers 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 the score on the chalkboard. To make this more difficult, as students progress, add more colors to the primary set (*e.g., beige, pink, violet*).

Whenever 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, "This 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 and Natalie Hess, Alta Book Center Publishers, 1997:

### 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 song 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 you have the lyrics for. 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 book, *Listening and Speaking Activity Book* accompanying the *New Oxford Picture Dictionary*, have sets of them in the back 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. Play 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 both, or 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. Or, 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 them 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 work out the correctness of the sentences as a group on the board, having the students correct them as you write them up.
4. **From poetry:** pick a poem that suits the level and content you want, with a few odd words for them to learn, and write it on the board.

### How To Do It:

1. First, work on reading the paragraph or sentences or poem. You can read it together first 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, take the eraser and 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?

### *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.

(Reprinted with permission of author.)

*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 *Peperwork: Contemporary Poems from the Job*, Tom Waymans, 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.)

## 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

# 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.

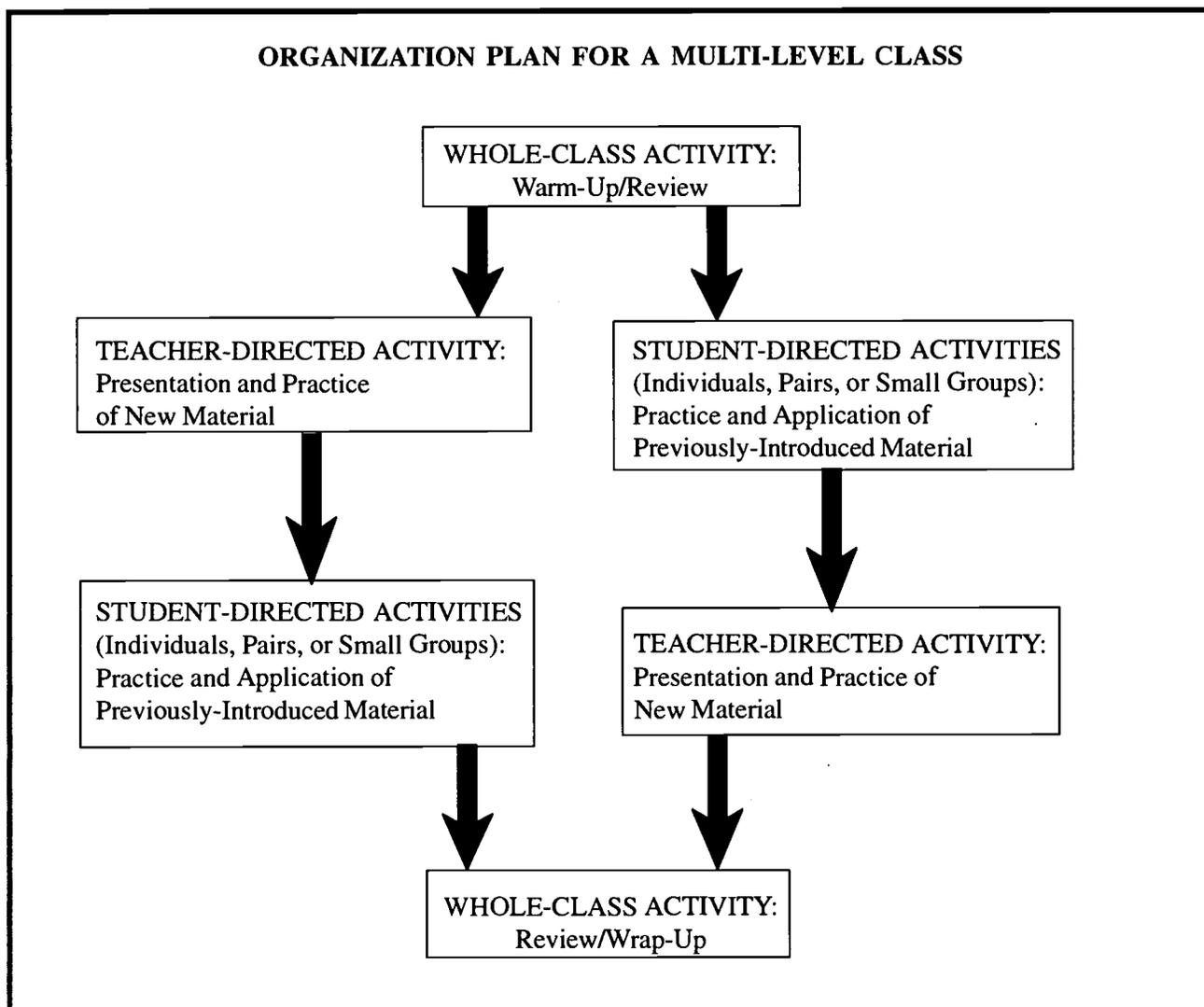


Chart developed by Catherine Porter

## 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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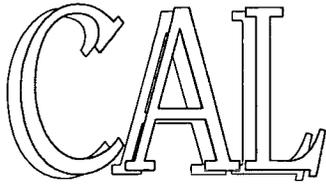
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Refugee Education Guide  
Adult Education Series #13

**Grouping**

**Peer Tutoring**

**Small Group  
Activities**

**Volunteers**

**Performance  
Objectives**

**Tutors**

**Resource Labs**

**Language  
Experience  
Stories**

**Strip Stories**

**Cloze Exercises**

# Teaching ESL in a Multilevel Classroom

Refugee Service Center  
Center for Applied Linguistics  
Washington, DC 20037  
Tel: (202) 429-9292

March 1982

E-7

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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

Canzano, Phyllis M. and D.M. Canzano. *A Practical Guide to Multilevel Modular ESL*. Portland, OR: English Language Services, 1974.

Elliot-Evans, Liz, and Barbara Lindsey Sosna. "What Goes on in a Portable Multilevel Classroom", *Classroom Practices In Adult ESL*, Ilyin and Tragardh (eds.), Washington, D.C.: TESOL, 1978.

- Fisher, Janet G. "Individualizing Instruction in the ESL Classroom Through Grouping," *CATESOL Occasional Papers #3*, 1976-1977, pp. 51-58.
- Hunter, H. Baird and Pat Barr-Harrison. "Look What They've Done to My Class, Ma!", *Foreign Language Annals*, Vol. 12:5, 1979, pp. 25-28.
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- Strasheim, Lorraine A. "The Issue: Multilevel Classes", *Foreign Language Annals*, Vol 12:5, 1979, pp. 23-25.

## Appendix B

### Activity and Game Resources

- Lee, William R. *Language Teaching Games and Contrasts*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- McCallum, George P. *101 Word Games*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.
- Olson, Judy Winn-Bell. *Conversation Starters*. San Francisco: Alemany Press, 1977.
- Spence, Dwight. *Word Games in English*. New York, Regents Publishing Co., 1976.
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## 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 your learners 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.

## ESL Instruction for Learning Disabled Students

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ERIC Digest . January 1996

The lack of success some adults experience in learning may be due to learning disabilities (Lowry, 1990; Osher & Webb, 1994). An Interagency Committee on Learning Disabilities identifies persons of average or above average intelligence who encounter significant difficulties with listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities or with social skills as learning disabled (Langner, 1993, Osher & Webb, 1994). Little is known about how these disabilities affect adults studying English as a second language (ESL).

This digest looks at what *is* known about learning disabilities and adult ESL learners, and addresses the following questions: How do learning disabilities affect the progress of adults learning English? How can learning disabled adults be identified and assessed? What kinds of instructional methods work best with this population? What kind of preparation is needed for teachers who work with them?

### LEARNING DISABILITIES AND SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Learning disabilities can affect every aspect of learning. They may impair multiple skills and abilities or they may impair only one. For example, difficulties with spelling may affect learners' writing skills, but not their reading skills. Learners may show learning disabilities in their second language yet not in their first. Often a subtle learning disability in the first language is masked by an individual's compensatory strategies (e.g., getting general information about what is said or written through the overall context when specific words or concepts are not understood or substituting known words for words that cause difficulty). However, these strategies may not be available to the learner in the new language (Ganschow & Sparks, 1993; Lowry, 1990).

### IDENTIFYING ESL ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

It is difficult to determine how many adult ESL learners have learning disabilities. Estimates of the total U.S. adult population who are learning disabled range from as low as 3% to as high as 80% (Langner, 1993; Lowry, 1990; McCormick, 1991; Osher & Webb, 1994). The percentage of learning disabled students in adult education classes may exceed that of the population as a whole (Lowry, 1990). It is not known, however, if this is true in adult ESL classes.

The process of identifying any one adult, child, native English speaker, or ESL learner as learning disabled can be stigmatizing (McCormick, 1991). Therefore, educators stress weighing the advantages of identifying adults as learning disabled (making them eligible for special instruction, resources, and services) against the possible stigma of the label (Lowry, 1990).

Before identifying an adult as learning disabled, other reasons for lack of expected progress should be considered.

Limited previous educational experience may hinder progress in learning, that is, lack of exposure to classroom behaviors (using a pencil, repeating after a teacher, "reading" from a chalkboard, etc.) may be new and difficult for the learner with little or no prior schooling.

The lack of effective study habits may cause problems in learning.

The interference of a learner's native language may complicate the process of learning English. (For example, the spelling problems of an Arab student might be explained by the change in alphabet from Arabic to English; his slow reading by the change of direction in reading.) In fact, some of the problems of learning disabled language learners may be similar to those of all students beginning to learn a second language. However, with the non-disabled learner, these problems should lessen over time.

A mismatch between the instructor's teaching style and the learner's expectations of how the class will be conducted may slow progress in learning the language.

External problems with work, health, and family may account for lack of progress in the second language classroom.

### ASSESSING THE LEARNER

Using standardized tests to identify learning disabilities presents problems: First, instruments designed to diagnose learning disabilities are usually normed on native English speakers. Therefore, the results cannot be reliably used with learners whose first language is not English. Portions of some tests can give a clear idea of a learner's strengths and weaknesses, but simple scores based on a whole test are not always reliable. Because the concepts and language being tested may have no direct translation, the validity of tests translated into the native language is questionable. Second, the tests are primarily designed for and normed on *younger* students and may not be suitable for adults (Lowry, 1990). Finally, since no single assessment technique is sufficient to diagnose a learning disability, multiple assessment measures (including the following) are necessary.

An interview in the native language can provide invaluable information about the learner's previous educational experience in English and in the native language, it can alert programs to learner expectations for classroom instruction, and it can provide insight into the learner's functioning in the first language (Ganschow & Sparks, 1993; Learning Disabilities Association, 1994).

Portfolio assessment in which measurements of learner progress in reading and writing are considered along with attendance data, writing samples, autobiographical information, and work on class assignments is favored in many programs because its variety of input provides a broad picture of the learner's performance (Wrigley, 1992).

Phonological tests (that could include auditory discrimination exercises assessing the learner's ability to distinguish between vowel sounds or between nonsense words) may suggest difficulties the learner could experience with sound-related aspects of the language (Ganschow & Sparks, 1993).

Visual screening and routine hearing tests may prove that what appear to be reading or listening and speaking disabilities may be due, in part, to correctable auditory or visual problems (McCormick, 1991).

### INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND MATERIALS

Learning disabilities affect learning in any language and must therefore be a guiding factor in designing instruction for adult learners with disabilities. Educators of learning disabled children and adults (Baca & Cervantes, 1991; Ganschow & Sparks, 1993; Lowry, 1990) give the following suggestions for providing instruction.

- Be highly structured and predictable.
- Include opportunities to use several senses and learning strategies.
- Provide constant structure and multisensory review.
- 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, timelines, and diagrams.
- Reinforce main ideas and concepts through rephrasing rather than through verbatim repetition.

Technology can help adult learners with learning disabilities to acquire a second language, but its use is not well documented. Raskind and Scott (1993) discuss the use of electronic aids for this population. Devices such as personal computers, hand-held translators and dictionaries, personal data keepers, and cassette recorders are useful as are more sophisticated learning tools such as speech synthesizers and reading

machines that allow learners to hear as well as see what is displayed on the computer. Also recommended are televisions with closed-caption capabilities and VCR decoding devices that transcribe and project spoken dialogue on the screen. (See Parks, 1994, for discussion of the use of VCR decoding devices with adult ESL learners.)

### TEACHER TRAINING FOR INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT

In elementary and secondary level ESL programs, the need for teachers trained in both ESL and special education has been recognized for some time, and various teacher training models team ESL instructors and special education instructors (Baca & Cervantes, 1991). In adult basic education and adult ESL, where less time and money are available for program capacity building through research and teacher training, there are fewer models to look to. However, two programs have been funded to do research on adult ESL learners with learning disabilities.

The Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP) has received a grant from the Virginia Adult Educators Research Network to explore ways teachers can assist adult ESL students who may be learning disabled to acquire and retain basic literacy in a learner-centered classroom or computer lab. Through the use of a combination of standardized assessment tools, portfolio assessment, and narrative case studies of students who do not make expected progress, REEP hopes to find a few specific techniques that benefit not only students with learning disabilities, but all students in the program (L. Terrill, personal communication, January 3, 1995).

The Learning Disabilities Association (LDA) in Minneapolis, in a project funded by the Minnesota Department of Education and Medtronics, Inc., used a combination of measures at the Lehmann ABE Center to assess adult ESL learners who were suspected of having learning disabilities. The assessment included some standardized tests [the Basic English Skills Test (BEST), the Learning Styles Inventory, a phonics inventory, and the Test of Non-verbal Intelligence-R (Toni-R)] as well as some alternative assessment (learner observations by teachers and learning disabilities specialists, and native language writing samples and interviews). Project findings suggest that learning disabled adult ESL students benefit most when learning disabilities specialists and ESL teachers work together to plan instruction that is individualized, multisensory, phonics-based, and delivered in an environment where the learner is comfortable--generally the regular classroom (LDA, 1994).

### CONCLUSION

As the extent of learning disabilities in the adult ESL population becomes more evident, training in issues and instructional methods related to learning disabilities will need to be part of professional development for all adult ESL educators. Research leading to the development of guidelines for assessment and instruction must be funded. Broader cooperation among the fields of ESL, adult education, and special education should ensure that the instructional needs of learning disabled ESL adults are being met.

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# CLEARINGHOUSE

## on Adult Education & Literacy

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DIVISION OF ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20202-7240

### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

# B R I E F

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.

## 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. A framework or logical system for associating and storing information is critical for later recall and retrieval.. Without this framework, individuals have no way of retrieving information later when it is needed.

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 students 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 verbally size up the demands of a task, to consciously identify 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 cues 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 thought 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 work, 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, multi-sensory 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 bypass 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, that is by 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 Greniuk

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 if the group wants 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, 1995 ERIC Digest

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 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 class work. This might involve only one or two hours. Or, 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 or the Literacy Kit.
  - 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.
  - h. Games: any game that reviews or practices material, such as Spill and Spell, Concentration, Hangman, Word Bingo, etc.
  
3. **Large group** (while teacher works with small group or individual).  
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 instructors 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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## 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 is 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 make your classroom more student centered and interactive.

## **SECTION F**

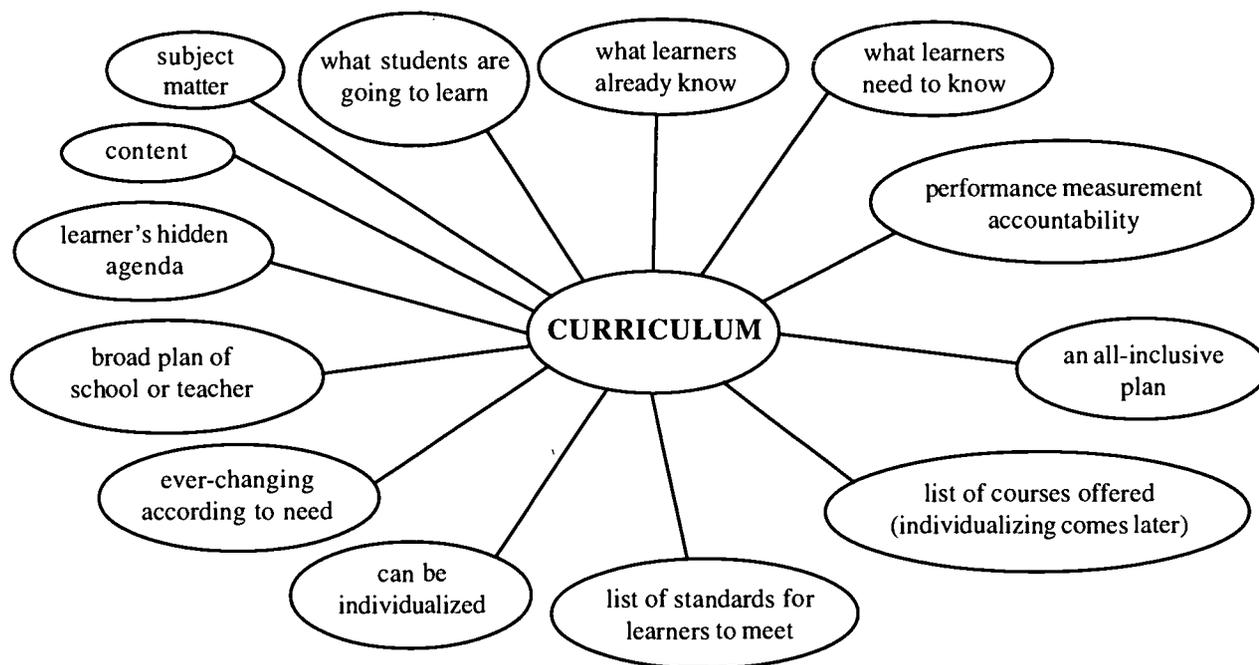
### **CHOOSING A CURRICULUM: HOW DO I PUT IT ALL TOGETHER?**

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 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 Education and Literacy 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.

A copy of this curriculum is included in The ESL Starter Kit.

### 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.

*Energy: Exploring the Environmental, Social, and Financial Costs*

Andrea Nash. Produced by Boston Oil Consumer's Alliance, 1994.

Level: Beginning to advanced

Focus/specialty area : The purpose of the curriculum is to provide an opportunity for students to develop language ability and academic skills as they analyze the ways in which energy is used and misused in the U.S. Students are introduced to what energy is, where it comes from, and how to conserve it. Also touched on are such sub-themes as environment, foreign policy, and landlord/tenant issues. Each unit can stand alone. Supplemental materials may be needed, depending on the interests of the students.

*A Curriculum Packet about Immigration-Related Job Discrimination*

Andrea Nash and Peggy Wright. Produced by Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition, 1991.

Level: There are activities appropriate for a variety of levels. Will work best in a classroom or group situation.

Focus/specialty area: Job discrimination, especially that based on citizenship status or national origin. Introduces students to issues surrounding job discrimination against the foreign-born in the US; activities are designed to engage students in sharing experiences and acquiring information and confidence to make informed decisions regarding what to do when faced with discrimination. The curriculum is divided into four stand-alone units.

*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.

*Health Promotion for Adult Literacy Students: An Empowering Approach*

Developed by the University of the State of New York, the State Education Department, Office of Workforce Preparation and Continuing Education. Albany, NY. 1993.

Level: Beginning through advanced

Focus/specialty: The curriculum is actually a kit or packet that includes a series of teacher guides, student workbooks, and cassettes. The material focuses on a range of health topics, including nutrition, first aid, health insurance, sexual abuse prevention, physical fitness, and health care resources. The goal of the materials is to provide information on major health issues and positive health behaviors which empower students. The materials can be used as resource/reference material for the instructor and students; the instructor can teach from the materials; or the instructor can use the materials to adapt or develop new lessons. The teacher guide includes information and sample lessons (with goals, outcome objective, and activities), while the student workbook includes the materials and handouts.

*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.





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