

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 482 789

FL 801 604

AUTHOR Condelli, Larry; Wrigley, Heide Spruck; Yoon, Kwang  
TITLE What Works Study for Adult ESL Literacy Students. Study Summary.  
INSTITUTION Aguirre International, San Mateo, CA.; American Institutes for Research, Washington, DC.  
SPONS AGENCY Office of Vocational and Adult Education (ED), Washington, DC.  
PUB DATE 2002-09-00  
NOTE 8p.  
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)  
EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS \*Adult Literacy; Attendance Patterns; \*English (Second Language); Instructional Effectiveness; \*Literacy Education; Second Language Instruction; Second Language Learning; Student Characteristics

ABSTRACT

This study sought to identify ways in which programs can provide effective instruction to improve the English language and literacy skills of English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) literacy students. The study also examined attendance patterns of adult ESL literacy students and instructional factors related to attendance and provided descriptive information about adult ESL literacy students, their classes, teachers, and the instruction that they receive. (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education) (Author/VWL)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original document.

## What Works Study for Adult ESL Literacy Students

### STUDY SUMMARY

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
Office of Educational Research and Improvement  
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION  
CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
- 
- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND  
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS  
BEEN GRANTED BY

Harry Condelli

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES  
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

2

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

## *What Works Study for Adult ESL Literacy Students*

### STUDY SUMMARY

Adult English-as-a-second-language (ESL) literacy students lack literacy skills in their native language as well as English communication skills. These learners face the challenge of developing basic skills for decoding, comprehending, and producing print, in addition to learning English. The purpose of the "What Works" Study for Adult ESL Literacy Students was to identify ways in which programs can provide effective instruction to improve the English language and literacy skills of ESL literacy students. The study also examined attendance patterns of adult ESL literacy students and class, instructional and student factors related to attendance; and provided descriptive information about adult ESL literacy students, their classes, teachers and the instruction they receive. The study was supported by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education and the Planning and Evaluation Service, and was conducted by the American Institutes for Research and its subcontractor, Aguirre International.



#### Methodology

The data collection for the project was from October 1999 through August 2001 in 38 classes from 13 programs in seven states (Arizona, California, Illinois, Minnesota, New York, Texas and Washington) and had a final sample size of 495 students. The sample included two cohorts of students who were followed from the time of entry into class for nine months. Onsite data collectors assessed students at entry and approximately three and nine months after enrollment, regardless of how long the student remained enrolled. Data collectors also observed classes bi-weekly and coded instructional activities using an observation guide developed for the project.

The instructional variables measured through the observation guide were quantified, using percent of observed time on the activity and observer ratings of teachers' use of instructional strategies. The following instructional variables were used in the analyses.

#### Instructional Emphasis Variables

- **Literacy development emphasis**—Main focus on reading and writing development.
- **ESL acquisition emphasis**—Main focus on speaking, listening, fundamentals of English.

- **Functional skills emphasis**—Main focus on functional literacy (e.g., interpreting forms, labels, using money, maps).
- **Basic literacy skills emphasis**—Main focus on fluency, basic reading skills, grammar and vocabulary.
- **Reading comprehension emphasis**—Main focus on comprehension strategies.
- **Writing emphasis**—Main focus on writing fluency, writing practice.
- **Oral communication emphasis**—Main focus on speaking and listening practice.

### Instructional Strategies Variables

- **Varied practice and interaction**—teachers provide students with opportunities to learn in a variety of ways and modalities (e.g., speaking, reading, writing) and by having students interact with each other.
- **Open communication**—teachers are flexible and respond to students' concerns as they arise; ask for open-ended responses; support authentic communication.
- **Connection to the “outside”**—teachers link what is being learned to life outside classroom and bring the “outside” into the class through use of field trips, speakers, and real-life materials.

### Outcome Measures

The study measured students' English language and literacy development using a battery of standardized and non-standardized tests, selected after a comprehensive review of all assessments available for low-level adult ESL learners. The battery measured reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. The standardized tests used were:

- The Woodcock-Johnson Basic Reading Skills Cluster (**WJBRSC**) and Reading Comprehension Cluster (**WJRCC**), which measured basic reading and comprehension abilities;
- The oral Basic English Skills Test (**BEST**), measured English speaking and listening;
- Adult Language Assessment Scales (**A-LAS**) Writing Assessment, measured writing ability; and
- Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (**CASAS**) Form Completion Test, measured functional writing.

The study also included an interview about student literacy practices and an alternative reading demonstration assessment, which measured student fluency and comprehension through reading of authentic materials. Each assessment was conducted individually and data collectors gave instructions for each test, and conducted the literacy practices interview, in the learner's native language.

## Selected Findings

### Students in the Study

The average age of students in the study was 40; they were 72% female and had an average of 3.1 years of schooling in their home country. The table below summarizes the students in the study by language group and prior education.

### Education in Home Country, By Language Background

Student Language Background	Number of Students	Mean Years of Education in Home Country	SD of Mean Years	Percent of Students with No Formal Education
All <i>What Works</i> Participants	490	3.1	2.8	33.1
Spanish – Mexican	285	4.0	2.7	17.9
Spanish – non-Mexican	43	3.8	2.2	11.6
Hmong	38	0.3	0.9	81.6
Somali	47	1.7	2.9	66.0
All others*	77	1.8	2.5	57.1

Note: Prior education data were missing from five students in the final study sample of 495.

\*More than 30 other languages are included in this group.

### Student, Class and Instructional Variables Related to English Language and Literacy Growth

The study examined the relationship of instructional content, instructional strategies, student characteristics, teacher characteristics and class variables on student outcomes using a complex statistical technique, latent growth modeling. Findings for the reading and writing assessments using this technique are summarized below.

#### Variables Related to Growth in Basic Reading Skills (WJ BRSC)

##### Instructional Variables

- Students in classes where teachers made connections to the “outside” or real world, had more growth.

##### Class Variables

- Shorter scheduled class time (measured by total hours offered)—other things being equal, the shorter the class’s weekly scheduled meeting hours, the faster the rate of students’ learning in basic reading skills.

### **Student Variables**

- Students who had more years of formal education (proxy for native language literacy) initially had faster growth, but this benefit faded over time.
- Students with higher initial oral English abilities (BEST score) had faster growth. Some proficiency in oral English skills seems to work as leverage for mastering basic reading skills.
- Younger students started lower but learned faster than older students.

### **Variables Related to Growth in Basic Reading Comprehension (WJ RCC)**

#### **Instructional Variables**

- Students in classes where teachers used students' native language as an aid to instruction had faster growth.

#### **Students Variables**

- Students who had a higher rate of attendance (proportion of hours student attended by total hours class was offered) grew faster.
- Students who have higher initial basic reading skills (BRSC score) improved in reading comprehension faster, but this benefit emerged slowly over time.

### **Variables Related to Growth in Oral English Language Development (BEST)**

#### **Instructional Variables**

- Students in classes where teachers used students' native language as an aid in instruction had faster development.
- Students in classes where the teacher used a varied practice and interaction strategy in class had faster growth.
- Students in classes where the teacher emphasized oral English communication in instruction had faster growth.

#### **Class Variables**

- Classes that had more scheduled instructional time had more student growth.

#### **Student Variables**

- Younger students showed faster growth.
- Students that attended at a higher rate had faster growth.
- Students with higher initial basic reading skills (BRSC score) had faster growth.

## Other Assessment Measures

No instructional or class variables were related to student gains in writing, using either assessment (ALAS or CASAS). In fact, there was very little improvement in student's writing skills over the study period. No teacher characteristics were found to be statistically related to any outcome measure.

## Student Attendance Measures

The study also examined the relationship of student, instructional, class and teacher variables of the attendance patterns of adult ESL literacy students, using four measures of attendance:

- *Total hours*— total number of instructional hours attended;
- *Total weeks*— total number of weeks attended;
- *Rate of attendance*— proportion of hours attended out of hours possible to attend; and
- *Intensity*— average number of hours attended per week.

Students in the study attended an average of about 16 weeks and 128 total hours. They attended about two-thirds of possible time (rate of 0.64) and just under an average of seven hours per week. The table below shows student means on each measure.

**Overall Attendance of Adult ESL Literacy Students  
(N=495)**

	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Total Hours of Attendance	128.7	106.0	94.3
Total Weeks of Attendance	16.2	16.0	8.1
Rate (hours attended/possible hours)	0.64	0.66	0.19
Intensity (hours per week)	6.9	6.3	3.3

Each attendance provided different information about student attendance patterns. *Total hours* gives us the amount of time the student was in class and exposed to instruction and *total weeks* informs us of the total length of time a student attended class. *Rate* measured how often the student attended, regardless of how many hours the class was scheduled. It is a measure of how often the student took advantage of the class time offered and may reflect student motivation to attend. Finally, *intensity* is a measure of how much attendance the student had in a given time. It is a measure of the dosage or concentration of attendance time. We used the statistical procedure of hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) to examine the variables related to each attendance measure.

### Total Weeks and Total Hours of Attendance

The HLM analyses revealed that the following student and class characteristics were related to more total hours and more total weeks of attendance:

- Student age (older students attended more weeks and hours);
- Students with lower basic reading skills at entry into class;
- Students who started class within the first three weeks; and
- Classes where teachers had more instructional focus on literacy development.

The analysis also suggests that an instructional strategy using varied practice and interaction is also positively related to total hours and total weeks of attendance, especially for younger students.

### **Rate and Intensity of Attendance**

The HLM analyses found the following variables related to rate and intensity of attendance.

- Student age (older students attended at a higher rate and intensity);
- Unemployed students attended and a higher rate and intensity;
- Students in classes with more scheduled instructional hours per week attended at a lower rate and intensity; and
- Older students who were mandated to attend attended at a lower rate and intensity than younger mandated students.

Type of instruction and type of class had no positive effect on rate or intensity of attendance. This lack of findings is intriguing, since it means that regardless of the class arrangement or instructional approach, students' attendance rate did not increase significantly from the overall average rate of about 0.65 percent of the time.

#### *For Additional Information, Contact:*

Mr. Michael Fong Project Officer U.S. Department of Education Planning and Evaluation Service 400 Maryland Avenue, SW Washington, DC 20202 PHONE: (202) 401-7462 FAX: (202) 401-5943 E-MAIL: michael_fong@ed.gov	Dr. Larry Condelli Project Director American Institutes for Research 1000 Thomas Jefferson Street Washington, DC 20007 PHONE: (202) 944-5331 FAX: (202) 944-5454 E-MAIL: lcondelli@air.org	Dr. Heide Spruck Wrigley Subcontract Project Director Aguirre International 480 East 4 <sup>th</sup> Avenue, Unit A San Mateo, CA 94401 PHONE: (650) 373-4923 FAX: (650) 348-0260 E-MAIL: hwrigley@aiweb.com
--	---	---

**BEST COPY AVAILABLE**



**U.S. Department of Education**  
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)  
National Library of Education (NLE)  
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

GE084785  
F1 80/604  
**ERIC**  
Educational Resources Information Center

## REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

**AERA**

### I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: <i>WHAT WORKS STUDY FOR ADULT ESL LITERACY STUDENTS</i>	Author(s): <i>LARRY CONDELLI, HEIDE SPRUCK WRIGLEY, KWANG YOON</i>
Corporate Source: <i>AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH</i>	Publication Date: <i>September, 2002</i>

### II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents

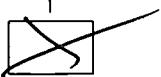
PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

*Sample*

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Level 1



Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) and paper copy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

*Sample*

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

Level 2A



Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

*Sample*

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

Level 2B



Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

1

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.  
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Sign  
here, →  
please

Signature: <i>Larry Condelli</i>	Printed Name/Position/Title: <i>LARRY CONDELLI/MANAGING ASSOCIATE</i>
Organization/Address: <i>1000 Thomas Jefferson St. NW WASHINGTON, DC 20007</i>	Telephone: <i>202-944-5331</i>
	FAX: <i>202-944-5454</i>
	E-Mail Address: <i>LCONDDELLI@AIR.ORG</i>
	Date: <i>10/21/02</i>

(Over)

### **III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):**

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, or, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

### **IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:**

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

### **V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:**

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

**ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE ON ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION  
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND  
1129 SHRIVER LAB  
COLLEGE PARK, MD 20742-5701  
ATTN: ACQUISITIONS**

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

**ERIC Processing and Reference Facility  
4483-A Forbes Boulevard  
Lanham, Maryland 20706**

**Telephone: 301-552-4200  
Toll Free: 800-799-3742  
FAX: 301-552-4700  
e-mail: ericfac@inet.ed.gov  
WWW: http://ericfacility.org**