Bilingual vocational education (BVE) offers a way to improve both the job and English skills of workers with limited English proficiency (LEP). Initially using both the native language and English to provide job training makes instruction immediately comprehensible to the students. Gradually, the use of the native language decreases while English use increases. The two components of BVE are job and language skill development; however, they are not enough to prepare persons with LEP for the changing workplace. Employability, communication, and cultural awareness skills are also needed. BVE programs are similar to workplace literacy programs in the emphasis on functional context. In BVE, this means emphasizing the grammatical structures, vocabulary, and appropriate expressions of the specific job situation, reinforcing skills through practice in real-world settings. The annotated resource list contained in this information alert includes 18 print resources and 5 resource 18 references and 5 resource organizations. (NLA)
Bilingual Vocational Education

Trends and Issues Alerts

Sandra Kerka
TRENDS AND ISSUES

BILINGUAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

A common scenario of the future workplace predicts higher skill levels of jobs and greater numbers of minority and immigrant workers. Many of these workers have limited English proficiency (LEP), and although they are often hardworking, motivated, and desirable employees, they lack the language and cultural skills to benefit from job training. Bilingual vocational education (BVE) offers a way to improve both the job and English skills of LEP workers. Initially using both the native language and English to provide job training makes instruction immediately comprehensible to the student. Gradually, use of the native language decreases while English use increases.

Basic components of BVE are (1) job skills instruction in both languages; (2) concurrent, job-specific language instruction (vocational English as a second language or VESL); and (3) close coordination of the two, often involving cooperation between the vocational instructor and the ESL teacher. Bilingual instructors or teachers' aides and peer teaching are also featured. However, job and language skill development are not enough to prepare LEP persons for the changing workplace. All workers need employability skills for finding and keeping a job, the ability to communicate with coworkers and supervisors, and cultural awareness to function in the diverse work force. Many BVE programs include cross-cultural training as well as training in workplace culture (in worksite-based programs, the culture of the specific company). (See Isertis et al. 1988; MacDonald 1990; Mrowicki et al. 1990.)

A recent trend in BVE is the recognition of similarities with workplace literacy. Many successful workplace literacy programs focus on a functional context approach, using actual job materials and settings to teach the reading, writing, computation, and reasoning skills needed to perform job tasks. In BVE, the functional context approach means emphasizing in VESL the grammatical structures, vocabulary, and appropriate expressions of the specific job situation, reinforcing the communication and job skills through practice in real-world settings (Mrowicki et al. 1990; Tito 1990).

The following resources give examples of program models, list appropriate materials and instruments, and provide sources of funding or additional information for bilingual vocational education.

Print Resources


Manual of procedures for planning and implementing BVE for persons with LEP covers seven components: targeted recruitment, diagnostic intake/assessment, adapted vocational education, VESL, counseling/support services, job development and placement, and coordination.

Cichon, D.; Grover, J.; and Thomas, R. Industry-Based Bilingual Vocational Training: A Review of Related


Reviews six topics: workplace literacy and BVE, job-related language needs of employees with LEP, cross-cultural communication in the workplace, BVE workplace training, program models, public/private partnerships, and economic costs and benefits of BVE.


Among the abstracts of 30 model programs for special populations in California community colleges are 8 programs for students with LEP.

Fortune, D., and Sims, A. The Student Transition and Retention Program (STAR) and Student Guidebook. Santa Ana, CA: Central County Regional Occupational Program and Santa Ana Unified School District, 1990. (ED 330 376)

STAR is a comprehensive dropout prevention program for 17- to 21-year-old LEP students. The program includes placement tests, counseling, academic and VESL courses, and support services.


Includes background information, training recommendations, discussion questions and answers, assignment sheets and answers, and the script for a videotape on the seven-part model program.

Friedenberg, J. et al. (1) Adapt Instruction for LEP Vocational Students; (2) Conduct Intake Assessment for LEP Vocational Students; (3) Recruit LEP Students for Vocational Programs; (4) Preparing Vocational Educators to Serve LEP Students. Columbus: National Center for Research in Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, 1988. (ED 328 793-796)

Set of four performance-based modules provides learning experiences that prepare vocational teachers for working with LEP students.


Annotated bibliography of test instruments for preschool-adult students with LEP includes achievement; language proficiency; aptitude; general ability; intelligence; vocational, career, and attitudinal inventories; and personality inventories.
Curriculum for workplace literacy/ESL program covers nine areas: job-specific terminology, clarification of information, following directions, interpreting communication, understanding the workplace, pronounciation, literacy, company organization/culture, and skill upgrading.


Presents ways to improve the comprehension of nonnative speakers of English in the classroom.


The shortage of skilled workers and higher skill requirements affect language minority workers. Although vocational education is needed for the noncollege-bound, LEP students enroll disproportionately in business, trade, and industrial courses.


This inservice vocational instructor training program covers bilingual vocational education, cross-cultural education, and language acquisition.


Bibliography of vocational materials for LEP adults is in two sections: (1) textbooks, basic skills, computer literacy, general technology, VESL, and technical writing; and (2) resources for specific occupations.


The International Refugee Center of Oregon is a community-based organization offering employment counseling and placement for refugees. The Preemployment Training Course addresses cultural differences in the workplace and VESL.


Core curriculum focuses on seven language use contexts: job performance, clarification/verification, workschedule/timecard/paycheck, safety, work-related interaction, social language, and company language.


Vocabulary-building curriculum for beginning carpentry contains dialogues for practice and incorporates important grammatical structures. Topics include hand tools, power tools, fasteners, sandpaper, and lumber.


Includes (1) a handbook for program developers on planning ESL training programs, conducting worksite-based literacy task analysis, and cross-cultural training; and (2) a guide for business-industry decision makers on recruiting and retaining LEP workers, creating partnerships, and developing an action plan.


Annotated bibliography of 197 monographs, reports, handouts, curriculum guides, articles, newsletters, and publishers’ catalogs.


VESL gives access to employment for immigrants, migrants, and refugees. Ideally, it encompasses language for specific job tasks as well as sociocultural skills for the workplace. More programs are being offered at the work site in order to provide a functional context.

### Resource Organizations


National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 1118 22nd Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037 (800/321-NCBE; 202/467-0867).

Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (USED), 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Room 505, Washington, DC 20202 (202/472-3520). Operates 16 regional Multifunctional Resource Centers.


Office of Vocational and Adult Education (USED), Bilingual Vocational Education Program, Switzer Bldg., Room 4512, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20202-7242 (202/732-2365).

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