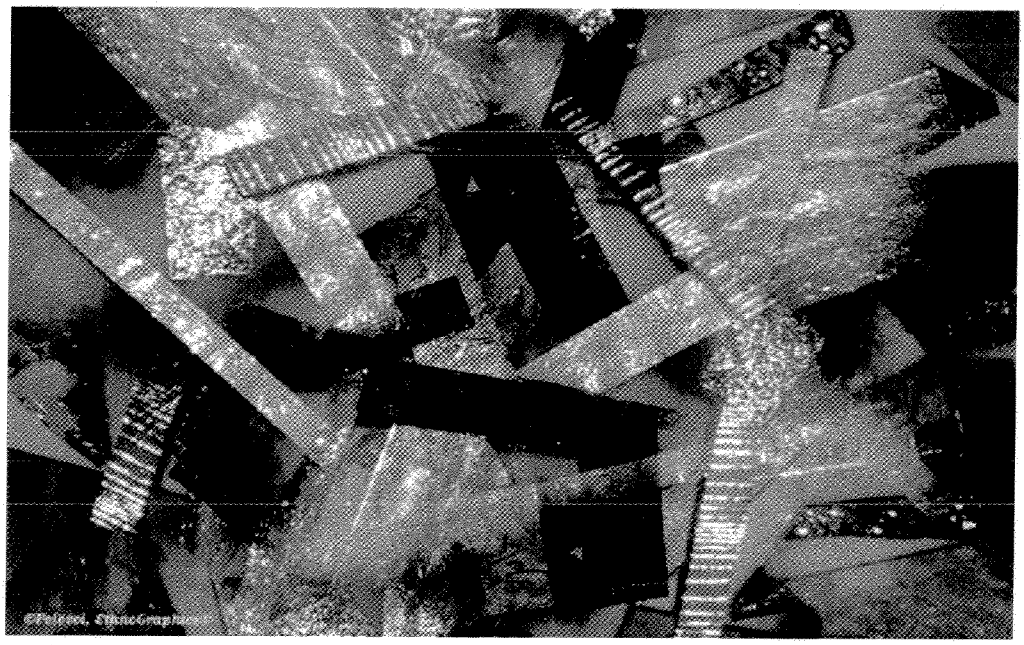
Making Second Language Acquisition Principles Come Alive in the Adult ESL Classroom



Colorado Department of Education
Adult Education and Family Literacy
February 2007

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Denver, CO 80203

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This training and the accompanying Facilitator Guide were developed by the CDE/AEFL Colorado CAELA team members listed below. The training activities were adapted from *The CAELA* Guide for Adult ESL Trainers*.

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*CAELA – the Center for Adult English Language Acquisition at the Center for Applied Linguistics

Making SLA Principles Come Alive in the Adult ESL Classroom

Information for Participants

Welcome:

In this study circle you will read two articles that discuss second language acquisition (SLA): *Beginning to Work with Adult English Language Learners: Some Considerations* describes SLA theory and suggests several theory-based teaching strategies; *Second Language Acquisition in Adults: From Research to Practice* describes SLA research and offers research-based strategies. You'll need to read the first article and complete a simple task *before* the first meeting of the Study Circle (see below). At the first meeting we'll read and discuss SLA theory and examine how the research supports the theory. You'll select one instructional strategy to implement with learners in your own classroom. We'll meet again a few weeks later to reflect on the implementation of your chosen strategy and to discuss additional aspects of second language acquisition.

Meeting logistics:

First Meeting:
Date and time:
Location:

Second Meeting:
Date and time:
Location:

Study Circle Preparation

Before the first meeting of the study circle, please prepare by reading *Beginning to Work with Adult English Language Learners.*

TASK: As you read the brief, please make notes of ideas that stand out for you or of questions that are raised for you. As you read the first two sections ("How do the principles of adult learning apply to adult English language learners?" and "What do instructors need to know about second language acquisition?") think about your own experience as a language learner.* Highlight or make notes about the theories that resonate with your experience. During the first session of the study group, <u>you will be asked to read one phrase or sentence from the text that captures your experience particularly well, and briefly to describe why.</u>

*If you haven't learned an additional language, or if you learned it at a very young age, think about math as an additional language, with its systematic use of symbols to communicate meaning.

Readings:

1. *Beginning to Work with Adult English Language Learners: Some Considerations*
http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/digests/beginQA.html
2. *Second Language Acquisition in Adults: From Research to Practice*
http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/digests/SLA.html

Study Circle Participant Questionnaire
Making Second Language Acquisition Principles Come Alive in the Adult ESL Classroom

In preparation for the upcoming study circle, we would like each participant to complete this questionnaire. It will help the facilitators know our audience better and be responsive to some of the individuality brought to this event.

A. As a second language learner

1. Have you studied a second language? _____ Which language? _____

2. If so, what were your learning situations and what kinds of instruction have you received?

3. What kinds of non-classroom learning and acquisition have you experienced?

4. Do you have a special successful experience you'd like to share?

B. As a second language teacher

1. How long have you taught ESL?

2. What levels have you taught?

3. Do you have a special successful experience you'd like to share?

C. Regarding Second Language Acquisition

1. Do you consider your understanding of second language acquisition to be:
____ undeveloped, ____ learning, ____ proficient, ____advanced

2. What background have you had in second language acquisition theory?

Study Circle Overview

Session 1 – SLA Theory, Research, and Classroom Strategies

Agenda

I. Introductions
II. Reviewing SLA Theory
II. Self-assessment of SLA-supported teaching strategies
BREAK
III. Focus on SLA Research
IV. Selecting a research-based strategy and planning its implementation
V. Understanding classroom research
VI. Closing and Evaluation

Mid-session assignment

1. Read resources on your chosen strategy (some are in the binder).
2. Following your plan and implement your strategy with the designated learners.
3. Collect ongoing evidence of how the implementation is going.
4. Complete the *SLA Strategy Summary* form in the binder.
5. Come back together for Session 2.

Session 2 – Language Acquisition and Culture

Agenda

I. Welcome back
II. Share the results of your classroom strategy implementation.
II. Reflection and looking ahead
BREAK
III. Cross-cultural issues and SLA
IV. Closing

Self-Assessment on Use of Instructional Approaches that Support SLA

A. Read each approach. Rate your current use of each approach using the following scale:

1 – I don't use this approach
2 – I am not very intentional or comfortable with this approach
3 – I am somewhat intentional or comfortable with this approach
4 – I am very intentional and comfortable with this approach

Instructional approaches that support SLA	**Rating**
1. Get to know your students – their backgrounds, goals, abilities and needs.	
2. Use visuals to support your instruction. (Photographs, gestures, charts, drawings, maps, picture sequences etc.)	
3. Model tasks before asking your learners to do them. Carefully explain the purpose of all activities and demonstrate the steps.	
4. Foster a safe classroom environment. Establish a community of trust and respect.	
5. Monitor your teacher talk and your writing. Simplify your language and explanations to an appropriate level.	
6. Use scaffolding techniques to support tasks. Gradually move from more support to less. Building redundancy into lessons.	
7. Use authentic materials as the basis for classroom activities. Use realia in level-appropriate ways.	
8. Don't overload learners. Strike a balance between new and known elements in each assigned task.	
9. Balance variety and routine in classroom activities. Include new tasks to challenge learners and familiar tasks to maintain comfort & confidence.	
10. Sustain and build learners' motivation. Help learners identify goals, overcome barriers, and celebrate successes.	
11. Focus on building learners' vocabulary. Consider breadth and depth (members of word families).	
12. Include learner-to-learner interactive tasks in every lesson. Use pairs, cooperative groups, task-based learning.	

See reverse.

B. During the discussion with the colleagues in your small group, make notes below about the ways they currently implement the twelve approaches in their adult ESL classrooms.

1. Get to know your students.
2. Use visuals to support your instruction.
3. Model tasks before learners do them.
4. Foster a safe classroom environment.
5. Monitor your teacher talk and your writing.
6. Use scaffolding techniques to support tasks.
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Name: _____

SLA Strategy Planning Form

1. Which strategy are you planning to implement?

2. Why did you choose this strategy? How will the strategy impact learner behaviors, learner skills/knowledge, teacher behavior, or teacher skills/knowledge? What outcomes are you hoping to see?

3. With which learners will you implement the strategy? (specific class, level, site, class purpose, etc.) What contextual factors (class size, learner proficiency, etc) will you have to take into account as you plan your strategy?

4. How will you implement this strategy? What, specifically, will you do? How will you incorporate the strategy into your lessons?

Continued on reverse.

5. What barriers might you have to overcome in order to implement the new strategy? (Barriers within you, the learners, your program, the classroom facility, etc.)

6. What resources do you have that will help you implement the strategy? (Human resources, material resources, information resources, etc.)

7. How will you track the progress of your implementation?

8. What signs will show you that the strategy is having an impact?

Name: _____

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8. What signs will show you that the strategy is having an impact?

Classroom Implementation Basics

A. The six steps to classroom implementation are:

1. Identify a classroom concern and select a strategy to address the concern
2. Write a question that defines the implementation (see below)
3. Implement the strategy in your classroom
4. Collect information about what happens during the implementation
5. Analyze the information you collected
6. Decide whether to continue with the new strategy, modify the new strategy, or abandon the new strategy

B. Write a question to specifically define your implementation.

A carefully written question, with clearly defined limits will keep your project focused and manageable.

QUESTION FRAMEWORK:

"What happens to (state the behavior or language skill) of (identify the group of learners) when (describe the strategy you'll implement) (describe limitations of frequency or scope)."

EXAMPLES:

"What happens to the reading skills of my Level 2 students when I use authentic materials for least one activity in each lesson?"

"What happens to the attendance of my Level 4 students when I do an in-class, group needs assessment at the beginning of the session and then write the agenda on the board every day to show how it relates to the needs assessment?"

"What happens to the vocabulary skills of my Level 3 students when we make vocabulary journals with five new word families each week?"

YOUR QUESTION:

What happens to: _____

of _____

when _____

_____

Write your finished question here:

_____

_____

_____

C. Collecting information for your question:

Below are some examples of information teachers might want to collect and ways to collect the information.

Information to collect	Ways to collect the information
Student behavior	
Attendance	Attendance log
Participation in class	Teacher's notes after each lesson
Interaction with classmates	Video taping, audio taping
Attentiveness, time on task	Peer's observation of the lesson
Completion of homework	Checklists
Student skills and achievement	
Listening	Teacher's notes after each lesson
Speaking	Samples of student work
Reading	Student portfolios
Writing	Results of in-class performance assessments
Vocabulary	Results of standardized pre- and post-tests
Teacher behavior	
Careful modeling before activities	Teacher notes after each lesson
Use of scaffolding techniques	Peer's observation of the lesson
Simplified teacher talk/writing	Video taping, audio taping
Balancing variety & routine	Teacher lesson plans
Not overloading learners	Student feedback/questionnaire

Name: _____

SLA Strategy Summary

Please complete this worksheet before coming to Part 2 of the Study Circle.

1. Describe the strategy you implemented. How did you implement it? How comfortable were you and your learners while implementing the strategy?

2. What struck you as interesting about what happened during the strategy implementation? How did it compare to what you expected?

3. What impact did you see the strategy have on the learners, on yourself or on the program?

Continued on reverse.

4. Did the strategy give you the information you were looking for? Please explain. What else might you try to get additional information?

5. What did you learn about the second language acquisition theory, research, or strategy you were testing?

6. Will you continue to use this strategy? Why? Why not?

7. What did you get out of the experience of applying theory and research to your practice?

8. Which of the twelve strategies might you try next?

Study Circle Evaluation Form

1. How useful did you find the study circle materials – the general articles about SLA research and theory plus the articles about individual strategies? Please explain.

2. How useful did you find the study circle meetings and discussions? Please explain.

3. How useful did you find activity of choosing a new strategy and implementing it in your classroom? Please explain.

4. What tools or ideas are you taking away that you will continue to use in your practice?

5. In what ways are you going to continue to apply research in your practice?

6. If this study circle is offered again, what advice would you give the facilitator(s)?

7. On what other topics would you like to have a study circle?

Reflecting on the Implementation

Write for ten minutes about the next steps you'll take implementing a classroom strategy that supports second language acquisition for ESL adults. Take into consideration what you've discovered through your own strategy implementation, or what you learned from the experiences of others. What new questions have been raised? What adjustments might you make to the strategy you are currently implementing? What other strategy would you like to try?

Cultural Discussion – Bullet item #1 "*Become acquainted with learners' cultures . . .*" (Flores/Burt)

Read the first bullet item on what instructors need to know about culture. Discuss the following:

> It can be challenging to be respectful of cultural beliefs and practices while also being careful not to see individuals in terms of cultural stereotypes. Talk about your experience in this regard. Have you ever erred one way or the other? What can teachers do to avoid these pitfalls?

Cultural Discussion – Bullet item #2 "*Learners may not be willing or able to participate . . .*" (Flores/Burt)

Read the second bullet item on what instructors need to know about culture. Discuss the following:

> Try as you might, you cannot anticipate everything that might make others uncomfortable or trigger difficult memories. Talk about your experience in this regard. What can teachers do if such a situation arises?

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Cultural Discussion – Bullet item #3 "*Remember that culture can play a role in all facets . . .*" (Flores/Burt)

Read the third bullet item on what instructors need to know about culture. Discuss the following:

> Response time is one way that culture may influence communication style. What other culturally-shaped differences have you noticed regarding communication styles or learning styles? How have you worked with these differences?

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http://www.wwcd.org/action/ampu/crosscult.html#PATTERNS

Working on Common Cross-cultural Communication Challenges

by Marcelle E. DuPraw, National Institute for Dispute Resolution and Marya Axner, Consultant in Leadership Development & Diversity Awareness

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- Six Fundamental Patterns of Cultural Difference
    1. Different Communications Styles
    2. Different Attitudes Toward Conflict
    3. Different Approaches to Completing Tasks
    4. Different Decision-Making Styles
    5. Different Attitudes Toward Disclosure
    6. Different Approaches to Knowing
- Respecting Our Differences and Working Together
- Guidelines for Multicultural Collaboration

We all have an internal list of those we still don't understand, let alone appreciate. We all have biases, even prejudices, toward specific groups. In our workshops we ask people to gather in pairs and think about their hopes and fears in relating to people of a group different from their own. Fears usually include being judged, miscommunication, and patronizing or hurting others unintentionally; hopes are usually the possibility of dialogue, learning something new, developing friendships, and understanding different points of view. After doing this activity hundreds of times, I'm always amazed how similar the lists are. At any moment that we're dealing with people different from ourselves, the likelihood is that they carry a similar list of hopes and fears in their back pocket.

*-- From **Waging Peace in Our Schools**,*
by Linda Lantieri and Janet Patti (Beacon Press, 1996)

We all communicate with others all the time -- in our homes, in our workplaces, in the groups we belong to, and in the community. No matter how well we think we understand each other, communication is hard. Just think, for example, how often we hear things like, "He doesn't get it," or "She didn't really hear what I meant to say." "Culture" is often at the root of communication challenges. Our culture influences how we approach problems, and how we participate in groups and in communities. When we participate in groups we are often surprised at how differently people approach their work together.

Culture is a complex concept, with many different definitions. But, simply put, "culture" refers to a group or community with which we share common experiences that shape the way we understand the world. It includes groups that we are born into, such as gender, race, or national origin. It also includes groups we join or become part of. For example, we can acquire a new culture by moving to a new region, by a change in our economic status, or by becoming disabled. When we think of culture this broadly, we realize we all belong to many cultures at once.

Our histories are a critical piece of our cultures. Historical experiences -- whether of five years ago or of ten generations back -- shape who we are. Knowledge of our history can help us understand ourselves and one another better. Exploring the ways in which various groups within our society have related to each other is key to opening channels for cross-cultural communication.

In a world as complex as ours, each of us is shaped by many factors, and culture is one of the powerful forces that acts on us. Anthropologists Kevin Avruch and Peter Black explain the importance of culture this way:

...One's own culture provides the "lens" through which we view the world; the "logic"... by which we order it; the "grammar" ... by which it makes sense. *(Avruch and Black, 1993)*
In other words, culture is central to what we see, how we make sense of what we see, and how we express ourselves.

As people from different cultural groups take on the exciting challenge of working together, cultural values sometimes conflict. We can misunderstand each other, and react in ways that can hinder what are otherwise promising partnerships. Oftentimes, we aren't aware that culture is acting upon us. Sometimes, we are not even aware that we have cultural values or assumptions that are different from others!

Six fundamental patterns of cultural differences -- ways in which cultures, as a whole, tend to vary from one another -- are described below. The descriptions point out some of the recurring causes of cross-cultural communication difficulties.1 As you enter into multicultural dialogue or collaboration, keep these generalized differences in mind. Next time you find yourself in a confusing situation, and you suspect that cross-cultural differences are at play, try reviewing this list. Ask yourself how culture may be shaping your own reactions, and try to see the world from others' points of view.

Six Fundamental Patterns of Cultural Differences

1. Different Communication Styles

The way people communicate varies widely between, and even within, cultures. One aspect of communication style is language usage. Across cultures, some words and phrases are used in different ways. For example, even in countries that share the English language, the meaning of "yes" varies from "maybe, I'll consider it" to "definitely so," with many shades in between.

Another major aspect of communication style is the degree of importance given to non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communication includes not only facial expressions and gestures; it also involves seating arrangements, personal distance, and sense of time. In addition, different norms regarding the appropriate degree of assertiveness in communicating can add to cultural misunderstandings. For instance, some white Americans typically consider raised voices to be a sign that a fight has begun, while some black, Jewish and Italian Americans often feel that an increase in volume is a sign of an exciting conversation among friends. Thus, some white Americans may react with greater alarm to a loud discussion than would members of some American ethnic or non-white racial groups.

2. Different Attitudes Toward Conflict

Some cultures view conflict as a positive thing, while others view it as something to be avoided. In the U.S., conflict is not usually desirable; but people often are encouraged to deal directly with conflicts that do arise. In fact, face-to-face meetings customarily are recommended as the way to work through whatever problems exist. In contrast, in many Eastern countries, open conflict is experienced as embarrassing or demeaning; as a rule, differences are best worked out quietly. A written exchange might be the favored means to address the conflict.

3. Different Approaches to Completing Tasks

From culture to culture, there are different ways that people move toward completing tasks. Some reasons include different access to resources, different judgments of the rewards associated with task completion, different notions of time, and varied ideas about how relationship-building and task-oriented work should go together.

When it comes to working together effectively on a task, cultures differ with respect to the importance placed on establishing relationships early on in the collaboration. A case in point, Asian and Hispanic cultures tend to attach more value to developing relationships at the beginning of a shared project and more emphasis on task completion toward the end as compared with European-

Americans. European-Americans tend to focus immediately on the task at hand, and let relationships develop as they work on the task. This does not mean that people from any one of these cultural backgrounds are more or less committed to accomplishing the task, or value relationships more or less; it means they may pursue them differently.

4. Different Decision-Making Styles

The roles individuals play in decision-making vary widely from culture to culture. For example, in the U.S., decisions are frequently delegated -- that is, an official assigns responsibility for a particular matter to a subordinate. In many Southern European and Latin American countries, there is a strong value placed on holding decision-making responsibilities oneself. When decisions are made by groups of people, majority rule is a common approach in the U.S.; in Japan consensus is the preferred mode. Be aware that individuals' expectations about their own roles in shaping a decision may be influenced by their cultural frame of reference.

5. Different Attitudes Toward Disclosure

In some cultures, it is not appropriate to be frank about emotions, about the reasons behind a conflict or a misunderstanding, or about personal information. Keep this in mind when you are in a dialogue or when you are working with others. When you are dealing with a conflict, be mindful that people may differ in what they feel comfortable revealing. Questions that may seem natural to you -- What was the conflict about? What was your role in the conflict? What was the sequence of events? -- may seem intrusive to others. The variation among cultures in attitudes toward disclosure is also something to consider before you conclude that you have an accurate reading of the views, experiences, and goals of the people with whom you are working.

6. Different Approaches to Knowing

Notable differences occur among cultural groups when it comes to epistemologies -- that is, the ways people come to know things. European cultures tend to consider information acquired through cognitive means, such as counting and measuring, more valid than other ways of coming to know things. Compare that to African cultures' preference for affective ways of knowing, including symbolic imagery and rhythm. Asian cultures' epistemologies tend to emphasize the validity of knowledge gained through striving toward transcendence. *(Nichols, 1976)* Recent popular works demonstrate that our own society is paying more attention to previously overlooked ways of knowing.2

You can see how different approaches to knowing could affect ways of analyzing a community problem or finding ways to resolve it. Some members of your group may want to do library research to understand a shared problem better and identify possible solutions. Others may prefer to visit places and people who have

experienced challenges like the ones you are facing, and touch, taste and listen to what has worked elsewhere.

Respecting Our Differences and Working Together

In addition to helping us to understand ourselves and our own cultural frames of reference, knowledge of these six patterns of cultural difference can help us to understand the people who are different from us. An appreciation of patterns of cultural difference can assist us in processing what it means to be different in ways that are respectful of others, not faultfinding or damaging.

Anthropologists Avruch and Black have noted that, when faced by an interaction that we do not understand, people tend to interpret the others involved as "abnormal," "weird," or "wrong." *(Avruch and Black, 1993)* This tendency, if indulged, gives rise on the individual level to prejudice. If this propensity is either consciously or unconsciously integrated into organizational structures, then prejudice takes root in our institutions -- in the structures, laws, policies, and procedures that shape our lives. Consequently, it is vital that we learn to control the human tendency to translate "different from me" into "less than me." We can learn to do this.

We can also learn to collaborate across cultural lines as individuals and as a society. Awareness of cultural differences doesn't have to divide us from each other. It doesn't have to paralyze us either, for fear of not saying the "right thing." In fact, becoming more aware of our cultural differences, as well as exploring our similarities, can help us communicate with each other more effectively. Recognizing where cultural differences are at work is the first step toward understanding and respecting each other.

Learning about different ways that people communicate can enrich our lives. People's different communication styles reflect deeper philosophies and world views which are the foundation of their culture. Understanding these deeper philosophies gives us a broader picture of what the world has to offer us.

Learning about people's cultures has the potential to give us a mirror image of our own. We have the opportunity to challenge our assumptions about the "right" way of doing things, and consider a variety of approaches. We have a chance to learn new ways to solve problems that we had previously given up on, accepting the difficulties as "just the way things are."

Lastly, if we are open to learning about people from other cultures, we become less lonely. Prejudice and stereotypes separate us from whole groups of people who could be friends and partners in working for change. Many of us long for real contact. Talking with people different from ourselves gives us hope and energizes us to take on the challenge of improving our communities and worlds.

Guidelines for Multicultural Collaboration

Cultural questions -- about who we are and how we identify ourselves -- are at the heart of *Toward a More Perfect Union in an Age of Diversity*, and will be at the heart of your discussions. As you set to work on multicultural collaboration in your community, keep in mind these additional guidelines:

1. Learn from generalizations about other cultures, but don't use those generalizations to stereotype, "write off," or oversimplify your ideas about another person. The best use of a generalization is to add it to your storehouse of knowledge so that you better understand and appreciate other interesting, multi-faceted human beings.
2. Practice, practice, practice. That's the first rule, because it's in the doing that we actually get better at cross-cultural communication.
3. Don't assume that there is one right way (yours!) to communicate. Keep questioning your assumptions about the "right way" to communicate. For example, think about your body language; postures that indicate receptivity in one culture might indicate aggressiveness in another.
4. Don't assume that breakdowns in communication occur because other people are on the wrong track. Search for ways to make the communication work, rather than searching for who should receive the blame for the breakdown.
5. Listen actively and empathetically. Try to put yourself in the other person's shoes. Especially when another person's perceptions or ideas are very different from your own, you might need to operate at the edge of your own comfort zone.
6. Respect others' choices about whether to engage in communication with you. Honor their opinions about what is going on.
7. Stop, suspend judgment, and try to look at the situation as an outsider.
8. Be prepared for a discussion of the past. Use this as an opportunity to develop an understanding from "the other's" point of view, rather than getting defensive or impatient. Acknowledge historical events that have taken place. Be open to learning more about them. Honest acknowledgment of the mistreatment and oppression that have taken place on the basis of cultural difference is vital for effective communication.
9. Awareness of current power imbalances -- and an openness to hearing each other's perceptions of those imbalances -- is also necessary for understanding each other and working together.
10. Remember that cultural n orms may not apply to the behavior of any particular individual. We are all shaped by many, many factors -- our ethnic background, our family, our education, our personalities -- and are more complicated than any cultural norm could suggest. Check your interpretations if you are uncertain what is meant.

Six Fundamental Patterns of Cultural Difference
Study Circle Activity

Authors Marcelle E. DuPraw and Marya Axner have identified six fundamental patterns of cultural differences. You have received a description of *one* of those patterns.

Instructions:

1) Read the description of the pattern.

2) With your partner(s) discuss any incidents that have occurred in your adult ESL classrooms that show how the cross-cultural communication pattern has happened and has impacted your teaching and your students' learning.

3) With your partner(s), write a brief ESL classroom scenario that demonstrates the pattern. The scenario you write might be drawn from your discussion in Step 2 or it could be an imagined scenario. Your scenario should include the cultural groups (or individual students) involved and a description of a classroom activity in which the individuals' communication styles cause the activity to go awry. Describe the actions and reactions of learners from the different cultures. The teacher can also be included in your scenario. Do not describe how the teacher resolved the situation.

Sample pattern:

National and regional cultures differ in their concepts of time. In "linear-active" cultures people focus on a scheduled timeline and like to do one thing at a time. "Multi-active" cultures are people-oriented and are more focused on interactions and dialogues. They don't care as much about schedules or timelines.

Sample scenario:

I was once teaching an ESL class where half were Japanese and the other half were from Brazil. The morning session started at 9am, and I would get there at about 8.30 to set up. At about 8.45 the first of the Japanese students would arrive, and by 8.55 all of the Japanese were in their seats and ready to start – which we did, at exactly nine o'clock. At about 9.15, the first of the Brazilian group would arrive, followed gradually by the others. The group was generally complete by about 9.45, but inevitably I spent the first hour backtracking so that latecomers knew what they were doing.

After several days, an irate delegation from the Japanese group came to talk to me. They felt that the Brazilians were showing disrespect both to me and to them by their constant lateness. They also complained that the Brazilian students never listened – they continually interrupted me to express their own ideas and to argue. In short, the Japanese felt that the Brazilians were ruining the class, and they couldn't understand why I was accepting it.

Selected Resources for Cross-cultural Communication

Information about specific national/cultural groups

For information on any particular cultural group, enter the country/group name and the words "culture' and 'communication' into your preferred search engine. For example " Somali Bantu culture communication". In addition to sites specific to particular cultures, the following sites provide detailed information on both "surface" and "deep" cultural practices of countries worldwide.

Cross Cultural Communication website
http://www.cba.uni.edu/buscomm/InternationalBusComm/world/asia/index.html
This site was originally prepared for business travelers but is very useful for ESL teachers as well. Click on a region of the world. The site displays flags of countries in the region. Click below the flag for an extensive description of cultural practices on these topics: Public Behavior, Conversation, Business Meetings, Attire, Other.

Culture Orientation Resource Center Website
http://www.cal.org/co/about/
Use the "Browse by Culture" search feature for downloading booklets with detailed descriptions of the history and cultural practices of 14 refugee groups.

Canadian Centre for Intercultural Learning Website – Country Insights
http://www.intercultures.ca/cil-cai/country_insights-en.asp?lvl=8
Select a country and a cultural topic from two lengthy dropdown lists. The system displays information about the cultural practices of the selected country and compares/contrasts them to the Canadian cultural practice.

Culturgrams, The Nations around Us, David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies, Brigham Young University 1997. Presents 4-page synopses of daily customs and lifestyles of the peoples of fifty nations. Available for check out from the Northern Colorado Professional Development Center. nclrc@stvrain.k12.co.us 303-702-7912

Fischetti, P.R. **The Ethnic Cultures of America** 1997 Education Extension Systems Presents synopses of cultures, traditions, religions, etc. of over 100 different immigrant and ethnic groups in the U.S. Available for check out from the Northern Colorado Professional Development Center. nclrc@stvrain.k12.co.us 303-702-7912

(More on reverse.)

Cultural Awareness and Communication Activities for the Classroom

Gaston, Jan. ***Cultural Awareness Teaching Techniques*** 1984, Pro Lingua
Twenty techniques for the classroom which focus on noticing, comparing and becoming more aware of the differences in cultures in the class. Available for check out from the Northern Colorado Professional Development Center. nclrc@stvrain.k12.co.us 303-702-7912

Haynes, Judy. ***ESL Teacher as Cultural Broker*** Everything ESL Website with lots of activities to demonstrate cross cultural communication issues. Designed for K-12 but can easily be used or adapted for use with adults.
http://www.everythingesl.net/inservices/crosscultural.php

Mental Health Issues

Cultural Adjustment, Mental Health, and ESL: The Refugee Experience, the Role of the Teacher, and ESL Activities
Adkins, Myrna Ann, Dina Birman and Barbara Sample
Spring Institute for International Studies, 1999
http://www.springinstitute.org/Files/culturaladjustmentmentalhealthandesl.pdf

Mental Health and the Adult Refugee: The Role of the ESL Teacher
Myrna Ann Adkins and Barbara Sample, Spring Institute for International Studies
Dina Birman, Georgetown University Medical Center
December 1999
http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/digests/mental.html

General Interest

ESL teachers' perceptions of the cultural variables that impact teaching and learning in the ESL classroom This is a report on the results of a five- teacher study circle on cross cultural communication issues.
http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2/content_storage_01/0000000b/80/27/ed/4c.pdf

Levine, D.R., Baxter, J. and McNulty, P. **The Culture Puzzle: Cross-cultural communication for English as a second language.** 1987 Prentice-Hall Available for check out from the Colorado State Professional Development Center.
Fawcett_d@cde.state.co.us 303-866-6914

http://www.cal.org/caela

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ESL Resources

ESL Resources

Adult ESL Resources

CAELA staff, as well as colleagues at the Center for Applied Linguistics and field have developed a variety of resources on topics of interest to adult E practitioners. These resources include bibliographies, books, briefs, online collections, digests and Q & As, and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).

Other resources available on the CAELA Web site include:

- *Adult English Language Instruction in the 21st Century* is available in E www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/languageinstructionEng.pdf and in Sp www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/languageinstructionSP.pdf
- *Adult ESL Language and Literacy Instruction: A Vision and Action Agen 21st Century* at www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/vision.pdf
- Adult ESL Fact Sheets at www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/collections/factsheets.html
- ESL Activities for African-American History Month has been updated at www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/civicsAAmon.html
- *Picture Stories for ESL Health Literacy* at www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/Health/healthindex.html
- *Proceedings of the National Symposium on Adult ESL Research and Pra* (September 4-7, 2001) at www.caela/esl_resources/nationalsymposiun
- *Project Based Learning and Assessment: A Resource Manual for Teache* Arlington Education and Employment Program. 1997. ERIC No. ED 442 www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/REEPproj.pdf
- *Reading and Adult English Language Learners: A Review of the Researc* available in pdf at www.cal.org/caela/research/raell.pdf
- *Research Agenda for Adult ESL* at www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/age
- Senior Scenarios: What Would You Do? (excerpted from *A Guide for Pr Engaging Immigrant Seniors in Community Service and Employment Pr*

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Research and Adult ESL

CAELA is pleased to announce the beginning of its new ESL resource datab categorizes and annotates over one hundred documents of interest to teac administrators, students, and researchers interested in adult ESL. When a the database links directly to documents online.

CAELA staff members have also updated the page on statistics and data re adult English language learners and are currently developing a set of anno that deal specifically with research in adult ESL and adult education.

The CAELA Web site is funded by the
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Study Circle Evaluation Form

1. How useful did you find the study circle materials – the general articles about SLA research and theory plus the articles about individual strategies? Please explain.

2. How useful did you find the study circle meetings and discussions? Please explain.

3. How useful did you find activity of choosing a new strategy and implementing it in your classroom? Please explain.

4. What tools or ideas are you taking away that you will continue to use in your practice?

5. In what ways are you going to continue to apply research in your practice?

6. If this study circle is offered again, what advice would you give the facilitator(s)?

7. On what other topics would you like to have a study circle?

General Readings on Second Language Acquisition:

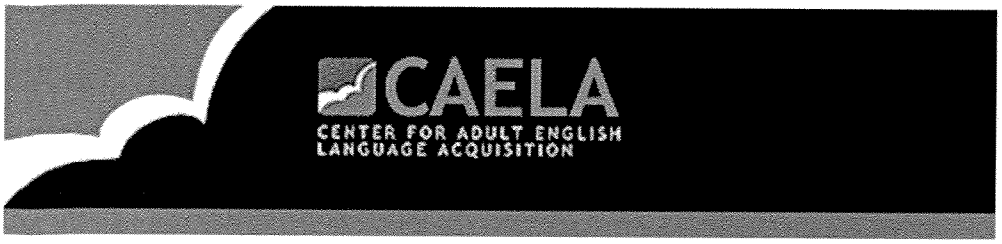
Florez, M.C. & Burt, M. "Beginning to Work with Adult English Language Learners: Some Considerations" ERIC Q&A 2001. Accessed 1-17-07 from: http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/digests/beginQA.html

"Glossary of Second and Primary Language Acquisition Terms" accessed 2-3-07 from http://earthrenewal.org/secondlang.htm

Moss, D., & Ross-Feldman, L. "Second Language Acquisition in Adults: From Research to Practice." ERIC Q&A, 2003. Accessed 1-17-07 from: http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/digests/SLA.html

Walqui, A. "Contextual factors in second language acquisition", ERIC Digest EDO-FL-00-05 September 2000. Accessed 1-17-07 from www.cal.org/resources/digest/0005-contextual-walqui.pdf

Wrigley, H. S., "What works for adult ESL students: A Conversation with FOB", NCSALL *Focus On Basics*, Vol. 6, Issue C, Sept 2003. Accessed 1-17-07 from http://www.ncsall.net/?id=189



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Beginning to Work with Adult English Language Learners: Some Considerations

MaryAnn Cunningham Florez and Miriam Burt
National Center for ESL Literacy Education
October, 2001

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

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

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

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

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

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

So what is different for English language learners? Obviously, they need help with the language as they learn content. Teachers working with English language learners also need to think about how Knowles' adult learner characteristics are filtered through culture, language, and experience. For example, it is not uncommon to find nonnative learners who may be hesitant to

take charge of their own learning. Their educational experiences in their countries may have taught them that the teacher is the unquestioned expert. They may be resistant to a learner-centered classroom where they are expected to develop goals and work in groups with other learners (Shank & Terrill, 1995).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

progressive verb forms in an unfamiliar dialogue format can be overwhelming).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Become acquainted with learners' cultures to better understand their perspectives and

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

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

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

What instructional approaches support second language development in adults?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

   Although it is important for the teacher to understand the structure of the English language,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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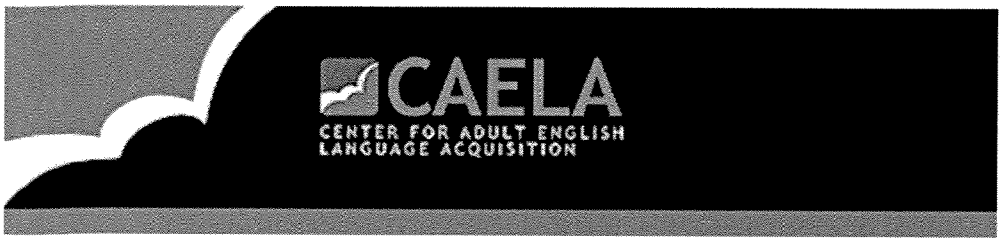

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Second Language Acquisition in Adults: From Research to Practice

Donna Moss, National Center for ESL Literacy Education
Lauren Ross-Feldman, Georgetown University
December, 2003

Second language acquisition (SLA) is the study of how second languages are learned and the factors that influence the process. SLA researchers examine how *communicative competence*-the ability to interpret the underlying meaning of a message, understand cultural references, use strategies to keep communication from breaking down, and apply the rules of grammar-develops in a second language (Savignon, 1997). They also study nonlinguistic influences on SLA such as age, anxiety, and motivation. (See Ellis, 1997; Gass & Selinker, 2001; & Pica, 2002 for extensive discussions of SLA theory and research.)

Little research has been conducted on SLA with English language learners in adult education contexts. The complexities of adult English as a second language (ESL) instruction make research in this field challenging. Investigating issues of culture, language, and education and tracking learner progress over time are not easy when complicated by diverse and mobile learner populations and varied learning contexts (e.g., workplace classes, general ESL classes, family literacy classes). However, knowing about the SLA research that has been conducted can be helpful to adult ESL teachers because the findings may be applicable to their populations and contexts.

The purpose of this Q&A is to show how SLA research can inform adult ESL instruction. Research in three areas of second language acquisition are discussed: (1) the effect of learner motivation, (2) the role of interaction, and (3) the role of vocabulary. The research presented here includes experimental, correlational, and descriptive studies, as well as theoretical CAEarticles that analyze the results of other research.

What does research say about learner motivation in SLA?

Motivation has been a focus of SLA research for many years. Dsrnyei (2002a, p. 8) identifies motivation as "why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity [and] how hard they are going to pursue it." Linguist Robert Gardner (1985; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003) examined factors that affected French- and English-speaking Canadians learning the language of the other community. His studies support the theory that *integrative motivation* (wanting to learn a language in order to identify with the community that speaks the language) promotes SLA. This motivation seems to promote SLA regardless of the age of the learner or whether the language is being learned as a second or foreign language. Even if individuals do not have this positive attitude toward learning the language, they may have *instrumental motivation*-that is, they may want to learn the language to meet their needs and goals, such as to get a job or to talk to their children's teachers (Oxford & Shearin, 1994). Whatever the learners' motivation, research seems to support the practice of teachers

discovering and responding to learners' needs and goals when planning instruction (Dsrnyei & Csizer, 1998; Weddel & Van Duzer, 1997).

Teachers can facilitate motivation by helping learners identify short-term goals and reflect on their progress and achievements. For example, teachers can provide learners with self-assessment checklists to identify skill strengths and weaknesses, weekly checklists to track their progress on meeting a learning goal, and self-reflection tools (e.g., learning diaries) to help learners build autonomy and take charge of their learning (Marshall, 2002).

Recent research looks at how instructional contexts also affect motivation. A learner's motivation may vary from day to day and even from task to task (Dsrnyei, 2002b; Dsrnyei & Kormos, 2000). Using varied and challenging instructional activities helps learners stay focused and engaged in instructional content (Dsrnyei & Csizer, 1998). Research examining how to improve learner motivation suggests that social factors (e.g., group dynamics, learning environment, and a partner's motivation) affect a learner's attitude, effort, classroom behavior, and achievement (Dsrnyei, 2002b). Therefore, teachers should create an environment that is conducive to learning by encouraging group cohesion in the classroom. Pair and group work activities can provide learners with opportunities to share information and build a sense of community (Florez & Burt, 2001).

Research also suggests that teachers cultivate opportunities that continue to stimulate language use when learners are not in class (Clement, Dsrnyei, & Noels, 1994). Project work provides learners with a bridge between practice in and outside of class. In addition, projects provide opportunities for learners to work with others to accomplish tasks, using English in real-life situations (Moss & Van Duzer, 1998).

Research on the relationship between motivation and second language acquisition is ongoing. Current research looks at instructional practices that teachers use to generate and maintain learner motivation and strategies through which learners themselves take control of factors that have an impact on their motivation and learning, such as lack of self-confidence, change of goals, or distractions (Dsrnyei, 2003; Noels, Clement, & Pelletier, 2003).

What is the role of interaction in SLA?

Another area of SLA research focuses on how interaction contributes to second language acquisition. *Interaction* refers to communication between individuals, particularly when they are negotiating meaning in order to prevent a breakdown in communication (Ellis, 1999). Research on interaction is conducted within the framework of the Interactive Hypothesis, which states that conversational interaction "facilitates [language] acquisition because it connects input [what learners hear and read]; internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention; and output [what learners produce] in productive ways" (Long, 1996, pp. 451-452). Interaction provides learners with opportunities to receive comprehensible input and feedback (Gass, 1997; Long, 1996; Pica, 1994) as well as to make changes in their own linguistic output (Swain, 1995). This allows learners to "notice the gap" (Schmidt & Frota, 1986, p. 311) between their command of the language and correct, or target-like, use of the language.

Empirical research with second language learners supports the contention that engaging in language interactions facilitates second language development. Findings from a study to determine how conversational interaction affects the acquisition of question formation indicate that interaction can increase the pace of acquisition (Mackey, 1999). Research on interaction includes studies of *task-based language learning and teaching and focus on form*.

What is task-based language learning and teaching?

Researchers have used tasks to understand both the second language learning and teaching processes (Bygate, 2000). Task-based teaching provides learners with opportunities for

learner-to-learner interactions that encourage authentic use of language and meaningful communication. The goal of a task is to "exchange meaning rather than to learn the second language" (Ellis, 1999, p. 193). Research suggests that learners produce longer sentences and negotiate meaning more often in pair and group work than in teacher-fronted instruction (Doughty & Pica, 1986). Interactive tasks may be most successful when they contain elements that

- are new or unfamiliar to the participants;
- require learners to exchange information with their partners or group members;
- have a specific outcome;
- involve details;
- center on a problem, especially an ethical one, such as deciding in a small group who should take the last spot in a lifeboat, a nuclear physicist or a pregnant woman; and
- involve the use of naturally occurring conversation and narrative discourse. (Ellis, 2000)

Teachers can use problem-solving tasks to provide learners with opportunities to share ideas, build consensus, and explain decisions about real-life issues important to them (see, for example, Van Duzer & Burt, 1999).

Information gap tasks, in which two people share information to complete a task, can be more structured than problem-solving tasks and give learners an opportunity to ask and answer questions. In one-way information gap tasks, one learner has all the information (e.g., one learner describes a picture while the other draws it). In two-way information gap tasks, both learners have information they must share with the other to complete the task. (See McKay & Tom, 1999, for examples.) When designing tasks, teachers should consider the learners' language proficiency, goal of the lesson, language to be practiced, skill and content areas, feedback opportunities, and classroom logistics.

What is focus on form?

SLA researchers have examined the role of focus on the grammatical forms of language in instruction. In a focus-on-form approach to language teaching, rather than grammar being taught in isolation, learners' attention is drawn to grammatical forms in the context of meaningful activities, and the teacher's attention to form is triggered by learners' problems with comprehension or production (Long, 2000). An analysis of research studies suggests that instruction that uses a focus-on-form approach-incorporating form with meaning-is as effective as more traditional grammar-teaching approaches (Norris & Ortega, 2001). Focus on form in communicative lessons can result in learners incorporating new and more correct structures into their language use (Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewen, 2001).

When focusing on form, teachers need to consider learners' needs and goals and their developmental readiness to understand the instruction. Teachers then need to make decisions about the best way to draw learners' attention to a form and provide opportunities for practice of the form in meaningful activities (Doughty & Williams, 1998). For example, in a workplace class with intermediate- or advanced-level learners, a memo from an employer could be used to highlight the use of the passive voice.

What is the role of vocabulary in SLA?

Word knowledge is an essential component of communicative competence, and it is important for production and comprehension in a second language (Coady & Huckin, 1997). What does it mean to know a word? Vocabulary knowledge is the size of the vocabulary and the depth of vocabulary, which includes knowledge of pronunciation, spelling, multiple meanings, the contexts in which the word can be used, the frequency with which it is used, morphological and syntactical properties, and how the word combines with other words (Qian, 1999).

Recent research has focused on *incidental vocabulary*--vocabulary that second language

learners develop while they are focused on a task other than on learning new words (see Gass, 1999, for a summary of research on incidental vocabulary acquisition). However, learners need to understand about 3,000 word families (e.g., the family of "think" includes think, thinks, thought, thoughtful, thoughtfully) in order to understand meaning from context (Laufer, 1997). Teachers can help learners build sight vocabulary by teaching word families and using word association activities such as semantic mapping (DeCarrico, 2001). In semantic mapping, teachers identify key terms in a text and learners list other words in the text that relate to the key terms.

Research also suggests that learners gain vocabulary knowledge through extensive reading. (See Burt, Peyton, & Adams, 2003, for a detailed discussion of vocabulary knowledge and its relationship to reading in adult second language learners.) Moreover, reading accompanied by vocabulary building activities can increase vocabulary knowledge (Paribakht & Wesche, 1997; Wesche & Paribakht, 2000). Teachers should include reading opportunities in class and assist learners by selecting texts that are of high interest and level appropriate. They should preview the key vocabulary in a reading passage, teach high-frequency words, and help learners use dictionaries effectively (Burt, Peyton, & Adams, 2003).

Active meaning negotiation seems to have a positive effect on vocabulary acquisition (de la Fuente, 2002; Ellis & He, 1999; Ellis, Tanaka, & Yamazaki, 1994). Teachers can provide learners with multiple opportunities to use new vocabulary in tasks such as those involving problem solving and information gap. Teachers can use games such as Bingo, Password, and Concentration and provide tasks for learners to pursue outside of class such as keeping vocabulary journals (learners keep a log of new words they encounter and the strategies they use to learn them).

Conclusion

Research seems to support many practices that are currently employed in adult ESL instruction. Giving students the opportunity to interact with the teacher and with each other, planning instruction to include tasks that promote these opportunities, and teaching language forms and vocabulary in the context of meaningful learning activities are all ways in which second language acquisition research is applied in the classroom.

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Contextual Factors in Second Language Acquisition

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While many discussions about learning a second language focus on teaching methodologies, little emphasis is given to the contextual factors—individual, social, and societal—that affect students' learning. These contextual factors can be considered from the perspective of the language, the learner, and the learning process. This digest discusses these perspectives as they relate to learning any second language, with a particular focus on how they affect adolescent learners of English as a second language.

Language

Several factors related to students' first and second languages shape their second language learning. These factors include the linguistic distance between the two languages, students' level of proficiency in the native language and their knowledge of the second language, the dialect of the native language spoken by the students (i.e., whether it is standard or nonstandard), the relative status of the students' language in the community, and societal attitudes toward the students' native language.

Language distance

Specific languages can be more or less difficult to learn, depending on how different from or similar they are to the languages the learner already knows. At the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California, for example, languages are placed in four categories depending on their average learning difficulty from the perspective of a native English speaker. The basic intensive language course, which brings a student to an intermediate level, can be as short as 24 weeks for languages such as Dutch or Spanish, which are Indo European languages and use the same writing system as English, or as long as 65 weeks for languages such as Arabic, Korean, or Vietnamese, which are members of other language families and use different writing systems.

Native language proficiency

The student's level of proficiency in the native language—including not only oral language and literacy, but also metalinguistic development, training in formal and academic features of language use, and knowledge of rhetorical patterns and variations in genre and style—affects acquisition of a second language. The more academically sophisticated the student's native language knowledge and abilities, the easier it will be for that student to learn a second language. This helps explain why foreign exchange students tend to be successful in American high school classes: They already have high school level proficiency in their native language.

Knowledge of the second language

Students' prior knowledge of the second language is of course a significant factor in their current learning. High school students learning English as a second language in a U.S. classroom may possess skills ranging from conversational fluency acquired from contacts with the English-speaking world to formal knowledge obtained in English as a foreign language classes in their countries of origin. The extent and type of prior knowledge is an essential consideration in planning instruction. For example, a student with informal conversational English skills may have little understanding of English grammatical systems and may need specific instruction in English grammar.

Dialect and register

Learners may need to learn a dialect and a formal register in school that are different from those they encounter in their daily lives. This involves acquiring speech patterns that may differ significantly from those they are familiar with and value as members of a particular social group or speech community.

Language status

Consideration of dialects and registers of a language and of the relationships between two languages includes the relative prestige of different languages and dialects and of the cultures and ethnic groups associated with them. Students whose first language has a low status vis a vis the second may lose their first language, perhaps feeling they have to give up their own linguistic and cultural background to join the more prestigious society associated with the target language.

Language attitudes

Language attitudes in the learner, the peer group, the school, the neighborhood, and society at large can have an enormous effect on the second language learning process, both positive and negative. It is vital that teachers and students examine and understand these attitudes. In particular, they need to understand that learning a second language does not mean giving up one's first language or dialect. Rather, it involves adding a new language or dialect to one's repertoire.

This is true even for students engaged in formal study of their first language. For example, students in Spanish for native speakers classes may feel bad when teachers tell them that the ways they speak Spanish are not right. Clearly, this is an issue of dialect difference. School (in this case, classroom Spanish) requires formal registers and standard dialects, while conversation with friends and relatives may call for informal registers and nonstandard dialects. If their ways of talking outside of school are valued when used in appropriate contexts, students are more likely to be open to learning a new language or dialect, knowing that the new discourses will expand their communicative repertoires rather than displace their familiar ways of communicating.

The Learner

Students come from diverse backgrounds and have diverse needs and goals. With adolescent language learners, factors such as peer pressure, the presence of role models, and the level of home support can strongly affect the desire and ability to learn a second language.

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Diverse needs

A basic educational principle is that new learning should be based on prior experiences and existing skills. Although this principle is known and generally agreed upon by educators, in practice it is often overshadowed by the administrative convenience of the linear curriculum and the single textbook. Homogeneous curricula and materials are problematic enough if all learners are from a single language and cultural background, but they are indefensible given the great diversity in today's classrooms. Such diversity requires a different conception of curricula and a different approach to materials. Differentiation and individualization are not a luxury in this context: They are a necessity.

Diverse goals

Learners' goals may determine how they use the language being learned, how native-like their pronunciation will be, how lexically elaborate and grammatically accurate their utterances will be, and how much energy they will expend to understand messages in the target language. Learners' goals can vary from wholly integrative—the desire to assimilate and become a full member of the English-speaking world—to primarily instrumental—oriented toward specific goals such as academic or professional success (Gardner, 1989). Educators working with English language learners must also consider whether the communities in which their students live, work, and study accept them, support their efforts, and offer them genuine English-learning opportunities.

Peer groups

Teenagers tend to be heavily influenced by their peer groups. In second language learning, peer pressure often undermines the goals set by parents and teachers. Peer pressure often reduces the desire of the student to work toward native pronunciation, because the sounds of the target language may be regarded as strange. For learners of English as a second language, speaking like a native speaker may unconsciously be regarded as a sign of no longer belonging to their native-language peer group. In working with secondary school students, it is important to keep these peer influences in mind and to foster a positive image for proficiency in a second language.

Role models

Students need to have positive and realistic role models who demonstrate the value of being proficient in more than one language. It is also helpful for students to read literature about the personal experiences of people from diverse language and dialect backgrounds. Through discussions of the challenges experienced by others, students can develop a better understanding of their own challenges.

Home support

Support from home is very important for successful second language learning. Some educators believe that parents of English language learners should speak only English in the home (see, e.g., recommendations made in Rodríguez, 1982). However, far more important than speaking English is that parents value both the native language and English, communicate with their children in whichever language is most comfortable, and show support for and interest in their children's progress.

The Learning Process

When we think of second language development as a learning process, we need to remember that different students have different learning styles, that intrinsic motivation aids learning, and that the quality of classroom interaction matters a great deal.

Learning styles

Research has shown that individuals vary greatly in the ways they learn a second language (Skehan, 1989). Some learners are more analytically oriented and thrive on picking apart words and sentences. Others are more globally oriented, needing to experience overall patterns of language in meaningful contexts before making sense of the linguistic parts and forms. Some learners are more visually oriented, others more geared to sounds.

Motivation

According to Deci and Ryan (1985), intrinsic motivation is related to basic human needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Intrinsically motivated activities are those that the learner engages in for their own sake because of their value, interest, and challenge. Such activities present the best possible opportunities for learning.

Classroom interaction

Language learning does not occur as a result of the transmission of facts about language or from a succession of rote memorization drills. It is the result of opportunities for meaningful interaction with others in the target language. Therefore, lecturing and recitation are not the most appropriate modes of language use in the second language classroom. Teachers need to move toward more richly interactive language use, such as that found in instructional conversations (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988) and collaborative classroom work (Adger, Kalyanpur, Peterson, & Bridger, 1995).

Conclusion

While this digest has focused on the second language acquisition process from the perspective of the language, the learner, and the learning process, it is important to point out that the larger social and cultural contexts of second language development have a tremendous impact on second language learning, especially for immigrant students. The status of students' ethnic groups in relation to the larger culture can help or hinder the acquisition of the language of mainstream society.

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What Works for Adult ESL Students

A Conversation with *FOB*...

What Works for Adult ESL Students

Heide Spruck Wrigley was the content specialist on "What Works for Adult ESL Literacy Students," a study funded by the US Department of Education and carried out jointly by the American Institutes for Research and Aguirre International. The two principal researchers on the study were Larry Condelli (AIR) and Heide Wrigley (Aguirre International). Heide discussed the study, its findings, and their implications for curriculum with Focus on Basics.

FOB: Can you briefly describe the study for us?
HEIDE: The study was designed to take a look at what helps literacy students who are new to English develop their English reading skills as well as their oral interaction skills in English. These are students who have fewer than six years of schooling in their home countries and who, by definition, don't have strong literacy skills in their home language nor do they generally have strong skills in English. But we do know that literacy students have strong skills that a curriculum can build on. They negotiate their daily lives in an environment that is both English-speaking and print-rich; they often have developed a score of sight words they rely on; and they use compensation strategies by drawing on their background knowledge and life experience to help them make sense of things. They all speak at least one language fluently and are now in ESOL [English for speakers of other languages] classes in an effort to pick up English and learn the basic skills they missed by not having been able to complete their schooling in their home countries.

The study is particularly pertinent now that immigration from poorer countries is increasing and includes many more individuals who had to leave school early because they had to work or their country was in the midst of civil strife. The largest group of these new immigrants comes

from Mexico, where educational opportunities are limited for much of the population (two-thirds of immigrants from Mexico haven't completed high school), but refugees from Southeast Asia (primarily Hmong) and from Africa (Somalia, Sudan, and a number of West African countries) are also among the literacy students. These groups have not been well served in conventional ESOL classes where the class starts with a book and the curriculum assumes that students have a certain level of literacy. These students - with limited literacy - have trouble in these ESOL classes, since students with higher levels of education drive the speed of the class and basic literacy is seldom taught. That was the concern behind the study.

It's an observational study, involving about 500 students who spoke more than 20 languages, with the majority being Spanish speakers. It was grounded in a framework that looked at literacy and language acquisition as a multidimensional construct. ESOL literacy involves learning how to deal with different kinds of text, and learning how to write for different reasons (for self-expression and functional literacy, for example). ESOL literacy also requires learning English, understanding it and producing it; learning grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and the other subskills. We developed a framework that identified the components of ESOL literacy, starting with print awareness, so that we could observe the classes to see to what extent are teachers are working with these different forms of literacy: narrative, document prose, etc. We looked at literacy development, second language development, and ways of connecting oral and written language.

We also looked at learning opportunities: to what extent did people get to interact with each other and to what extent did students get a chance to talk about their own lives, be involved in spontaneous conversations, or deal with problem solving? We wanted to see to what extent teachers used authentic materials or materials that reflect the literacy demands of the world outside, beyond the classroom. We noted the language (English or the native language) used by the teacher during the ESOL literacy classes. The study used a multivariable statistical model of analysis, looking at intraclass variation, holding various factors constant to see what kind of teaching made a difference. The model allowed us to look at complex relationships among literacy, teaching, and learning. That is what learning literacy while you are trying to learn a second language is: a complex relationship.

FOB: What were the study's key findings?
HEIDE: One of the key findings for reading development was that students learned more, as measured in movement on standardized tests, in classes where the teacher made the connection between life outside the

classroom and what was learned in the classroom than in classes that did not. So, for example, if teachers led field trips where students had to use English; or brought in grocery fliers or catalogues to read and discuss; or used as literacy materials cereal boxes or soup cans to figure out calories, all of which are materials and information that reflected the literacy that students deal with in their everyday lives, the impact was stronger. We called this "bringing in the outside." Bringing in the outside made a significant difference in reading gains on standardized tests.

In one class, for example, the teacher helped a group of displaced workers learn how to order food in English at a local fast food restaurant. This seems like a small task but was hugely important to the group since their children always had to order for them. Ordering themselves helped restore the parental role to what the students considered a more natural balance. The group spent a great deal of time discussing the menu, predicting questions, and practicing what to say: "Would you like that supersized?" "No, thank you." They then went to the fast food restaurant and, for the first time, ordered their food by themselves.

We also did a literacy practices inventory to see what kind of things people were reading and writing in their native languages and English. We didn't see a really close relationship between what they were reading and how much they were reading and gains on standardized tests; there are just too many variables involved. Of course, people who had higher scores to start with tended to read more because it was easier for them.

FOB: Did you happen to look at whether, if a teacher "brought in the outside" to class, students increased their use of literacy skills outside of class? That's something that Victoria Purcell-Gates studied in her research (click here for a description of her findings).
HEIDE: I can't say that there was no relationship between teaching approach and use of literacy, because we didn't analyze for that. We were looking primarily at the relationship between the kind of ESOL and literacy emphasized in the classroom and the way it was taught, and learner outcomes (as measured by standardized tests). There were other findings as well, related to growth in oral proficiency, for example, and we had some interesting findings in terms of attendance.

FOB: Were there any findings you did not expect?
HEIDE: Yes. Judicious use of the native language made a difference in both reading and oral language skill acquisition as shown by results on standardized tests. We didn't have any native language literacy classes, and we didn't have any classes in which teachers did a great deal of translating for the students. But students had higher gains when the students in the class shared a language - (in our case, Spanish) - and the

teacher was bilingual and used Spanish here and there, to give instructions, or to clarify, or to offer a quick translation of a difficult term. In classes with other language groups, the group either spoke multiple languages, as was the case in Seattle and New York, or the teacher was not bilingual, as was the case with Somali and Hmong classes.

The classes where the teacher used the native language here and there had higher gains. This makes sense, particularly for literacy students who had little English, because their brains are busy trying to speak, to figure out print, to understand what the teacher wants, all while dealing with a new language and a new culture. Many of the students had not been in a classroom since they were small children, so school tasks were new to them as well. In these cases, where you are cognitively taxed to your fullest extent, if someone comes in and explains it to you, it really frees up mental space to focus on the task itself. In ESOL classes that are all in English, so much of students' time and energy is spent trying to figure out what it is the teacher wants them to do. Once the instructions are clear, the task becomes manageable.

Something else new, although not totally unexpected, was that students need practice and they need variety. I think in our emphasis on communicative competence we sometimes forget how much practice is needed before literacy and English take hold and become internalized or "automatized." On the other hand, if language input and language tasks become repetitive and boring, the brain shuts down and learning slows way down. Students who experienced mainly skill and drill in their classes didn't do as well as other groups who had more varied experiences. By the same token, if everything was new all the time, and lots of different activities came at the students without a clear focus on what they needed to learn, they didn't do as well either.

The students who got both sufficient time on task with a particular component and a chance to encounter that component in various ways (reading, writing, hands-on activities, talking about they were reading) showed higher gains than the rest. Students need a chance to interact with print, to practice, and to "get it down." At the same time, they benefit from different kinds of experiences that reinforce language and literacy skills. This kind of balance between routine and variety made a difference in their scores on standardized testing.

FOB: The two findings seem like they may be related: judicious use of native language, to introduce procedures and to clarify complex points, for example, and the need for routine. Both indicate that time should be spent on the content - on the learning - rather than on the

procedures.
HEIDE: I think a certain amount of routine is good, particularly for adults who have little experience with schooling and who often doubt their own ability to learn. School-based learning is important to them and they want to get the basic skills that they have missed. But they often really come alive when they get a chance to work with important concepts, such as figuring out what all the charges on a phone bill are for or whether buying vegetables at a farmer's market or in a supermarket is a better deal. The finding also points to the importance of giving instructions that are simple and clear, and of demonstrating and modeling so that frustration and anxiety are reduced and students can focus on "meaning-making." And that can be done in English as well as in the native language.

FOB: Any other findings to share?
HEIDE: The basic attendance finding was that it didn't matter how many hours for class that students came but the percentage of class time they came. Rate of attendance matters more than the hours per se. For example, a student who comes to class almost every day and then drops out after three and a half months ends up doing better than a student who only attends sporadically but stays for the full six months of the course. This is true even when the total number of class hours attended are the same.

FOB: What are the implications of the findings of your study for curriculum?
HEIDE: We found that building on what students are interested in outside of the classroom results in success. This supports the idea that you want to have a curriculum that connects literacy development with oral language development and connects it back to students' lives. You can't read in English if you don't know English. We didn't see that a narrow approach that focused solely on narrow notions of reading was successful, although spending time on some of the subskills related to fluency and decoding certainly is necessary for students who don't have these skills. As we keep hearing, these subskills are necessary but not sufficient and I think our study shows that.

The findings speak for building a rich curriculum that makes a connection between the language and literacy used inside and outside of the classroom and lets these students see that they are gaining skills that reflect what's needed in daily life. Use of objects (real foods, household items), environmental print (flyers, labels, signs), mail (including notes from schools), and trips to neighborhood spots where literacy is needed are not the only materials that are useful. Language experience stories, personal writings, and stories and songs build engagement and can

become the starting point for discussions and further language use. These materials also form the basis for building fluency, discovering patterns, developing vocabulary, and practicing various subskills. Their use ties back in with the finding about practice and variety.

"Varied interaction and practice" is important. We do need to draw students' attention to what it is we want them to learn. There needs to be focus, engagement, and practice if language and literacy learning is to take place. A lot of times in ESOL teaching we're doing way too many things that don't connect to each other. Tightening the connections, doing fewer things, focusing on what students need to get in order to move forward is important.

In terms of the native language, we do need to rethink that "English only" idea, and that fear that any minute spent in native language takes away from English learning. That is actually not true. We need to really think about how to provide opportunities for students to have enough time on task really to become fluent in English. This calls for multiple opportunities to use English while facilitating learning by using the native language here or there or, if that is not possible, taking time out to demonstrate or model the tasks or use visual information to get our point across.

I mentioned before that language learners need enough energy in terms of cognitive resource to focus on language learning. If tasks are constantly changing or if instructions contain new words and phrases, learning is really inhibited. So I like to encourage teachers to keep a certain amount of classroom interaction routine when they are introducing new concepts. That lets people focus on the learning rather than on the procedures. But overall, in terms of curriculum, the findings suggest a rich language and literacy learning curriculum that provides opportunities for students to use English outside of the classroom, both through interactions with English speakers and through engagement with various forms of print. But the study also points toward the need to provide a sufficient focus on structure and practice. We can't just assume that literacy students will pick up reading and writing skills on their own, through mere exposure and continued acquisition of English. This may be true for students who have a sound foundation in literacy in the native language, but it's not true for students who lack these skills. Through our curriculum, we will need to give ESOL literacy students practice in acquiring basic reading and writing skills within the context of their lives without making these skills the primary focus of the curriculum.

FOB: Thanks for sharing all this with us. Where can readers go for your full report?

HEIDE: The report is still under review by the Department of Education. It's difficult to tell when it will be released. As soon as the study is released, it will be available on the web. We will announce its availability in various newsletters and list serves, including the *Focus on Basics* electronic discussion list (to subscribe, click here).

Resources

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Glossary of Second and Primary Language Acquisition Terms	
Term	**Usage**
Additive Model/Common Underlying Proficiency	Theory that both acquisition of first and second languages can contribute to underlying language proficiency. Experiences with both languages, according to Cummins, promote the development of the proficiency underlying both languages, given adequate motivation and exposure to both, within school or the wider environment. SUP (Separate Underlying Proficiency) approach indicates that no such relationship/synergy exists between L1 and L2 language acquisition.
Affective Filter	Optimal input occurs when the "affective filter" is low (Krashen, 1982). The affective filter is a screen of emotion that can block language acquisition or learning if it keeps the users from being too self-conscious or too embarrassed to take risks during communicative exchanges.
Audio-Lingual Method (Skinner and others)	Non-communicative approach that involves heavy use of mimicry, imitation and drill. Speech and not writing is emphasized. It is perhaps unfair to associate this approach with B.F. Skinner whose theories would in no way preclude a communicative approach to second language acquisition instruction.
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) are those that are cognitively-undemanding and include known ideas, vocabulary and syntax. They are the aspects of communication that are used daily in routine communicative exchanges (e.g., while dressing, eating, bathing, playing, etc.). BICS skills represent the informal aspects of social talk as well as skills that do not require a high degree of cognition (e.g., naming objects and actions, referring to non-existence, disappearance, rejection, and negation, and so forth). Students demonstrating BICS might recognize new combinations of known words or phrases and produce single words or short phrases. When students begin to acquire a second language, they are typically able to develop BICS within 2-3 years. *Most importantly, Cummins cautioned that students should not be placed in learning situations in which a second language (L2) is used just because they have adequate L2 BICS.*

Bilingual Advisory Committee (BAC)	Site level committee composed of parents, teachers and others that monitors school's bilingual/ESL programs. Required if site has >= 21 LEP students.
Bilingual Education Act (Title V11)	Compensatory program to support education programs, train teachers/aides, develop and disseminate instructional materials and encourage parental involvement in bilingual/ESL education. In 1970 the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) informed school districts with more than 5% national origin-minority students that they must provide some kind of special language instruction for LEP students. The OCR also prohibited the assignment of students to classes for the handicapped on the basis of English language skills; prohibited placing students in vocational tracks instead of teaching them English and mandated that administrators communicate with parents in a language they can understand.
Bilingual language User	A person who is skilled to some degree in two languages. This might be someone who speaks two languages (e.g., English and Spanish)
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency, or CALP. CALP takes much longer that BICS to develop; usually about 5-7 years. CALP skills are those that are necessary for literacy obtainment and academic success. CALP enables students to have academic, analytical conversation and to independently acquire factual information. CALP is used to use information acquired to find relationship, make inferences, and draw conclusions.
Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA)	Instructional approach that provides explicit teaching of learning strategies within academic subject areas. Strategies are divided into three major categories: (1) Metacognitive (planning, self-monitoring, classifying, etc.); (2) Cognitive (note taking, summarizing, making inferences, self-reflection, etc.) and (3) Social-affective (Asking questions, cooperative learning, peer tutoring, etc.).
Communicative Approaches	Teaching approach where negotiation for meaning is critical. The teacher becomes a facilitator. Collaborative learning and peer interaction is important. Students and teacher select and organize curriculum contents.
Comprehensible Input	Input + 1/Zone of Proximal Development-Input/instruction that is just above the students abilities. Instruction that is embedded in a meaningful context, modified (paraphrasing, repetition),

	collaborative/ interactive and multimodal.
Cultural Adaptation/Culture Shock Cycle	Model of what happens when a person is introduced into a new culture and then must return to their home culture. Stages include: (1) Pre-departure anxiety; (2) Arrival honeymoon; (3) Initial culture shock; (4) Surface adjustment; (5) Mental isolation; (6) Return anxiety and (8) Re-entry culture shock.
Cummin's Classification of Language and Content activities.	Divided activities/modes of instruction and learning along two continuums (context embedded/reduced and academic and cognitively demanding /undemanding). Instruction should progress from context embedded/academically non-demanding to context reduced/academically demanding. Teacher should be aware of where his instruction falls and how it is relating to the needs of his students who may be in various stages of language acquisition and development.
Direct Method (Berlitz)	Non-communicative method that involves exclusive use of target/L2 language, uses a step by step progression of material and considers correct translation to be very important.
District Bilingual Advisory Committee	Required if district has >= 51 LEP students. Monitors District bilingual/ESL programs.
ELD	English Language Development
English Language Assessment	Each student with a home language other than English must be assessed in English within 30 days of enrollment.
Enlightened Eclecticism (Wilga Rivers)	Communicative approach that pulls from a variety of methods.
ESL (English as a Second Language)	As distinguished from true Bilingual education, ESL emphasizes the submersion /submersion + ESL/pullout approach and where the goal is early transition. Instruction in English is looked upon as remedial.
Grammar	A theory or hypothesis, about the organization of language in the mind of speakers of that language--the underlying knowledge that permits understanding and production of language.
Grammar Translation Method	This is a non-communicative approach that relies heavily on reading and translation, mastery of grammatical rules and accurate writing.

Home Language Survey (HLS)	Form completed by parents/guardians that gives information about a student's language background. Must be on file for every LEP student.
Humanistic Approach (Galyean)	Communicative approach that focuses on the whole learner, starts with the individual then expands to group and includes music, art and physical activity.
Immersion Programs	Bilingual program similar to double or two-way program. Sometimes also used to describe a program where L1 students are given academic instruction in a non-native language for enrichment.
Input +1	Optimal input must be at a level slightly above that of the learner. Krashen labeled this concept "input + 1". To explain this principle, Krashen uses an analogy of an English speaker trying to comprehend Spanish from a radio program. Those of us who have a beginner's ability to speak Spanish and who have listened to a Spanish radio broadcast know how frustrating (and incomprehensible) it can be to try to attend to input that is just too complex and that lacks a visible context from which we can deduce clues.
L1	Primary language
L2	Secondary language
Language Acquisition Theory (Krashen and others)	Acquisition and learning are two separate processes. Learning is knowing about a language (formal knowledge). Acquisition is the unconscious process that occurs when language is used in real conversation. Language Acquisition Theory embodies the following hypotheses: A. Natura l Order: Natural progression/order of language development exhibited by infants/young children and/or second language learners (child or adult). (PEPSI) B. Mon itor: Learning (as opposed to acquisition) serves to develop a monitor- an error detecting mechanism that scans utterances for accuracy in order to make corrections. As a corollary to the monitor hypothesis, language acquisition instruction should avoid emphasis on error correction and grammar. Such an emphasis might inhibit language acquisition, particularly at the early stages of language development.

	C. Input: Input needs to be comprehensible . D. Affective Filter
Language Assessment Tests	LAS O/R/W (See definition above) Basic Inventory of natural Language (BINL) Idea Oral Proficiency (IPT) Quick Start in English (QSE) Woodcock-Munoz Language Survey (WML)
Language Diagnostic Assessment Notification Letter	Letter sent to parents/guardians of students "diagnosed" as LEP informing them of the test results and the type of instruction their children will receive.
LAS	Language Assessment Scales. State approved assessment test to determine language status and appropriate placement for LEP students. *English LAS: LAS-Oral and LAS Read/Write* *Spanish LAS Oral and LAS Read/Write*
Lau v. Nichols	Supreme Court case where the Court ruled that, "There is no equality of treatment merely by providing students the same facilities, textbooks, teachers and curriculum, for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education". Also: Lau remedies.
LEP	Limited English Proficient Students
Maintenance Bilingual Program	Bilingual program whose goal is to maintain English learner's native language and culture. Students are encouraged to be proficient in English and their native tongue.
Morphology	The study of the meaning units in a language (morphemes)
Natural Approach (Terrell and Krashen)	Communicative approach that: (1) Takes into account PEPSI; (2) Uses comprehensible input; (3) Stresses low affective filter and (4) Uses meaningful, authentic communication/activities.

Noam Chomsky	Pioneered cognitive/gestalt approach to understanding language acquisition. Mind contains Language Acquisition Device that generates rules through the unconscious acquisition of grammar.
One-Way	Bilingual program where native English speakers do not receive instruction in the native language of the English learners.
Phase or Stage	Periods of development that are typically used in discussion of language ability instead of ages to refer to a child's process.
Phonology	The study of the sound patterns of a language.
Pragmatics	The general study of how context affects the user's interpretation of language.
Primary Language	The language of most benefit in learning new and difficult information.
Primary Language Assessment	Every LEP student must be assessed for primary language proficiency within 90 calendar days of enrollment.
Redesignation	Developmental progress of LEP students is reviewed annually. FEP (Fluent English Proficiency) redesignation will occur based on the following criteria: 1. Teacher recommendation 2. SOLM 3. Oral English Fluency (LAS-O and other assessment tests) 4. Reading/Writing (LAS R/W and other assessment tests) 5. Student writing sample 6. CTBS score of 36 percentile or greater in reading, language and math)
Semantics	The study of meanings of individual words and or larger units such as phrases and sentences.
Silent Way (Gattegno)	Communicative approach that makes learner responsible for own learning and makes extensive use of Cuisenare rods, color-coding and other manipulatives.

SOLM (Student Oral Language Observation Matrix)	Form designed to help teachers assess oral language skills of students.
Specially Designated Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE)	Academic, subject area instruction that takes into account the special needs of LEP and other students by fostering: 1. Active student participation 2. Social interaction 3. Integrated oral and written language 4. Authentic books and tasks 5. Adequate coverage of background knowledge required to master a topic (vocabulary, key concepts, etc.).
Stages of Language Development (PEPSI)	Level 1: Pre-Production Stage (Silent Period): Minimal comprehension, no verbal production. Level II: Early Production Stage. Limited Comprehension; One/two-word response. Level III: Speech Emergence Stage. Increased comprehension; Simple sentences; Some errors in speech. Level IV: Intermediate Fluency Stage. Very good comprehension; More complex sentences; Complex errors in speech.
Submersion	Sink or swim approach to ELD instruction. L2 students are placed in the same classes as L1 students and required to learn as much as they can.
Submersion + ESL	English learners are given a separate ESL class for a prescribed period of time, usually one hour per day. The rest of the day is spent in classes with L1 learners (Pullout ESL).
Suggestopedia (Lozanov)	Communicative approach that uses Baroque music (in the session phase of a lesson) and stresses a welcoming atmosphere and natural settings. A Suggestopedia lesson may have three phases: (1) Presession; (2) Session and (3) Postsession.
Syntax	The study of the sentence patterns of a language and rules that govern the correctness of a sentence.
Total Physical Response (TPR) (James Asher)	Communicative approach where students respond with actions, not words first. Instruction is concrete

	and can be introductory to reading/writing experiences.
Transition	Bilingual program whose goal is to help English learners ultimately adjust to an all English educational program. May be early-exit (2nd grade) or late-exit (6th grade).
Two-Way	Bilingual program where L2 learners receive L1 instruction and L1 students receive L2 instruction. To be effective program must: 1. Allow for development of CALP 2. Optimal input in both languages. 3. Focus on academic subjects. 4. Integrate the curriculum. 5. Allow for monolingual instruction for sustained periods. 6. Have home-school collaboration 7. Empower students as active learners. 8. Make sufficient use of minority language.

Strategy #1: Get to know your students

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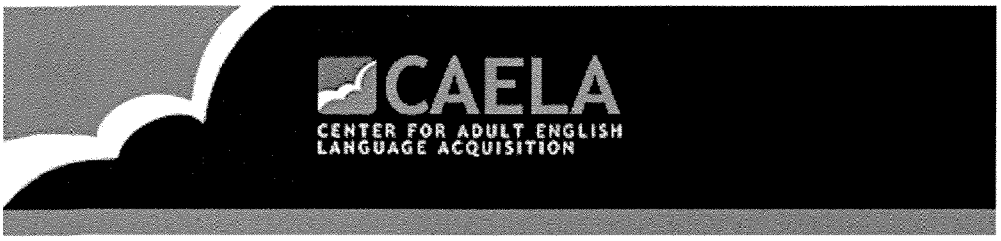

Print Close

Mental Health and the Adult Refugee: The Role of the ESL Teacher

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English as a second language (ESL) teachers are often among the first people available to help refugees and other immigrants cope with a new cultural and linguistic environment. Although the identified role of the teacher is to teach English language skills, the teacher's role as a cultural broker is very important as well.

This digest focuses on how teachers can help adult refugee and immigrant learners make significant progress in adjusting to a new life in an unfamiliar culture. It discusses the qualities of mental health, stresses faced by refugees, and three things that teachers can do to help their students adjust.

Qualities of Mental Health

Mental health includes two components: a *psychological,* internal experience of well-being and *behavioral* markers, observable by others, that indicate whether the individual is able to handle life's challenges in adaptive ways.

Psychological. Mental health involves the ability to cope adequately with life's difficulties and demands, to experience joy and happiness when life events call for this, and to grieve and live through the painful and tragic times in life.

Behavioral. Mentally healthy people can successfully accomplish basic life functions such as eating and sleeping, perform well in the occupational arena, and have satisfying relationships with others.

Concepts of mental health are laden with cultural bias. For example, one of the most important ways that cultures differ is that the societies where many of the refugees and immigrants to the United States come from tend to be more collectivistic, whereas U.S. society is more individualistic. In the United States, parents are generally encouraged to rear their children to be independent and self-reliant, to leave home early, and to be responsible for their own happiness and well being. In collectivist societies, parents raise their children to be interdependent and to be responsible for others, within a system of relationships where others in turn care for them. Americans may see behavior of people coming from such cultures as overly dependent and dysfunctional. However, behaving in individualistic ways could be seen as dysfunctional within the context of these other societies. Because of these cultural differences, U.S. teachers of refugee adults must be cautious in passing judgment on behaviors they may not understand.

Stress Experienced in Resettlement

Stress occurs when the burdens imposed on people by events or pressures in their lives exceed their resources to cope. For refugees, resettlement involves three types of stress: *migration stress, acculturative stress,* and (for many) *traumatic stress.*

Migration stress. Moving to a new country triggers a number of stressful life events at one time. When migration occurs suddenly as a result of political violence, war, or other catastrophes, refugees are functioning under conditions out of their control. Moreover, many of the losses associated with migration represent the loss of the usual coping resources--such as family, friends, surrounding community--that people would ordinarily rely on to help them cope with stress.

Acculturative stress results from having to learn to function in a culture different from the one an individual is born and raised in. Immigrants and refugees often do not expect that the very fabric of life around them will be profoundly different. Ways in which people relate to each other and form and sustain friendships will be different, and how children go to schools and are socialized will change. Even the most simple of daily tasks, such as shopping for food or asking for directions, can become challenges involving not only the language barrier, but also the potential for deep cultural misunderstanding. New refugees and immigrants can feel that their very identity is threatened in the new culture (Ullman, 1997).

Traumatic stress results from extreme events that cause harm, injury, or death, such as natural disasters, accidents, assault, war-related experiences, and torture. Generally, it is believed that injury resulting from accidents and natural disasters is less traumatic than injury resulting from willful acts by other human beings, such as torture. It is inevitable that individuals suffering such events will be changed by that experience, and research suggests that these changes will be psychological, social, and physical (Pynoos, Sorenson, & Steinberg, 1993).

What ESL Teachers Can Do

Teachers of adult refugees can promote cultural adjustment and mental health by learning about the challenges facing refugees; by providing material and activities in the classroom that will address some of the individuals' particular needs; and by becoming an integral part of a larger network of providers that includes mental health professionals.

1. Teachers can learn to recognize symptoms of mental illness, or abrupt behavioral changes that disrupt the class. Signals teachers identify from observation may include absences, withdrawal from participation, lack of attention, sleeping in class, frequent crying, behavioral problems, and change in progress. Symptoms often reported by students include headaches, backaches, stomachaches, insomnia, and excessive drinking of alcohol (Adkins, Birman, & Sample, 1999).

Sometimes the signs are not obvious. In writing about survivors of domestic abuse, Horsman (1998, p. 2) talks about the "hidden" impacts of traumatic stress that may make it difficult for adults to be totally "present" or involved in their learning, including "a lack of comfort with ambiguity, and a tendency to see everything as all or nothing." Horsman suggests addressing these issues openly in the class, making it part of the curriculum to discuss what it means to be present in the class, giving permission for learners to not always be totally involved in all the class activities, and exploring the value of the "middle ground ... deciding which stories to tell when, and creating a safe place to learn" (p. 3).

2. Teachers can discuss health and cultural content relevant to learners. When refugees seek help from a medical doctor or a mental health professional, they often become uneasy when asked about details of their personal lives and backgrounds. In the ESL

classroom, activities related to making appointments to see a doctor and then talking about health issues with the doctor, finding and keeping a job, negotiating transportation, and so forth are all natural components of the curriculum. These activities give learners opportunities to discuss issues of personal interest and concern with others and to solve problems related to survival, family, and employment. When viewed as part of the process of developing needed competencies using the English language, they are usually not considered invasive or out of context by either students or teachers.

Topics for discussion related to mental and physical health include

- accessing medical services;
- going to the doctor;
- finding an adequate place to live;
- identifying and shopping for food and drink;
- using available recreational activities;
- interacting with the school;
- disciplining children;
- developing healthy relationships among family members;
- learning conflict resolution strategies; and
- relating to the past, the native country, and distant relatives and friends.

Activities that help learners develop strategies for coping with cultural adjustment can also promote mental health (Silver, 1999). Some suggestions for activities are listed below.

- *Language experience stories.* In groups, students write stories about something from their culture (for example, a custom, a place, or a food).
- *Dialogue journals.* Learners write to their teacher about topics of their own choice, and the teacher responds to them in writing.
- *Picture stories.* Learners respond to questions about a story told through photos or drawings. Silver describes how asking a question about an obviously sad woman in a picture story ("What advice would you give this woman?") brought different responses from the learners, depending on where they came from, their length of time in the United States, and their age and gender. Out of this simple activity came an array of language and culture learning, giving opportunities to talk about register and to look at acceptable forms of offering advice.
- *Goal-setting exercises.* Learners map out short-term and long-term goals. Even such a straightforward exercise as this may be problematic. As Horsman (1998) points out, this needs to be handled delicately. The issue of control is central to goal setting, and for survivors of trauma, having and taking control is a "complex and fraught area" (p. 3).
- *Timeline activities.* Students map and reflect on the highs and lows of their past while looking ahead to the future. (See Adkins, Birman, & Sample, 1999, and Van Duzer & Burt, 1999, for activities related to goal setting and timelines.)

3. Teachers can network. Most teachers are not therapists, but they can work with others who have more knowledge and experience.

- First, they can collect information about community resources for dealing with refugee mental health.
- Second, they can develop relationships with interested local mental health providers, find out how the local mental health system works, and identify community resources related to accessing help for cultural adjustment and mental health. Useful contacts might include a provider at a local clinic or hospital who is familiar with the situation of refugees and is willing to serve as a resource and the local refugee resettlement office that may provide interpreters.
- Finally, they can make a decision about whether or not it is appropriate to contact resources, speak with other family members, bring the situation to the attention of a resettlement agency or sponsor group, or give the student the opportunity in classroom activities to discuss or disclose personal information.

Conclusion

The myriad needs that refugees bring to the classroom provide rich opportunities for learning. ESL teachers can be a critical link in a well-functioning team of providers helping refugees establish a new life that is both productive and satisfying. Teachers can be a crucial resource to their culturally diverse students who are grappling with concerns related to cultural adjustment and mental health. The ESL classroom is a safe place where students can improve their English and learn about U.S. culture"both of which can serve as tools for enhancing mental health.

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Needs Assessment and Learner Self-Evaluation

The assessment of literacy needs from the learner's perspective is an important part of an instructional program. Learners come to adult English as a Second Language programs for diverse reasons. Although they may say they just want to "learn English," they frequently have very specific learning goals and needs; for example, to be able to read to their children, speak with their children's teachers, get a job, or become a U.S. citizen. If their needs are not met, they are more likely to drop out than to voice their dissatisfaction. Therefore, using informal, self-assessment tools to gauge learner needs and goals is important. Also important, of course, is using formal assessment tools to gauge learner progress. For information about and descriptions of formal assessment instruments, see *Assessing Adult English Language Learners*, Part IV–25.

The needs assessment process can be used as the basis for developing curricula and classroom practice that are responsive to learners' needs. It encompasses both what learners know and can do and what they want to learn and be able to do. Learners also need opportunities to evaluate what they have learned—to track their progress toward meeting goals they have set for themselves in learning English.

What is Needs Assessment?

Needs assessments with adult English language learners examine the following aspects from the perspective of the learner:

- English language proficiency
- Native language literacy
- Literacy contexts in which the learner lives and works
- Learner need for native language translation or aid of an interpreter
- Learner wants and needs for functioning in specified contexts
- Learner expectations from the instructional program

The needs assessment process focuses and builds on learners' accomplishments and abilities rather than deficits, allowing learners to articulate and display what they already know (Holt & Van Duzer, 2000). It is a continual process and takes place throughout the instructional program. The process can influence student placement, materials selection, curriculum design, and instructional practice (TESOL, 2003). At the beginning of the program, needs assessment might be used to determine course content, while during the program, it assures that learner goals and program goals are being met and allows for necessary program changes. At the end of the program, needs assessment can be used for planning future directions for the learners and the program (Marshall, 2002). These same tools also may be used as a way to measure progress at the end of the year. However, for reporting outcomes

to funders and external stakeholders, standardized assessments must be used. See page IV–31 for an annotated list of standardized assessments of English language and literacy.

What Do Assessment Tools Look Like?

Learner self-assessment tools may have a variety of formats, including survey questionnaires that require learners to check areas of interest or need, open-ended interviews, or informal performance observations. For assessment to be effective, tools and activities must be appropriate for the particular learner or group of learners. For example, materials written in English might be translated into the learners' native language, read aloud by the teacher or an aide (in English or the native language), or represented pictorially. Types of needs assessment tools and activities are described in Figure II-1, followed by samples of assessment tools that may be used or adapted to meet particular program needs.

Figure II-1: **Types of Needs Assessment Tools and Activities**

Type of Tool/Activity	Description	Samples
Survey questionnaires of learners' needs and goals	Many types of questionnaires have been designed to determine learners' literacy needs and goals. Frequently they consist of a list of topics, skills, or language and literacy uses. The learners indicate what they already know or want to know by checking in the appropriate column or box, or they may be asked to use a scale to rank the importance of each item. For beginning learners who do not read English, pictures depicting different literacy contexts can be shown, and learners can mark the contexts that apply to them. The list of questionnaire items may be prepared ahead of time by the teacher or generated by the students themselves through class discussion.	Samples 1-6 (pp. II–8 - II–13)
Inventories of language and literacy use	Checklists may be used here, as well as more open-ended questions requiring learners to keep lists of ways they use language and literacy and update them periodically.	Samples 7-9 (pp. II–14 - II–16)
Learner interviews to assess needs and interests	Interviews with learners may provide valuable information about what learners know, what their interests are, and the ways they use or hope to use literacy. Interviews may be done one-on-one or in small groups, in their native language, or in English.	Samples 10-11 (pp. II–17 - II–26)
Personal or dialogue journal	Learners' journals, in which they write freely about their activities, experiences, and plans, may be a rich source of information about their literacy needs.	Sample 12 (p. II–27)
Timelines to express learners' short-term and long-term goals	Learners may prepare their own personal timelines, in writing or pictorially, that indicate major events in their lives as well as future goals. Discussion can then focus on how progress towards those goals may be met through the class.	Sample 13 (p. II–27)

(Adapted from Weddel & Van Duzer, 1997)

The amount of explanation required for the following sample activities, and the writing required from the students for each form will vary according to their level of English proficiency. The activities may need to be explained in more detail for beginning level learners. Also at the beginning level, the teacher might need to simplify the language in the forms or translate them and explain them in the learners' native language.

These forms are designed to provide examples of learning activities with English language learners. Practitioners are asked to include the reference at the bottom of the forms if they are duplicated.

Needs assessment may take many forms and may be carried out at different times during the instructional process. Whatever the focus and format, the basic purpose is to determine what learners want and need to learn. When learners know that educators understand and want to address their needs and interests, they are motivated to continue in a program and to learn.

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Sample Needs Assessments

Sample II–1: Beginning-Level Questionnaire Guide

Even in literacy- and beginning-level classes, it is important to conduct some needs assessment in the first days of class. Needs assessment should then continue informally throughout the entire class cycle. Typically when literacy-level adult English language learners are asked which English skill is most important for them—reading, writing, speaking, or listening—they say "everything." A teacher might agree with the students, but then explain that they cannot learn everything at once, so the teacher needs an idea of what is most important to particular learners. This will enable the teacher to set priorities for what is to be taught. The following steps may be useful in assessing needs and determining priorities.

1. Elicit from the students situations and places where they might need English, such as getting a job or going to the doctor. Discuss whether they need to read, speak, listen, or write (or often, all four) in these situations.
2. Label four cards, each card representing one of the skills—reading, writing, speaking, listening—and put a simple graphic on each card, e.g., an ear for listening, a mouth for speaking, a book for reading, and a pen for writing. Post one skill card in each corner of the room.
3. Ask the students (and demonstrate, if necessary) to stand by the card representing the English skill they most need to improve. If students are confused, repeat and demonstrate the directions and allow them to help each other in their native languages. While students are standing in their chosen corners, have them write their names on the appropriate skill card. Leave the card on the wall for the rest of the class cycle.

The above "four corners" activity helps prepare learners for the more complicated task of choosing which topics to study.

1. Create a simple form asking students to indicate which topics are the most important for them to learn. Draw or find illustrations of possible topics to be studied in class, such as health, housing, shopping, and transportation. (See sample on page II–9.)
2. For group instruction, make transparencies of the pictures on the form. The form can contain basic words such as *work, health, community*.
3. Discuss the pictures and words on the form.
4. Give each learner a handout of the form and ask them to circle the topics most important to them. Ask them to choose 3-5 topics, depending on the length and intensity of the instruction. Some learners may help each other in their native languages, or volunteers may assist in English or the native language. Individuals may circle words or pictures.
5. While the students are working, circulate to help with the process and confirm with each adult learner that he or she has chosen important topics.

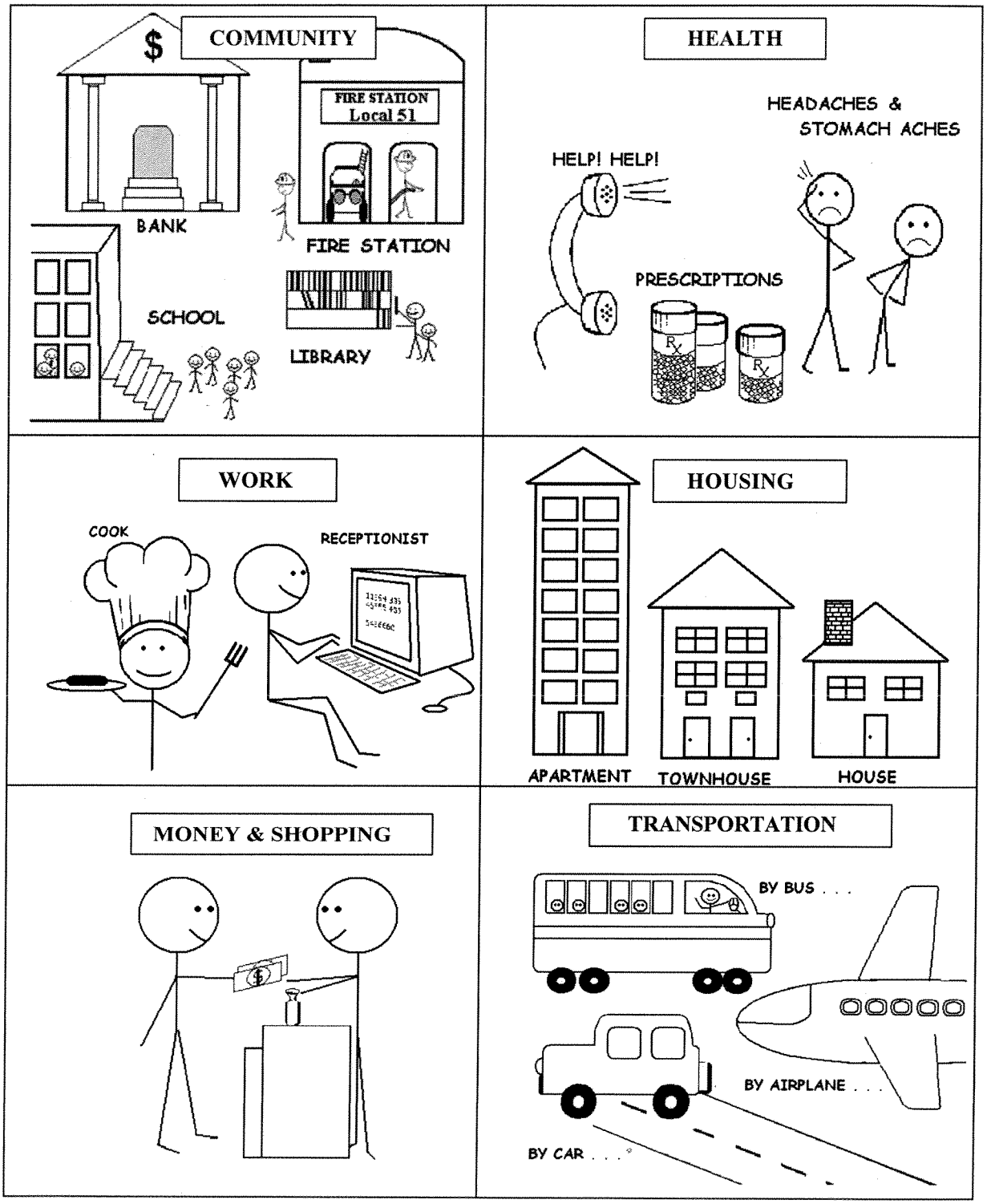
The next day, on the original transparency or on the board, present a tally of the topics that were marked, and decide with the class which topics are important to the most people. Some may find the entire task challenging because they are unfamiliar with the concept of needs assessment and because of difficulties in understanding and expressing themselves in English. But everyone ultimately understands the inherent fairness of this group process. The process itself serves to forge a strong class bond while showing adult English learners that their voices have been heard. These activities also allow the teacher to assess the skills, ideas, and feelings of each individual in the class.

(Adapted from Shank & Terrill, 1997.)

Sample II–1a: Beginning Level Questionnaire

What do you want to study?
Circle three topics.

Name _____
Date _____



Sample II–2: Intermediate/Advanced Level Questionnaire

Name _____ Date _____

1. Why do you need to learn more English? Please be specific. Give examples of situations that are difficult for you in English.

2. What specific areas of English would you like to improve before you leave this class?

3. When people speak English to you, how much do you understand? Check the amount.

   ___ everything ___most ___some ___a little ___very little

4. When you watch TV, how much do you understand? Check the amount.

   ___ everything ___most ___some ___a little ___very little

5. When you speak English, how much do other people understand?

   ___ everything ___most ___some ___a little ___very little

6. Order the skills that you need from 1 to 6. Number 1 is the most important and number 6 is the least important to you at this time. Please use each number only one time.

   ___ Reading

   ___ Writing

   ___ Listening

   ___ Speaking

   ___Vocabulary

   ___ Pronunciation

(Adapted from Marshall, 2002. Used with permission.)

Sample II–3: Intermediate Level Questionnaire: Family Activities

Purpose: To identify literacy practices in the home, record parent-child interactions, and provide a baseline for documenting changes over time.

Process: Either as part of a whole-group or small-group discussion, have learners discuss activities they currently do with their children. Give the learners the following prompts: "Parents and children can do many things together. They go to the park on Sunday, go fishing, cook food, clean the house, go hiking, watch TV, work in the garden, or look at magazines. In many families, parents help their children with homework or check their assignments. What do you do together with members of your family?" Record their responses on the lines below.

Luisa and her husband go to church together on Sundays.

Then they watch their son Marcos play soccer.

(Adapted from Holt & Van Duzer, 2000. Used with permission.)

Sample II–4: Intermediate Level Open-Ended Questionnaire: Home Literacy Activities

Purpose: To record home literacy events and activities that parents regard as essential and to gain insights into educational values and opinions about learning.

Process: As part of a whole-group or small-group discussion or through pair activities, have the learners discuss and then record their views of how children learn and how parents can help their children learn. Give the following prompt:

In my opinion, these activities help children learn.

Talking about (for example, field trips, birthday parties)

Teaching children to (for example, ride a bicycle, use the stove)

Helping children with (for example, math homework, spelling words)

Asking children questions about (for example, their friends, their favorite class, personal problems)

Telling children that (for example, everybody makes mistakes, you learn by doing)

(Adapted from Holt & Van Duzer, 2000. Used with permission.)

Sample II–5: Intermediate Level Can-Do List for Self Assessment

Directions: Put a check mark (✓) in the box that best describes you. Put only one check for each row.

Here's what I can do.	I can do this. No problem.	I do OK most of the time, except when things are complicated.	This is a little difficult for me, but I can do it with some help from others.	This is very difficult for me. I can only do it with a lot of help from others.	I can't do this. No way. It's much too difficult.
Talk about my country and my city with a friend or neighbor					
Ask for directions on the street or ask where something is in a store					
Ask someone to speak more slowly or to say things in a different way					
Fill out a form (name, birthdate, address, phone)					
Explain about myself and my work in a job interview					
Understand the notes that my child's teacher sends from school					
Figure out my phone bill or electricity bill					
Explain to the doctor in detail what's wrong					
Pick a story in the newspaper and read it					
Understand the news on TV					

(Adapted from Holt & Van Duzer, 2000. Used with permission.)

Sample II–6: Beginning Level Self-Assessment Instrument

Purpose: To set personal goals and develop an individualized plan for documenting progress.

Process: Give this form to the students. Explain the meaning of "once in a while" if they don't know it. Then, give them the following prompt:

Based on home literacy activities identified in the Open-Ended Questionnaire on page II–11, list activities you plan to do with your children. Indicate how often you might do each.

Family Activity	Almost every day	Once or twice a week	Several times a month	Once or twice a month	Once in a while
My children and I plan to … *go to the library*				X	

(Adapted from Holt & Van Duzer, 2000. Used with permission.)

Sample II–7: Beginning Level Language Log

Purpose: To track the amount of English used during the prior week and to consider that which was difficult and that which was easy.

Process: Give this form to the students. Explain that the more we think about our English language use, the more we are able to improve our ability to use English. This language log will help them track the amount of English they use weekly. Ask them to try to increase their English language use each week.

Name _____ Date _____

Where did you speak English this week?

_____

_____

_____

To whom did you speak English?

_____

_____

_____

What did you read in English this week?

_____

_____

_____

What did you need to study this week?

_____

_____

This week, _____ was difficult in class.

This week, _____ was easy in class.

(Adapted from Marshall, 2002. Used with permission.)

Sample II–8: Beginning Level Language Use Inventory

Purpose: To practice thinking, writing, and speaking English by answering simple questions.

Process: Give this form to the students. Display the handout on an overhead transparency. As a large group activity, walk through the handout, offering suggestions and asking for examples from the students. Have students work on their handout individually, then have them get into pairs and work on interviewing each other.

Answer for YOU

	To whom did you speak?	What did you say?	Was it easy? Difficult?
At home?			
At work?			
At the store?			
Another place?			

Now ask your PARTNER

	To whom did you speak?	What did you say?	Was it easy? Difficult?
At home?			
At work?			
At the store?			
Another place?			

(Adapted from Marshall, 2002. Used with permission.)

Sample II–12: Beginning Level Diary/Journal

Purpose: To help students become aware of their daily use of English.

Process: Give this form to the students. Display the handout on an overhead transparency. As a large group activity, walk through the handout, offering suggestions and asking for examples from the students. Have students work on their handout individually, in pairs, or in small groups.

Complete the follow statements:

Today I learned _____.

Today I read _____ in English.

Today I spoke English to _____.

Today I wanted to speak English when _____.

Today I learned some new words. They are _____.

Tomorrow I am going to _____to practice English.

(Adapted from Marshall, 2002. Used with permission.)

Sample II–13: Intermediate Level Timelines

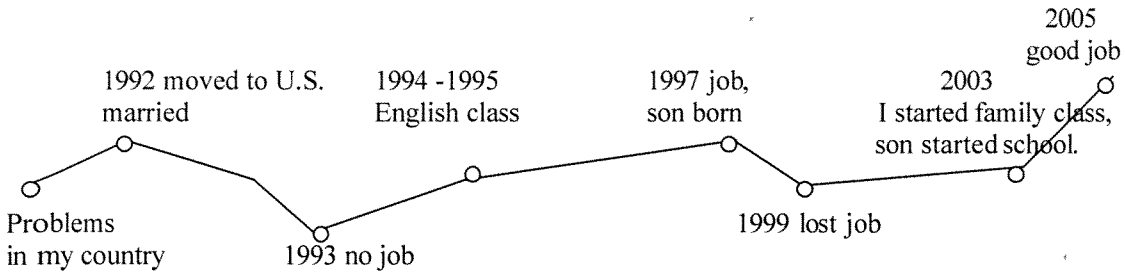
Purpose: Students may use timelines to reflect on elements of their past and present lives and to express needs and goals for the present and future.

Process: High points on the timeline mark important points and goals met. The low points mark difficult times or unmet goals. To support students in creating timelines use the following process:

- Brainstorm words and phrases and write them on the board (e.g., *came here in 1992*; *married in 1993; started school in 2003; my son is an honor student*).
- Show a model of your own timeline.
- Provide magazines, scissors, markers or crayons, and glue sticks for students to use to design and illustrate their timelines.
- When students have finished their timelines, have them ask and answer questions about each other's timelines (e.g., *When did you come to the United States? What do you want to do in the future?*).

Share the sample on the next page as a model for learners.

My name is Celia. This is my personal time line.



(From the classroom of Lynda Terrill, 2004. Used with permission.)

Additional Timeline samples are available at:
http://www.Arlington.K12.Va.Us/Instruct/Ctae/Adult_Ed/REEP/Reepcurriculum/Timelines.Html

Print Close

Needs Assessment for Adult ESL Learners

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May 1997

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

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

WHAT IS NEEDS ASSESSMENT?

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

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

Needs assessment is a continual process and takes place throughout the instructional program (Burnaby, 1989; Savage, 1993), thus influencing student placement, materials selection, curriculum design, and teaching approaches (Wrigley & Guth, 1992). As Burnaby (1989) noted, "The curriculum content and learning experiences to take place in class should be negotiated between learners, teacher, and coordinator at the beginning of the project and renegotiated regularly during the project" (p. 20). At the beginning of the program, needs assessment might

be used to determine appropriate program types and course content; during the program, it assures that learner and program goals are being met and allows for necessary program changes; at the end of the program, it can be used for assessing progress and planning future directions for the learners and the program.

WHY IS NEEDS ASSESSMENT IMPORTANT?

A needs assessment serves a number of purposes:

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

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

ASSESSMENT TOOLS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

NEEDS ASSESSMENT IN ONE ADULT ESL PROGRAM

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

In-class needs assessment is most successful when learners understand its purpose and are comfortable with each other. Because of this, the first curriculum unit in every new class is called "Getting Started" (Arlington Education and Employment Program, 1994). It enables learners to get to know one another through the needs assessment process as they acknowledge shared concerns and begin to build a community in the classroom (Van Duzer, 1995). For several days, some class time may be spent discussing where they use English, what they do with it, what problems they have encountered, and why they feel they need to improve their language skills and knowledge. Through this process, both the learners and the teacher become aware of the goals and needs represented in the class. A variety of level-appropriate techniques, like those mentioned above, are used to come to a concensus on the class instructional plan and to develop individual learning plans. Learners select from both program-established curricular units and from their identified needs. The needs assessment process serves as both a learning and information-gathering process as learners use critical thinking, negotiation, and problem-solving skills to reach this plan.

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

CONCLUSION

Needs assessment can take many forms and can be carried out at different times during the instructional process. Whatever the focus and format, the basic purpose is to determine what

learners want and need to learn. When curriculum content, materials, and teaching approaches match learners' perceived and actual needs, learner motivation and success are enhanced.

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Strategy #2: Use visuals to support your instruction.

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PICTURE THIS: Communicative Picture Activities for the ESL Classroom

Rocky Mountain TESOL Conference; Longmont, Colorado
November 10, 2000
Presentation by Kevin Keating
Center for ESL at The University of Arizona, Tucson

INTRODUCTION

Today's students are certainly visually oriented. We as teachers can take full advantage of this orientation by using pictures in our classrooms. In this interactive demonstration, participants will walk through several practical, classroom-proven picture and drawing activities that are sure to stimulate effective and fun-filled communication and learning.

PICTURE ACTIVITIES

1) "Mix and Match" - Gather a number of pictures which equals half the number of students in your class. For example, if you have 22 students, you will need 11 pictures. Cut the pictures in half and shuffle. Distribute one half of a picture to each student. The student looks for a while alone at his picture and then puts it in his pocket. Next, students get up and circulate about the room to find their mate by describing their half of the picture. When they think they have found a mate, they can compare pictures to verify. When mates have all been found, tape the pictures on the wall and have the partners walk around the room and describe each of the pictures. Follow up with comprehension questions for each picture.

2) "Picture This" - One half of the class is shown a picture. These students must then describe the picture they have seen to a partner, who in turn draws the picture being described. Partners are switched several times to edit and more fully complete the drawing.

[NOTE: In these activities, always remember to create interest by discussing before starting the activity, to pre-teach vocabulary or grammar, and to follow up with some kind of activity. In "Picture This", for example, the teacher might begin by asking students if they usually take a bath or a shower, or if they ever read in the bathtub. Then the teacher might dictate some vocabulary words, such as tub, pillow, and robe, and go over them as a class. After the drawing activity is completed, the teacher could do a True/False reading activity: e.g., The shower is on; The man likes wine; The man is married.]

3) "Off the Wall Picture" - Pieces of a picture are taped up on the classroom walls. Pairs of students first walk about the room and put the puzzle together in their minds and then draw out the entire picture.

4) **"What's Wrong With This Picture?"** - Students in pairs read and discuss a passage which the teacher has written describing a picture. When ready, the pairs turn over the reading passage and are given a picture which is similar to but not exactly the same as the one described in the passage. Students must edit the picture to make it conform to the reading without looking at the passage right away. [This activity can also be done using the picture first and then the reading passage, in which case the students would edit the passage to make it conform to the picture. Also, instead of a reading passage given to the students, the teacher could just read the passage to the students to make it a listening exercise.]

5) **"Fill-Me-In"** - The class is divided into teams of four members. Each group is given one part of a four-part picture story, i.e., a story which has four pictures in sequence to tell the entire story. The members of the group should discuss and memorize as much as possible about the picture. When the groups are ready, the teacher removes the pictures; students must rely on their memories now. Next, take one member from each group of four and form a new group whose four members have seen the four different pictures that make up the entire story. These group members must then describe their pictures to each other so that the group can get the whole story. The group should also decide whose picture is first in the sequence, whose is second, whose is third, and whose is fourth. Pairs can then be assigned to discuss the whole story before class discussion and finally showing the entire sequence of pictures.

6) **"Parallel Lines"** - Half of the class is shown a picture. Give students time to study and absorb the information. Then arrange the class in one in parallel lines facing each other, with the students who have seen the picture making up one of the lines. Next, these students must describe the picture to their partner in a certain amount of time as designated by the teacher (e.g., 40 seconds) depending on the complexity of the picture. After the allotted time is up, students who have seen the picture switch partners and again describe the picture to the new partner, this time in a shorter period of time, perhaps 30 seconds. Keep switching in this fashion and keep decreasing the allotted time to describe the picture. When the first group has described the picture several times, switch roles, and the partners who had been listening are now required to describe what they understood about the picture. Again, designate the time and, when done with one partner, switch to a new partner to explain again in a shorter amount of time. Finally, pairs can draw out the picture. Show the picture at the end to verify comprehension.

7) **"Fast Eyes"** - The teacher flashes a picture to the class who tries to catch as much as it can of the picture. Pairs discuss what they saw. The teacher can ask a few True/False or Comprehension Questions about the picture which can be discussed by the students. Repeat the activity, but more slowly, as a follow-up.

8) **"Pictures Out of Sequence"** - Teachers will need a pictures story of four or five pictures. Shuffle the pictures so the sequence is out of order. Flash the pictures one by one to the students. When finished, have the students in pairs describe what they think is the correct sequence.

9) "Human Puzzles" - Cut up a picture into four parts - either quarters of equal size, or in strips from left to right. Ask four fairly proficient students to come to the front of the class to describe their part. After hearing all four parts, the class works in pairs to discuss and then draw out the entire picture. Verify afterwards by having the same four show their pictures and describe to the class.

10) "I Read, You Draw" - The teacher finds a fairly detailed picture and writes up 10 or 12 sentences to describe the picture. In class, one student at a time is asked to come up and read one of the descriptive sentences. The rest of the class draws what is heard. After all of the sentences have been read, partners compare pictures and describe what they have drawn. Teacher can later verify by showing the original picture.

11) "On the Wall Outside" - As in Activity 11, a teacher finds a fairly detailed picture and writes up 10 or 12 sentences to describe the picture. These sentences are then taped up outside the classroom. Pairs are assigned, and one member of each pair is designated as the reader. The reader then goes outside to read the first sentence of the description, returns inside to tell his partner the sentence, and the partner draws what he has heard described. When the first half of all the sentences are finished, the partners switch roles: the reader becomes the drawer and the drawer becomes the reader for the last half of the sentences. When the sentences are complete, partners can compare their pictures with other pairs of students. Follow up by having the students write the descriptive sentences they remember from the wall outside.

12) "Guess the Rest" - Show half of a picture to the class, and have the students guess what the second half contains. A variation of this would be to show the first picture of a two-picture story, and have students predict what the second picture will be.

13) "My Picture, Your Picture" - Give pairs of students two similar pictures but which contain several notable differences. Without showing their picture to their partners, students should describe their pictures one sentence at a time and make note of any differences. For example, one student in the pair begins, "In my picture, there is a man with his feet in the pool." The other student says, "In my picture, there is a woman with her feet in the pool." When they have found the major differences, they can switch pictures and work with a new partner.

Hints & tips

More about pictures!

If you are anything like us, the previous article may have inspired you to clip and organize some magazine pictures for your class!

We asked some of our teaching friends for additional ideas about using pictures for ESL students, and here are some of their great tips.

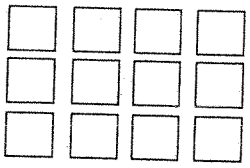
(With a snip, snip here and a snip, snip there—a teacher prepares a creative lesson!)

Memory game

Linda Phipps suggests, "Show a busy picture for a minute. Put it away. Have the students recall as much about the picture as they can remember." This is a good way for intermediate or advanced students to review vocabulary and practice describing something, while testing their visual recall.

Which picture?

Linda also suggests this visual activity for intermediate or advanced students: "Lay out a dozen pictures in four rows of three pictures each. Have each student secretly choose one picture and describe it. The others must guess which picture the student described, i.e., "It was the first picture in row three."



This works best if the pictures in each row are fairly similar, so the students have to describe their choice in enough detail that the others know which one it is. For example, one row might all be different people watching TV; the student must describe what is different about the picture he or she chose.

"A variation of this for more advanced students is to play Twenty Questions. Each student in turn secretly chooses a picture. Others have to ask 'yes' or 'no' questions to guess which picture it is."

Describe feelings

Sally O'Dwyer suggests using evocative photos to talk about about people's feelings. She says, "The teacher could discuss the topic of feelings and then show pictures, asking the class how the pictures made them feel. This is also fun to do with music selections."

If you have people pictures with strong feelings illustrated in them, students could speculate how the person in each picture feels, and why, and write a story from that person's point of view. (This makes an imaginative lesson for a substitute teacher, especially for intermediate or advanced levels.)

Matching activity

For her beginning level students, ESL teacher **Abbie Tom** prepares this activity: "I have made up some simple one-paragraph stories about 'people pictures.' I put the pictures up on the board with letters, then the stories (in large print) with numbers. The students match them. I also have another version of the same exercise, but with the stories in strips. By writing the stories myself I can include whatever vocabulary and content we're working on."

Simple descriptions

Describing pictures doesn't have to be limited to students at higher levels—Abbie also does this with beginners: "When we study housing, for example, I give each student (or pair of students) a picture of a house. They write down 5 words about 'their house' on the board. Then we look at the pictures of the houses and guess which house each set of words represents." You could do a variation of this even with literacy-level students.

Editor's note: Abbie Tom and co-author Heather McKay's ***The Card Book*** *has more ideas for interactive activities using pictures, and includes over 240 photocopyable drawings. ISBN 1-882483-79-0, available from Alta, 1-800-ALTA/ESL or www.altaesl.com.*

Create-a-family

Here's a very interesting way to use people pictures. Abbie reports that she heard about this activity at a conference:

"Divide the class into groups. Give each group a picture of a family. When they study personal information, they make up and write personal information about each of 'their' family members. When they study about family, they can add another piece of paper and write about the family using that information. When they study food they write another paper about the family's food preferences, etc. Each time they re-read (review) what they wrote before so they have a cumulative record of what they've studied in their description of an imaginary family."

This is a great way to provide continuity from one lessson to the next. If you do this you'll want to make sure you have regular attenders in each group of students, if possible.

Continued, next page. . .

Inspiring ABE Writers Using Objects and Images

by Andrea O'Brien, Jane Schwerdtfeger and Janet Fischer

Winter/Spring 2005 issue

As ABE teachers, we are excited by the possibilities that art-images, objects, photographs hold to inspire learners to write. Art is a wonderful prompt for writing, because we all have unique experiences that come to mind when we write, and each of them is valid, valued, and personal.

The Power of Personal Photos

For Andrea, the power of a personal photograph for evoking writing cannot be stressed enough. At our Network 2004 workshop on inspiring ABE writers, Andrea illustrated a powerful technique. She began by sharing a video clip of a midwestern town taken after a tornado had passed through and destroyed many homes and buildings. We saw an auditorium filled with tables, covered with hundreds of photographs, scattered remains of the tempest. As the townspeople walk up and down the aisles trying to recover their memories, viewers were left wondering, what would happen if our own personal photographs were lost or de-stroyed? Andrea stopped the clip; she then shared photographs of her parents and grandparents. Using an intriguing photograph taken before her parents married, Andrea led the group into an exercise of observation, asking:

- Where are these two people?
- What are they doing in the photo?
- Who took this picture?

As she shared the story behind the photos, Andrea modeled a guided writing exercise she has used with her ESOL learners. Using their own personal photos, learners begin by answering questions in a graphic organizer (see chart below). The chart helps students focus on specific information to questions that can then be expanded upon for more detailed writing.

Pre-writing: Gathering the Details	
When was the picture taken?	
Where was it taken?	
Who took the picture?	
What do you think they can hear?	
How do you think they feel?	

Pre-Writing: Gathering the Details
The questions above provide a framework that allows even the shyest writer to respond, and reduces students' fear of having to come up with something completely "out of the air" to write about. Andrea then models a first draft of her favorite photograph, sharing with us the writing she shares with her learners.

By taking the responses to the question in the first chart, the information can be turned into complete sentences that form the foundation for the writer's ideas, while providing lots of opportunity to add extra detail and information in the writing revision stage.

For our learners, personal photos invite them to "tell their story" and start from something familiar. Students can choose to include information that they feel is relevant and "safe" to share.

Every Object Is Full of Story
Jane's background as a museum educator is the inspiration for using objects (both familiar and unfamiliar) to inspire writers. At the Network conference, she began by asking participants in our workshop to think of a special memory-one that evokes our senses-and asked What do you see? What do you hear? What do you smell? What does it feel like? Does it have a special taste?

These questions framed our curiosity for the object she brought out to the audience. We began by examining the object closely. As we passed the object through the audience, we had a chance to feel it, play with it, try to open it, look inside, see if it made a sound. Through reflection and responding to a series of questions about the object, we learned that the object Jane passed through the audience is a barn lantern that was used in the early 1800s, and we came to understand the design and functionality of the lantern for its original users.

For Jane, questioning strategies are a great way to engage students actively in the learning process. The teacher facilitates a dialogue between the student and the object. The questions posed to students can help build skills in critical thinking, writing, and reflection.

Different questions have different purposes, depending on the response you intend to elicit. For example, asking questions that use one's senses elicits descriptive information about the object. Asking students questions that build on the descriptive, as well as prior knowledge), and applying that information for other purposes, encourages student to process information, make inferences, summarize, and organize what they know. Finally, asking questions that have students using higher-order thinking skills encourages students to develop new ideas, make predictions, formulate hypotheses, or support an opinion about the object.

These questioning strategies represent a hierarchy of questioning roughly based on Bloom's Taxonomy, but there are other levels of thinking skills that can be drawn upon, too.

The Truth of a Photograph
To illustrate her use of photographs in teaching writing at the Network conference, Janet hung a variety of pictures from magazines and newspapers around the room. She began

by asking participants what they noticed as they entered the workshop room; what caught their eye? Everyone noticed the collection of pictures on the wall, aware that the room looked physically different from most of the conference rooms. She then asked them to stand by a nearby photograph on the wall, and to begin by simply describing what they saw in the picture. She reminded participants that simple observation must prevail at that initial observation point, and to beware of the temptation to leap into judgments and speculations about who the people are, what they are doing, why they are doing it, or how they are feeling.

As participants began to share information about their pictures, Janet asked them to reflect on what struck them. and asked: Did the picture remind you of anything in particular? In what ways does it relate to your own experience? As participants shared this information with a partner, the room became abuzz with conversation. A spark had been lit, interest increased, and excitement flowed as people eagerly engaged in discussion and reflected on their observations and experiences.

Using Pictures

In the ABE/ESOL classroom, photographs can serve the same powerful purpose as they did with teachers at the Network conference. They provide a starting point for rich discussion and many activities. The rich imagery of a picture evokes not only students' interest but also provides a stimulus for writing in response to it. A picture can catch us in the moment and still allow us to transcend it. Using pictures also encourages students to think creatively and critically.

Using pictures students can:

- tell the story behind the picture;
- give the picture a title and explain it;
- write from the perspective of a person portrayed in the picture;
- prepare a debate on a theme evident in the picture.

Using pictures, teachers can:

- teach compare and contrast strategies using more than one picture;
- teach simple vocabulary and descriptive words;
- teach letter writing skills by encouraging students to write a letter to one of the characters in the picture or write a letter to the editor about an issue depicted in the picture.

In addition, pictures can be adapted for many activities, including pair work, small group and whole class cooperative learning, making them particularly suitable for multi-level classes.

Objects and pictures,can provide a common or shared experience for adults to explore together. They are easy to collect and transport, they can reflect the individual interests of teachers and students. They are free or low cost, and they can be used over and over again!

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Strategy #3 Model tasks before learners do them.

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FIELD NOTES

Modeling Class Activities for Low-Level Literacy Learners

by Lee Haller

Field Notes main page Fall 2000 issue

All teachers of low-level literacy must be familiar with this scenario: You spend hours planning an activity for class. When the time comes, you explain the activity, holding the paper up where the learners can see it. You pass out the papers and are met with a chorus of, "I don't understand, teacher." You explain it again, which doesn't help, so you show individual learners on their papers how to do the activity. By the time the learners understand what they're supposed to do, they're finished with the exercise. How can we avoid this problem? In this article I will illustrate techniques for modeling three kinds of literacy activities-cloze, cut-up sentences, and matching, so learners will be able to do them successfully and independently.

I have modeled these activities with my ESOL students in the literacy level class at the International Institute of Boston.

Don't Assume Too Much

Most of the activities we do in ABE/ESOL classrooms are unfamiliar to learners who have limited formal education. Teachers assign matching exercises, cloze exercises, cut-up sentences, and comprehension questions because we believe these exercises will improve learners' comprehension of a particular story and help their reading ability in general. These are "school- based" activities, unlike reading itself, which is an activity people do both inside and outside the classroom. We can't assume that students already know how to complete these tasks; People learn how to do these activities after being in classrooms and doing them repeatedly. Initially, however, they need explicit instruction and modeling before they can do the activities independently. Of course, the end goal of these activities I have chosen to model: cloze, cut-up sentences, and matching is to help beginning readers manipulate text in a variety of ways so they gain confidence and fluency in the reading process.

Can Everyone See?

In general, modeling (where the teacher shows the class how to do something using an example) is a whole-class activity, so the first question is how to make the activity large enough that everyone will see and work with it easily.

Essential Props

An excellent tool for teachers of low-level literacy classes is a pocket chart, available through the Hammett Co. A pocket chart is a nylon fabric rectangle that hangs on the wall; sewn onto the nylon are clear plastic strips to make horizontal pockets. You can put word cards, letter cards, pictures, or whatever you want in the see-through pockets, then take them out and reshuffle them.

Another prop useful for modeling literacy activities is large paper, such as a roll of newsprint. The ends of rolls of newsprint are often available free from newspaper printers. A more expensive alternative is a flip chart. A pocket chart and large paper are both invaluable props-I honestly don't know how I could teach low-level literacy without either of them. Most activities can be modeled for the whole class using one of these two props.

Post reading Activities

The exercises I discuss below are postreading activities. All of these exercises start with a reading, either learner-generated, teacher-written, or from a source outside the class. The learners are familiar with the text before beginning any of these follow-up activities. The activities help the reader become more fluent with the text they have initially encountered, helping them reinforce vocabulary, sentence structure, and comprehension. All three activities can be done using the same original text, allowing for reinforcement of language and reading in a variety of ways.

Cloze Activity

For the cloze activity, the teacher puts blanks in the story in place of some of the words. Learners figure out what the missing words are and write them in the blanks. There are many different ways to do a cloze. Some teachers remove every 5th, 6th, or 7th word arbitrarily from a text. The purpose of this is for readers to skip over the blank, read the rest of the sentence, and select a word that would make sense in the sentence, either from a word bank or from their own vocabulary. Some teachers remove selected words with a grammatical, phonetic, vocabulary, or content focus. For example some remove all the prepositions, some remove "to be" verbs, others remove articles. The teacher can supply a list of words for the blanks, or not. Some beginning readers need to use the original story for reference when completing a cloze.

Modeling Cloze Activities

If the original reading the cloze is based on is a language experience story elicited from the class, the teacher may have already written the story on big paper as the learners were telling it, then taken it down to write the activities for the next class.

1. The tea cher can put the original story on big paper back onto the wall, then cover some words with post-it notes. A word list can go on the board or another piece of big paper, if desired.
2. Have learners read the story aloud and discuss what words go in the spaces.
3. Have one learner come up to the story with a marker and write the word on the post-it note, then check off the word from the word list.
4. Have another learner come up and write another word and so on, until the cloze is complete.
5. Then lift up the post -it notes to check it against the original.

Alternatively, the teacher can write the whole cloze on big paper with blanks and a word list at the bottom, and individual learners can come up to fill it in as discussed above.

After Modelling

After modeling the activity and making sure students know how to proceed, the teacher can then hand out individual cloze worksheets and point out step-by-step that the activity is the same as the one they have just practiced as a whole class. At this point, I

usually say "no pencils," so everyone stays with the explanation; otherwise, some students will want to copy from the model. The class can complete the activity orally, using their worksheets, then the teacher can fold up the model and learners can complete the activity on their worksheets in writing.

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Cut-up Sentences

A cut-up sentence activity uses sentences from the same story, which have been cut up into individual words. The goal of the cut-up sentence activity is for learners to reassemble sentences, then put the sentences into order to reassemble the story. This is a challenging activity, best done after learners are very familiar with a story. It leads learners to focus on sentence structure and on reading each individual word of a story instead of calling (guessing) or skipping words. This is especially important for literacy-level students.

Modeling Cut-up Sentences

To model this activity, use the pocket chart.

1. The tea cher can write the story, word by word, on index cards or cut-up manila folders. (These words can often be reused, since there are many common words from story to story).
2. The tea cher gives out the word cards, a few to each learner, and asks them to read their words to the class.
3. Then the tea cher can motion to the pocket chart and tell the learners to create the story in the chart. One learner is sure to understand enough to get started and ask others for cards ("I need 'she.' Mohammed, do you have 'she'?") and others will quickly catch on.
4. The tea cher can monitor participation, asking particular learners to sit down after they've completed some of the story, and encouraging others to get out of their seats with their cards and go to the chart.
5. After the y're finished, the class can reread the completed story from the pocket chart. (If it was difficult, the teacher can choose to repeat the whole-class activity the next day before having learners do the task individually.)
6. Each stude nt then gets an envelope of cut-up words that he or she reassembles and tapes together at her seat. Students can then copy their reassembled words for reinforcement.

Matching

Matching activities, where a learner draws a line from a list in one column to the corresponding item in the other column, can give additional practice with vocabulary words and can teach sorting or categorizing skills. They can also teach learners to read for specific information. However, they are often difficult for low-literacy learners and need careful modeling to avoid confusion.

An example of a matching activity might be to match the name of fruits and vegetables with the correct colors. In another case, the worksheet would match names to activities, for example: Victor--go shopping and Marie--go to the park.

Matching activities can be challenging for a few reasons. Learners sometimes get lost

and forget the first item if they don't find the matching item right away. Drawing the lines can be challenging because they may try to draw more than one line for each item, or they may draw lines straight across the paper instead of looking for matches.

Matching Step-By-Step

I have found that breaking the modeling into two parts works best. The first part uses paper slips rather than drawing lines across columns.

Part One: (Using Paper Strips)

1. The teacher prints out names of students (Victor, Marie, etc.) on one color paper and cuts it into word slips. She then prints out activities (went to the park, went shopping) on another color paper and cuts it into phrase slips.
2. Using the pocket chart, the teacher calls a learner up to the chart and guides the learner to put the names and activities together on one line of the chart. For example, "Victor" with "went shopping," "Marie" with "went to the park," and so on.
3. Once students have shown that they understand the concept of matching, they can work in pairs or individually using their own smaller packets of word slips to put together.
4. For extra practice students can copy their matching word slips onto another sheet of paper.

Part Two: (Using Lines)

Once students get the idea of matching, the teacher can move toward modeling the activity using lines across columns. This task aids in locating specific information from a text and can prepare students for reading charts and graphs.

1. The teacher writes the matching activity on big paper.
2. The class reads it together and discusses the answer: that is, which thing in column A gets matched with which thing in column B. For example, names in column A get matched with activities in column B.
3. An individual learner comes to the front with a marker to draw a line connecting the matching items.
4. Students then get an individual worksheet and complete the activity in pairs or on their own.

As you can infer from the above activities, successful modelling is repetitious: the whole class does the whole exercise, then learners do it individually on their own paper. Such repetition in the modeling process may sound boring, but in my experience, it never is. It feels like a different activity when the whole class does it versus individual learners working independently. The repetition, far from being boring, gives learners the practice they need to successfully complete the activities independently.

Resources for props: J.L Hammett Co. catalog: 1-800-333-4600 or www.hammett.com

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Teaching the Compare and Contrast Essay through Modeling

Author

Amy Mozombite
Largo, Florida

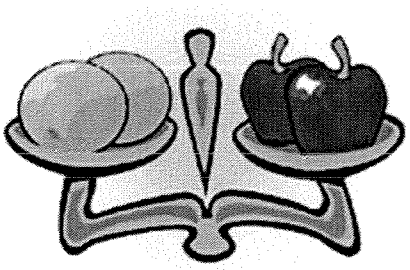
Grade Band

Estimated Lesson Time

Three 50-minute sessions

Overview

Together, students and teacher create the first half of a draft of a comparison and contrast essay. During the modeling, students observe what writers do when revising a draft as they reread and write. They will begin to explore the techniques that writers use, such as rearranging or clarifying words or sentences. Students then apply the techniques by continuing the draft independently.



From Theory to Practice

When I model the writing process for my class, I can see the light bulb moments in the students' faces as they think of ways to apply what is being demonstrated in their own writing. In her book *Conversations*, Regie Routman explains why this modeling process is so successful: "It has always been our job to teach directly and explicitly in response to students' needs—carefully demonstrating, specifically showing how, clearly explaining. Whatever we want our students to do well, we first have to show them how. Of all the changes I have made in my teaching, adding explicit demonstration to everything I teach has been the single most important factor in increasing students' literacy" (24).

Further, writing out loud with students gives me an opportunity to show my enjoyment for the writing process. Students see that revision and editing are part of the fun, and that even teachers don't get it correct the first time. As an added bonus, students are frequently more eager to share personal writings with me for feedback once they see this process modeled.

Further Reading
Routman, Regie. 1999. *Conversations: Strategies for Teaching, Learning, and Evaluating*. Heinneman.

Student Objectives

Students will

- define the characteristics of a comparison/contrast essay.
- generate ideas for the group composition and their own essays as the process is modeled.
- develop a final copy of a comparison/contrast paper.

Resources

- Compare and Contrast Chart Graphic Organizer
- Comparison and Contrast Rubric

- Comparison and Contrast Guide
- Venn Diagram Student Interactive
- LCD Projector and computer
- Word processor software

Instructional Plan

Resources

- LCD Projector hooked to a computer with a word processor, or an overhead projector
- General classroom supplies (pencils, paper, etc.)
- Venn Diagram Student Interactive
- Comparison and Contrast Guide
- (optional) Compare and Contrast Chart Graphic Organizer
- (optional) Comparison and Contrast Rubric

Preparation

1. Set the projector up so that the teacher is facing the class and able to type the text (or write easily on the overhead) and the class is able to follow along.
2. Familiarize yourself with the basic commands of the word processor on the computer that you're using.
3. Test the Venn Diagram Student Interactive and Comparison and Contrast Guide on your computers to familiarize yourself with the tool and ensure that you have the Flash plug-in installed. You can download the plug-in from the technical support page.
4. Prior to this lesson, students should have learned how to write introductions and conclusions. The ReadWriteThink lesson Leading to Great Places in the Elementary Classroom can be a useful resource for exploring introductory sentences.

Instruction and Activities

Session One

1. Hold up or display two different objects for students to focus on as they explore the meaning of the terms *compare* and *contrast.* You might choose two different beverage options (juice versus milk), two candy bars (Milky Way versus Reese's Cups), or two different television programs (*SpongeBob SquarePants* versus *The Rugrats*). Be sure to choose items which students are familiar with so that the process of comparing the objects will be clearer to them.
2. Make two columns on the board or chart paper and invite students to brainstorm characteristics of first one of the objects (e.g., juice) and then the other object (e.g., milk). Invite students to add and revise information as they work, moving between the two columns.
3. If students need help building the lists of characteristics, ask leading questions such as "How do you decide which beverage you want to drink?" or "How do you decide which candy bar to buy?"
4. Ask students to identify characteristics that are included in both of the columns. Either mark these similarities using a different colored pen, or create a new chart with the column headings of "Comparison" and "Contrast."
5. Based on the information in the lists, lead a class discussion on the definitions of the words *compare* and *contrast*. Refer to examples on the charts to clarify the difference between the two terms.
6. As a class, brainstorm other ways students compare and contrast in their daily lives (sports teams, restaurants, toys, books, etc.). You can do this by pairing students in groups or 2-4 having them compose a list as a group and then as a coming together as a class to share ideas.
7. From there, you will brainstorm and generate a class definition of compare and contrast making sure they understand why comparing and contrasting is important by using examples as needed.

Session Two and Three

1. Use the Comparison and Contrast Guide to review information from the first class session as

needed.
2. You can decide or allow the class to help you decide two things to compare and contrast for the class essay.
3. Use the "Graphic Organizer" tab on the Comparison and Contrast Guide to introduce the 2-Circle Venn Diagram. Alternately, you can use the Compare and Contrast Chart Graphic Organizer if you prefer.
4. Open the Venn Diagram Student Interactive. Alternately, you can draw a simple graphic organizer on the chalkboard of a Venn diagram (two overlapping circles).
5. Label the circles and brainstorm as a class what is different about your topics and drag the ideas to the appropriate circle and what is the same about your topic and drag those ideas to the overlapping part of the circles.
6. Print out the Venn Diagram, and make copies for students to use in later sessions.
7. Use the "Organizing a Paper" tab on the Comparison and Contrast Guide to introduce the Similarities-to-Differences structure.
8. Open a new word processor file, where you'll compose the first sections of the essay as a group.
9. Brainstorm an interesting lead with the class. Have several people give ideas and model for the class how to rearrange ideas and thoughts to come up with the best and most interesting beginning and continue writing as a class from there.
10. Demonstrate cut, copy, and paste commands for your word processor software.
11. As you write with your class, feel free to delete ideas and change them as better ones come up and reread what has been written before asking for the next idea to be sure that the thoughts flow nicely. Refer back to the Venn Diagram as necessary.
12. Use the "Transitions" tab on the Comparison and Contrast Guide to introduce the use of transitional words to increase coherence.
13. Save your class draft of the introduction and the section on similarities. If possible, share the file with students, so that they can continue writing the text in their own copy of the file. Alternately, print the file and makes copies for students.
14. Ask the students to continue the essay using the beginning that you've written together. They can add the section on differences and the conclusion in class or as homework.
15. Use the Comparison and Contrast Guide to review information as needed. Use the "Checklist" tab to explain the requirements for the finished essay. If desired, share the Comparison and Contrast Rubric with students as well.
16. Show students how to access the Comparison and Contrast Guide so that they can refer to the resource as they like while writing.
17. If students work in class, circulate among students, giving ideas and help.

Extension Activities

- Write another comparison and contrast essay, using the whole-to-whole or point-by-point organization explained in the "Organizing a Paper" tab on the Comparison and Contrast Guide.

- Have students write a compare and contrast essay in a different content area. See the list below for a sampling of topics that can be compared.

History
: historical figures, maps of different time periods, states, time periods, books on the same historical subject

Science
: scientists, weather patterns, plants in habitats

Art
: paintings, artists' lives, different techniques

Reading
: two different authors, two stories by the same author, books on the same topic by different authors, a book and the movie made from it

Web Resources

Learning Tip #26: Comparison Strategies Support Reading, Writing, and Learning
http://www.kidbibs.com/learningtips/lt26.htm
This site provides a number of resources appropriate for teaching comparison-contrast in the elementary classroom, including picture books which explore the topic. Note that the site includes links purchase the books on Amazon.com.

Comparison/Contrast Essays, from LEO: Literacy Education Online
http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/acadwrite/comparcontrast.html
This explanation of comparison-contrast provides advanced examples of the basic structures for the essay. The site is part of the St. Cloud State University Writing Center.

Three-Part Format: Comparison/Contrast
http://www.odessa.edu/dept/english/mjordan/Compare-contrast.htm
This detailed explanation of comparison/contrast essays from Odessa College can provide complete information for teachers to review before teaching the essay.

Student Assessment/Reflections

If possible, it is great to read the essay with the student individually and provide direct feedback. When this option is not available, constructive written comments are helpful. As you read the essays, keep notes on the aspects to review and share with the class later. For more structured feedback, use the Comparison and Contrast Rubric.

After you have finished responding to the essays, review them with the class, adding advice as needed. You might go back and model an area where students needed more practice. Alternately, you can use the Comparison and Contrast Tour to review the area.

NCTE/IRA Standards

3 - Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

4 - Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

5 - Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

6 - Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

International Reading Association NCTE marcopolo verizon
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Strategy #4: Foster a safe classroom environment.

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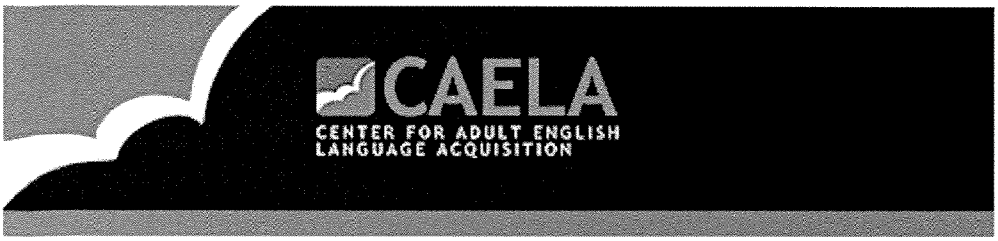

Print Close

Mental Health and the Adult Refugee: The Role of the ESL Teacher

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December 1999

English as a second language (ESL) teachers are often among the first people available to help refugees and other immigrants cope with a new cultural and linguistic environment. Although the identified role of the teacher is to teach English language skills, the teacher's role as a cultural broker is very important as well.

This digest focuses on how teachers can help adult refugee and immigrant learners make significant progress in adjusting to a new life in an unfamiliar culture. It discusses the qualities of mental health, stresses faced by refugees, and three things that teachers can do to help their students adjust.

Qualities of Mental Health

Mental health includes two components: a *psychological,* internal experience of well-being and *behavioral* markers, observable by others, that indicate whether the individual is able to handle life's challenges in adaptive ways.

Psychological. Mental health involves the ability to cope adequately with life's difficulties and demands, to experience joy and happiness when life events call for this, and to grieve and live through the painful and tragic times in life.

Behavioral. Mentally healthy people can successfully accomplish basic life functions such as eating and sleeping, perform well in the occupational arena, and have satisfying relationships with others.

Concepts of mental health are laden with cultural bias. For example, one of the most important ways that cultures differ is that the societies where many of the refugees and immigrants to the United States come from tend to be more collectivistic, whereas U.S. society is more individualistic. In the United States, parents are generally encouraged to rear their children to be independent and self-reliant, to leave home early, and to be responsible for their own happiness and well being. In collectivist societies, parents raise their children to be interdependent and to be responsible for others, within a system of relationships where others in turn care for them. Americans may see behavior of people coming from such cultures as overly dependent and dysfunctional. However, behaving in individualistic ways could be seen as dysfunctional within the context of these other societies. Because of these cultural differences, U.S. teachers of refugee adults must be cautious in passing judgment on behaviors they may not understand.

Stress Experienced in Resettlement

Stress occurs when the burdens imposed on people by events or pressures in their lives exceed their resources to cope. For refugees, resettlement involves three types of stress: *migration stress, acculturative stress,* and (for many) *traumatic stress.*

Migration stress. Moving to a new country triggers a number of stressful life events at one time. When migration occurs suddenly as a result of political violence, war, or other catastrophes, refugees are functioning under conditions out of their control. Moreover, many of the losses associated with migration represent the loss of the usual coping resources--such as family, friends, surrounding community--that people would ordinarily rely on to help them cope with stress.

Acculturative stress results from having to learn to function in a culture different from the one an individual is born and raised in. Immigrants and refugees often do not expect that the very fabric of life around them will be profoundly different. Ways in which people relate to each other and form and sustain friendships will be different, and how children go to schools and are socialized will change. Even the most simple of daily tasks, such as shopping for food or asking for directions, can become challenges involving not only the language barrier, but also the potential for deep cultural misunderstanding. New refugees and immigrants can feel that their very identity is threatened in the new culture (Ullman, 1997).

Traumatic stress results from extreme events that cause harm, injury, or death, such as natural disasters, accidents, assault, war-related experiences, and torture. Generally, it is believed that injury resulting from accidents and natural disasters is less traumatic than injury resulting from willful acts by other human beings, such as torture. It is inevitable that individuals suffering such events will be changed by that experience, and research suggests that these changes will be psychological, social, and physical (Pynoos, Sorenson, & Steinberg, 1993).

What ESL Teachers Can Do

Teachers of adult refugees can promote cultural adjustment and mental health by learning about the challenges facing refugees; by providing material and activities in the classroom that will address some of the individuals' particular needs; and by becoming an integral part of a larger network of providers that includes mental health professionals.

1. Teachers can learn to recognize symptoms of mental illness, or abrupt behavioral changes that disrupt the class. Signals teachers identify from observation may include absences, withdrawal from participation, lack of attention, sleeping in class, frequent crying, behavioral problems, and change in progress. Symptoms often reported by students include headaches, backaches, stomachaches, insomnia, and excessive drinking of alcohol (Adkins, Birman, & Sample, 1999).

Sometimes the signs are not obvious. In writing about survivors of domestic abuse, Horsman (1998, p. 2) talks about the "hidden" impacts of traumatic stress that may make it difficult for adults to be totally "present" or involved in their learning, including "a lack of comfort with ambiguity, and a tendency to see everything as all or nothing." Horsman suggests addressing these issues openly in the class, making it part of the curriculum to discuss what it means to be present in the class, giving permission for learners to not always be totally involved in all the class activities, and exploring the value of the "middle ground ... deciding which stories to tell when, and creating a safe place to learn" (p. 3).

2. Teachers can discuss health and cultural content relevant to learners. When refugees seek help from a medical doctor or a mental health professional, they often become uneasy when asked about details of their personal lives and backgrounds. In the ESL

classroom, activities related to making appointments to see a doctor and then talking about health issues with the doctor, finding and keeping a job, negotiating transportation, and so forth are all natural components of the curriculum. These activities give learners opportunities to discuss issues of personal interest and concern with others and to solve problems related to survival, family, and employment. When viewed as part of the process of developing needed competencies using the English language, they are usually not considered invasive or out of context by either students or teachers.

Topics for discussion related to mental and physical health include

- accessing medical services;
- going to the doctor;
- finding an adequate place to live;
- identifying and shopping for food and drink;
- using available recreational activities;
- interacting with the school;
- disciplining children;
- developing healthy relationships among family members;
- learning conflict resolution strategies; and
- relating to the past, the native country, and distant relatives and friends.

Activities that help learners develop strategies for coping with cultural adjustment can also promote mental health (Silver, 1999). Some suggestions for activities are listed below.

- *Language experience stories.* In groups, students write stories about something from their culture (for example, a custom, a place, or a food).
- *Dialogue journals.* Learners write to their teacher about topics of their own choice, and the teacher responds to them in writing.
- *Picture stories.* Learners respond to questions about a story told through photos or drawings. Silver describes how asking a question about an obviously sad woman in a picture story ("What advice would you give this woman?") brought different responses from the learners, depending on where they came from, their length of time in the United States, and their age and gender. Out of this simple activity came an array of language and culture learning, giving opportunities to talk about register and to look at acceptable forms of offering advice.
- *Goal-setting exercises.* Learners map out short-term and long-term goals. Even such a straightforward exercise as this may be problematic. As Horsman (1998) points out, this needs to be handled delicately. The issue of control is central to goal setting, and for survivors of trauma, having and taking control is a "complex and fraught area" (p. 3).
- *Timeline activities.* Students map and reflect on the highs and lows of their past while looking ahead to the future. (See Adkins, Birman, & Sample, 1999, and Van Duzer & Burt, 1999, for activities related to goal setting and timelines.)

3. Teachers can network. Most teachers are not therapists, but they can work with others who have more knowledge and experience.

- First, they can collect information about community resources for dealing with refugee mental health.
- Second, they can develop relationships with interested local mental health providers, find out how the local mental health system works, and identify community resources related to accessing help for cultural adjustment and mental health. Useful contacts might include a provider at a local clinic or hospital who is familiar with the situation of refugees and is willing to serve as a resource and the local refugee resettlement office that may provide interpreters.
- Finally, they can make a decision about whether or not it is appropriate to contact resources, speak with other family members, bring the situation to the attention of a resettlement agency or sponsor group, or give the student the opportunity in classroom activities to discuss or disclose personal information.

Conclusion

The myriad needs that refugees bring to the classroom provide rich opportunities for learning. ESL teachers can be a critical link in a well-functioning team of providers helping refugees establish a new life that is both productive and satisfying. Teachers can be a crucial resource to their culturally diverse students who are grappling with concerns related to cultural adjustment and mental health. The ESL classroom is a safe place where students can improve their English and learn about U.S. culture"both of which can serve as tools for enhancing mental health.

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Clues to Classroom Management in ABE

by Lenore Balliro

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As adult educators, we often shy away from terms rooted in the business world. We have students, have classrooms, not venues; we look for educational gains, not the bottom line. Still, a term like "m a useful construct as a way to talk about all those extra-content aspects to teaching that make a class environment or one filled with conflict.

What do we mean by classroom management? According to Wesner (1999), "Classroom manageme effort on the part of the teacher to make the classroom a comfortable place for students to learn." Ho class time, attend to the needs of a multi-level class, plan for periodic student conferences—all of th to classroom management and take an enormous amount of teacher energy. A great deal of the litera management focuses on elementary and high school and offers advice for preventing and addressing problems. But some educators take a broader view on the topic. For example, Johns Hopkins Center (2002) looks at the following categories when defining classroom management: getting off to a gooc class flowing, cooperative learning, anticipating and handling problems. By unpacking what we mea management and by looking at teachers' strategies for facilitating a well-run class, we can expand ou and increase our repertoire of classroom management techniques. When teachers are comfortable in effective manager as well as effective content area teacher, everyone benefits.

Effective classroom management, especially in adult education programs, can help students feel con respected, and challenged, leading to student empowerment rather than detracting from it. New teacl creative and well-steeped in their content areas, often have no way of anticipating classroom manage can blindside and derail the teaching and learning process.

Establishing Guidelines with Students

Creating a comfortable climate for adults means including them in the decision-making process fron the class cycle. In fact, some progressive educators would maintain that it is largely students' respon education class to develop the guidelines and expectations they will follow throughout the cycle. Ac Marshall, (2002) an adult educator from Oakland, California, "The foremost goal of classroom mana should be student responsibility. Involving learners in the establishment of class rules and procedure student responsibility as well as the student support that is critical to the success of classroom manag Simple strategies can give learners control over how a classroom functions and can encourage them collaboratively, solve problems, think creatively, and exercise responsibility. Suggestion boxes prov for student input on issues from interpersonal conflicts in the classroom to furniture layout. Instructc together can develop a list of classroom jobs and a job-assignment rotation."

Establishing guidelines with student involvement illustrates a proactive stance in the classroom and problems from occurring in the first place. Early in the learning cycle, teachers and students can disc maximizing their learning time in and out of class and for treating each other respectfully. They can (Hopkins, 2005):

- How do you want me to treat you?
- How do you want to treat one another?
- How do you think I want to be treated?
- How should we treat one another when there's a conflict?

While most adult education programs have institutional attendance and other requirements, an in-cla agreements created by students personalizes the rules and makes them more binding since students a each other. For example, at the Taunton Public Schools ABE/ BCC Partnership program, students cr handbook: a manual by students, for students to introduce the program and give students guidelines information. Most adults are willing to engage in this process, especially when literacy, writing, lang grammar skills are made explicit in the process.

Clarifying Expectations

Like younger students, adult learners want to know what to expect—for the day, the week, and the e cycle. When teachers have a blueprint for teaching—from daily lesson plans to syllabi—and when tl with students, classroom management is facilitated. Having a blueprint doesn't foster rigidity: even v expectations about where the class is headed, a teacher can still be responsive to teachable moments opportunities for ad hoc learning that arise in the class.

Many teachers, including myself, have difficulty with time management within the microcosm of th impossible at times to stop an intense classroom activity or discussion. We don't want to derail stude For this reason, the use of a buzzer or timer may be helpful as an auditory reminder to stop and mov choose to ignore the timer, at least that choice is a conscious decision.

Effective classroom management often involves knowing students and paying attention to cues; faci transitions between different stages of the class; setting up and maintaining good student records, an developing and using strong instructional strategies.

Classroom Climate

How does creating a positive classroom climate connect to classroom management? Some of the lite refers to classroom climate as the physical nature of the teaching/learning space. Is it clean? Does it sounds do you hear in the classroom? Are there supplies at the ready for teachers and students so yo searching for pa-per, pencil, chalk, markers? Of course, all the successful management strategies in substitute for teaching from the heart. Excel-lent teachers must truly care about their students and ca their work into the classroom. They must be able to see the big picture at all times (well, most of the attend to daily routines. It helps, too, when a teacher feels comfortable with her authority without be But an effective management structure can allow passionate, caring teachers to work even more effe students; it helps provide a container, of sorts, for all the quirky, wonderful, messy, and very human in the classroom.

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Helping Adult Learners Handle Stress

by Marjorie Jacobs

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During my 31 years working in adult education as an ABE/GED counselor and teacher at the Community Learning Center in Cambridge, I have observed many changes. Most strikingly have been the changes in our student population and society. Our classes used to be filled with adults, most of whom were either born in the US or had emigrated from the British West Indies. They were either working or on welfare.

Within the last 10 years, however, we have been seeing a growing number of young adults in our classes and with MCAS, we anticipate many more youth. These are students who did not function well in high school, many with attendance, behavioral, motivation, and learning issues. We have also been seeing more students with learning disabilities, mental health problems, and physical health conditions. An increasing number of ABE/ASE students are not native English speakers. Many are immigrants, the children of immigrant parents, and/or former ESOL students who have transitioned into ABE/ASE programs. What all these students have in common is a belief in education as a stepping stone to a better life in a society that has become very fast-paced and technologically advanced.

Unfortunately, learning to read, write, speak English, do math, move up grade levels on TABE tests, and/or pass GED exams does not happen overnight. Learning is usually a slow process that requires a relaxed, focused, committed mind. The learner must work hard and steadfastly without losing motivation over a number of months or sometimes years. Adult learners have so many commitments—to family, jobs, community, their health, school—that they are under tremendous pressure. In many cases, they also expect or really want quick results. The longer they are in school and working a low-paying job or are unemployed, the more their frustration and stress builds. The more stress they have, the more their learning suffers as their minds become distracted and forgetful. Disappointment, eroding motivation, and negativity may result. Because of this stress, many students drop out, often returning later to complete unmet goals.

A host of other changes in recent years, particularly as a result of 9/11, has affected adult learners. Fears of terrorist attacks in US cities, the tightening of immigration laws, the dismantling of the welfare system, an economic recession, cuts in health care, a shortage of affordable housing, and MCAS has also led to increased levels of stress.

Stress and Its Effects on Adult Learners

What is stress? Stress is a natural, inescapable part of life. From birth, we are constantly having to adjust our behaviors and thoughts to an ever-changing environment in order to survive and hopefully have a happy and meaningful life. Stress is based on our

perceiving the world around us as unsafe, whether physically or emotionally. It can be defined as the perception of danger to our mental and/or physical well being, the perception that we cannot cope, and the perception that we are not in control. Stress can be momentary or chronic, lasting for years.

How we perceive something is complex because it is based on a number of factors, such as our senses, past experiences, family, memories, culture, socialization, gender, age, race, socio-economic status, personality, health, education, and self-esteem. This explains why not all people react to stressful events in the same way. Some are more resilient, having more resources and strategies available to them to cope with life's ups and downs.

Characterized as part of a low-literacy and low-income population, adult learners suffer the negative effects of stress disproportionately to the middle- and upper-class populations in the US. They have fewer resources available to them, making it more difficult to deal with housing, employment, and health issues. They are also more at risk for health conditions, such as blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, heart disease, drug/alcohol addiction, and others.

Stress negatively impacts learning. The list below lists stress-related symptoms in the classroom that interfere with attendance, ability to learn, and the attainment of educational goals.

Stress Erasers for the Classroom

Since stress is a major obstacle confronting adult learners, teachers and counselors need to recognize it and address it. More one-on-one counseling should be provided to find out why students are not attending school, what help they need to support their learning, and what resources are available in their community to assist them in their lives. Counselors and teachers working together can also help students set realistic educational goals. Teachers and counselors should also educate themselves about the signs of stress and develop strategies for the classroom that can help student reduce their stress. The following is a list of suggestions to help students handle their stress within the ABE/ASE classroom. All can be used as a vehicle for teaching traditional classroom content.

1. Create a Safe Learning Environment

At the beginning of a semester, the class and the students should make a list of rules for a respectful, comfortable, safe learning environment, which includes acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. Confidentiality needs to be included and discussed so that everyone's privacy is respected and trust among students is fostered. These rules should be posted in the classroom, and every student should have a copy. Periodically, these rules should be reviewed, especially when new students enter after the semester has begun.

2. Write About Stress

Just writing about stressful events can reduce stress. We can encourage our students to write poems, letters, journal entries, short stories, notes. The classroom provides an ideal setting for students to share their stressful experiences and thoughts. They can receive support from their classmates and teacher, and by discussing and writing about their stress, they can unload and leave behind some of it.

The *Mind/Body Health Newsletter* in 1999 reported that patients in experimental groups writing for 15–20 minutes a day about their deepest thoughts and feelings about a very stressful event for 3 to 5 consecutive days experienced fewer visits to the doctor, improved mood, and a more positive outlook compared to control groups writing about ordinary matters such as their plans for the day.

3. Keep a Joy Journal
Keeping a joy journal is a strategy to reduce stress and at the same time build optimism. Students keep a journal of positive experiences, whatever makes them happy, eye-opening observations, new and exciting learning.

4. Brainstorm a Collective List of Students' Stress Erasers
Have students brainstorm a list of what they do to ease their stress. Then encourage students each week to practice one suggestion from the list and record their experiences in their journal.

5. Start the Class with Movement or Exercise
Start a class with a few minutes of lively music which conveys energy and happiness. Have students bring in their own music (a great way to share in the diversity of cultures within a classroom). In each class a student can formally teach classmates how to dance to the music or informally get others to follow his/her movements.

Try some aerobic exercise (like running in place, marching in place, jumping jacks) or quiet stretching/yoga at the beginning, between classes, or in the middle of a class longer than 1½ hours.

6. Learn and Practice Good Nutrition for the Mind and Body
Teach the importance of eating a well-balanced diet. Use different food pyramids from around the world and explain how to read food labels. (Such topics combine reading, math, and science.) Talk with students about eating well before coming to school. Encourage students to drink water during class and bring healthy snacks for breaks (e.g., dried fruit, fresh fruit, nuts, low-fat cheese). In class talk about, write, and share recipes and have potluck lunches or dinners in class.

7. Learn and Practice Diaphragmatic Breathing
Teach students how to distinguish shallow chest breathing from deep diaphragmatic breathing and practice the latter. Spend five to ten minutes in silence doing diaphragmatic breathing exercises, such as counting each cycle of breathing from 10 down to 0; inhaling 1-2-3-4 and exhaling 4-3-2-1; or visualizing the breathing process and sensations in the body. Students can also practice coordinating their breath with a phrase that each student makes up for him/herself, for example, on the inhalation saying "I am" and on the exhalation saying "Letting go of stress." Make a list of student generated meditation-focus phrases that they can use for practice.

8. Practice Mindfulness
Mindfulness is the ability to be present in the moment, not have your mind wandering to the past or future. Being mindful means being able to focus or pay attention to whatever is happening at that moment without expectation or judgement. This is accomplished by engaging in only one activity at a time and doing it slowly. Mindfulness is necessary for learning to take place.

9. Practice Positive Thinking and Positive Speech
Our ability to resist stress through positive thinking and trying to redirect our negative thoughts into positive ones is called stress hardiness. When we think in a positive way, we feel more self-confident and more in control, thus making us more resilient to stress. As a result, we suffer less from our negative thoughts, which to a large extent are grounded in our fears.

On the first day of class, establish that the classroom is not a place for negative thinking and speech. It is a positive thinking/ speaking zone. Students should carefully listen to the way/attitude they phrase things and help each other reframe negative speech into positive speech. Teach students to write positive affirmations, put them on the wall of the classroom. During class, have students help each other to reframe negative thoughts/speech by listening carefully to what each other says.

Practice the stress reduction strategy of Stop-Breathe-Reflect-Act. This strategy helps stop the snowballing of automatic negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. It can turn off the stress response and support the notion that we can take positive action and regain control during a stressful situation. When students are asked to do something they find stressful (like writing an essay) and they start to speak negatively ("I hate this, I can't do this"), ask them to stop, take a few deep breaths, repeat the negative statements that they just said for themselves and their classmates to hear. Get students to talk about why they would make such statements (fears from earlier school days) and help each other to reframe their thoughts so that they can approach the work with an open, positive mind and attitude.

10. Teach Study Skills
Having good study skills helps give students a feeling of control over their own learning and, thus, can ease school stress. The following are two useful study skills to teach:

- An organized notebook system that invites studying and homework completion: the 3-ring, 2-pocket binder system with subject dividers and the use of highlighters, index cards, a spiral notebook for math as the developing class math book ("goodbye to scrap paper").
- Time management skills, which include at the beginning of the school year making a weekly schedule with ½ to 1 hour study slots, keeping a monthly wall calendar, using daily to-do lists, learning to prioritize one's daily tasks, and delegating responsibilities so that there is time allocated for attending class, doing homework, and studying. (Taking on a new commitment, such as going to school, may require giving up some chores and previous commitments.)

One of the best ways that we adult educators can help our students handle stress is by taking care of ourselves emotionally, psychologically, and physically. By controlling our own stress, we can be more present for our students and give the compassion, kindness, and quality instruction that they need.

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Dancing the Meringue: Partying to Promote Conversation in the ESOL Class

by Peggy Rambach

Winter/Spring 2005 issue

It's hard enough to make conversation in someone else's living room, let alone in someone else's language. I mean, invite any number of adults into a small, enclosed area and the first thing one of them might say will be, ?Anybody got a beer?? After all, what makes for lively conversation, but loud music and a free bar?

Which was something I began to consider after about the fourth week of attempting to get my ESL 2 class to talk. Instead, I sweated it out (literally), placing them in my "innovative" circle configuration and hoping against hope that at some point, one of my brilliant topics would hit like a slot machine. But no. It was more like:

> Me: So, what holiday do you like most in Vietnam and Cambodia?
> Most of Class: [Shrug.]
> Me: New Year's? Do you like New Year's?
> Most of Class: [Nod.]
> Me: When is New Year's in your country?
> All of Class: [Silence.]

Until, of course I'd long for it to be my New Year's so I could pop a cork and put myself out of my misery.

But not one to rely on such means to solve a crisis, I had to finally face the fact that cultural holidays, what you do on the weekends (sleep, buy groceries), what you do in the summer (sleep, work, and buy groceries) and how you like your supervisor (very nice, fine) were not going to evoke the kind of conversation I was after.

So I had to ask: What exactly was I after? Indeed, what was a good conversation? Answer: A free-flowing, spontaneous, exchange of ideas. And why, I thought, is making good conversation often referred to as an art? Answer: Because it's really hard. It takes imagination and skill. We even identify those who have the skill as "good conversationalists" and invite them to our dinner parties. So I asked: What makes a conversationalist good? Answer: Confidence, lack of self-consciousness, and the ability to ask questions and convey genuine interest in the answers.

So, I concluded, the key to making good conversation was not in the choice of the perfect topic, as the textbooks would have you believe, but in creating a classroom atmosphere that resembled a really great cocktail party (minus the cocktails, of course).

That is, I had to design activities that did what cocktails do, that would make my students relax, shed their inhibitions, make them want to ask questions and want to hear the answers. Most important, I had to create an atmosphere that made them have fun. Because if they were having fun, everything else would follow.

And, yes, I agree, cultural exchange is important in an ESL class, but there are ways to do it that are a lot more lively than asking someone, "What do you do on New Year's in your country?" Instead, I asked the Dominicans in my class to teach the Asians the meringue dance. I asked the Asians to teach the Dominicans their traditional dance ? all in English of course and so the classroom was in fact filled with music and laughter and a lot of talking and dancing. In fact, it sounded, not like a class, but suspiciously like a party.

And rather than force my students to dredge up their past continually by demanding that they tell an autobiographical story, we played make-believe. My students assumed fictional roles, but always in pairs and sometimes in response to a fictional situation. For in- stance, they witnessed a crime ("This is a crime," I said and stole a student's purse.) Then, one student played "witness," one the "interrogator."

I gave the witness a 3 by 5 card with the "criminal's" name written on it, which was the name of another student in the class. The witness, in response to the interrogator's questions, had to describe the student whose name was written on their card, and describe that student well enough for the interrogator to eventually be able look around the classroom and identify who it was.

This gave the student/witness a reason to talk, and the student/ interrogator a reason to ask questions. I realized that if students had a purpose for speaking, other than, because-the-teacher-asked-me-to, students will actually want to speak.

More common to ESL classes, I also had my students play real-life situation roles like interviewer/job applicant, grocery store checkout clerk/ patron, eye doctor/patient, always in pairs and always preceded by a demonstration and list of necessary vocabulary.

And then one day, when I was introducing a unit on car buying, I thought, I've never bought a car without agreeing to a deal I regret for the full seven-year term of the loan, so how can I, in good conscience, teach this subject to my students? I thought then, why not just import the real thing? So I asked a car salesman to visit my class and sell my students assorted models of new and used Matchbox cars.

Sure enough, I found an affable car salesman (most of them are) willing to donate his time, and the whole exercise produced that same party atmosphere. In this case much of the class playing the spectators who called out suggestions to the pretend buyers, everyone laughing, and everyone having fun, including the salesman, who, of course, left me with a stack of business cards.

Next came a friend who taught my class CPR. And now I'm thinking of asking one of those friendly, techie guys who work at my local Radio Shack to come in and sell my students a DVD player. There are any number of possibilities.

And how has my role changed? Well, as you can see, I just play the host, wandering around the noisy classroom like I'm carrying a tray of hors d'oeuvres offering a canap頻 f a vocabulary word here, a Swedish meatball of encouragement there. And I always lead the celebratory toast.

Peggy Rambach, the author of *Fighting Gravity*, a novel published by Steerforth Press, has compiled and edited three anthologies of writing from the Asian community in Lawrence. She lives and writes in Andover, and teaches ESOL in Lawrence at the Asian Center of Merrimack Valley, Inc. She can be reached at prambach@aol.com

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Strategy #5: Monitor your teacher talk and your writing.

Cunningham Florez, Mary Ann (2001) 'Beginning ESOL Learners' Advice to Their Teachers" NCSALL, *Focus on Basics*, Vol. 5, Issue A., August 2001. Accessed 2-13-07 from: http://www.ncsall.net/?id=279

Santopietro Weddel, K., *Classroom Teacher Language for Teacher and Learner Interaction.* Independent Study Course. Available from ncpdc@stvrain.k12.co.us

This page is located at: http://www.ncsall.net/?id=279

Beginning ESOL Learners' Advice to Their Teachers

Beginning ESOL Learners' Advice to Their Teachers

by MaryAnn Cunningham Florez

"They [the teachers] have a lot of 'esfuerzo'." It seemed like an innocuous comment from a learner about a two-teacher team, and it was only one of many that I furiously noted as I talked with a focus group of adult learners from a beginning-level class in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). When I opened my notebook a day or two later, however, I realized exactly how much this learner and others were telling me. The word "esfuerzo" made me stop and think. The English translation from a dictionary - effort, spirit - might not seem that informative, but we were holding these discussions in the learners' native Spanish, and the implications of that word in Spanish and the comments it sparked provided a wealth of insights into the instructional process in that classroom. The learners were telling me what they valued in their teachers' practices: not only their heart and dedication, but also the focus, pace, activity, and sense of purpose in the lessons they conducted. It provided me with a wonderful window into what teachers need to know and do to support beginning-level English language learners, and also gave me valuable information for planning and implementing the training of their teachers.

In ESOL, we often talk about learner-centered instruction and the value of including learners' perspectives and realities in our program and classroom planning and implementation. Teachers and administrators everywhere work to gather learners' input on issues from content topics to teaching methods. I began conducting learner focus groups as a way of including learners' voices in our small program's end-of-semester evaluation. In what specific areas did I think learners' comments might be applied? I was probably expecting them to be helpful in identifying barriers to participation or providing comments that might help me as I talked with individual teachers about their practices.

I was missing the potential impact that direct comments and ideas from

learners could have on staff development, especially for teachers working with beginning-level learners. Until, that is, I began to see the quality, thoughtfulness, and depth of the comments they were providing. These comments added enriching dimensions to the approaches, techniques, and information that are usually a part of training for teachers working with beginning-level learners.

Ours is a community-based volunteer program at St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church, Falls Church, VA. We began this year with approximately 140 predominantly Central American learners assigned to five different classes. Sixty percent of the learners enrolled were placed in the three beginning-level classes. They attend classes two evenings a week for two hours, working primarily on basic language development within a life skills context. The learners exhibit a range of literacy skills (from nonliterate to highly literate) and educational backgrounds in their native language, as is typical in beginning-level classes (Brod, 1999; Shank & Terrill, 1997). There are 12 volunteer teachers for the program's five classes: three two-person teams and six individual teachers. All of the teachers teach one night a week; one teacher teaches both nights of her class. Only one of the teachers has experience teaching English to non-English speakers.

Self Assessment

I ask learners to self-assess what they have learned at the end of each unit in our textboc learner a three-column chart and I draw a similar one on the board. The first column wi with items we studied in the unit. Learners put a check in one of the other two columns they have mastered the item or not. I use symbols (a simple drawing of a person smiling and another of a person frowning) or words ("I know;" "I don't know") columns, depending on the proficiencies of my learners and their comfort w the process.

I ask learners to look back through the unit and think about what we have studied. brainstorm together and I record the items on the chart on the board while the learners r their individual charts. (I may write one or two items in the first column as examples, started.)

Depending on the learners' language levels, I might use words, symbolic drawings, or a of both to list the items that we brainstorm. As I list items, I make sure that I point to pages in the book where they were covered, to remind learners of the context and to everyone is clear about what we are naming. Learners then indicate individually wha

> learned and what they need to practice more. Afterward, we debrief, either as a whole pair or small groups that then report back to the large group, to determine the items that common. On that basis, we decide what we may need to review as a class or as ind

The advice that follows - representing a collection of the most frequently heard statements - is drawn from the comments of 28 students in the beginning-level classes who participated in three different focus groups with me. All of the learners are native Spanish speakers; I conducted the focus groups in Spanish to ensure that all could participate as fully as they wanted.

The Learners' Advice

Repeat, but differently. One of the most consistent suggestions was that teachers need to create opportunities for learners to practice material repeatedly but in different ways and in different contexts. For some learners, this meant a better balance of opportunities to engage in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. For others, it meant different practice structures: pair work, individual work, round-robin, choral response, etc. For still others, it meant changing the context in which the content or material is used: saying, copying, and printing lists of numbers as a first step for pre- or nonliterate learners and later practicing them again as times, dates, and prices.

Spend more time on topics and go more deeply into them. Learners were generally very happy with the topics and themes typically covered in beginning-level classes: health, personal information, jobs, or shopping. They appreciated the fact that these topics involved language they needed to know and use in their daily lives. However, they suggested that teachers spend more time on each topic, offering more and different ways to practice the material and exploring issues and situations associated with it. They wanted teachers to move more deliberately through the language and materials being presented and to be open to studying related language and issues identified by the learners.

Don't fall into a vocabulary rut. Many learners felt that teachers spent more time on practicing vocabulary than on actually using it. Flash cards, matching games, labeling of pictures, copying of words, and similar vocabulary development exercises are useful, but they shouldn't constitute the whole lesson. The learners want to use the words in sentences, in dialogues, and completing other tasks.

Do more reading and writing. The majority of learners felt that reading and writing are the skills most often neglected in their beginning-level ESOL classes. While most acknowledged that speaking and listening (or "understanding," as many learners called it) were the immediate needs in

their lives, reading and writing were the areas in which they felt they needed the most practice. They wanted teachers to make concerted efforts to incorporate level-appropriate reading and writing as regular parts of the class, as they did with speaking and listening.

Let us know how we are doing. A number of learners expressed a desire for more tests and quizzes in their classes. With further probing, however, I found that what they really wanted were more opportunities of any type that would help them to check on their progress. Paper-and-pencil tests were mentioned, perhaps because learners are familiar with this means of assessment. More consistent, concrete feedback from the teacher was also mentioned. Teachers may feel that, at the beginning levels, learners will find tests or direct feedback too intimidating or even discouraging. The challenge may be for teachers to introduce learners to the variety of forms that assessments can take and to the concept of self-assessment. The latter, in particular, is a valuable concept to introduce, although it may be difficult because learners may not have experience with it; or if they do it, they may not know it as self-assessment.

Give us more than the "simple present." As one learner put it, how can teachers expect learners to talk or write about important experiences, their homelands, or even their families when so many of these things are in the past and all students have to work with is the present tense? If teachers are going to involve learners in activities that ask them to use life experiences as their basis, the learners want at least a start on the language tools required to do so. This may mean introducing and using some past tense verbs or a sentence using a modal. It does not mean, however, that beginning learners should be expected to learn everything about that past tense verb or modal and be able to reproduce it out of the context in which it was presented.

Ideas for Eliciting Learner Feedback

What if you want to get feedback from your learners about the learning process in your c you do not share a native language with them?

- Use picture or word prompts to stimulate role plays or brainstorming sessions to p topic. As you and the learners do this, you will gather clues about what they alrea have experienced and any special needs or interests they may have in relation to tl
- Create a Language Experience Approach (LEA) story about studying English. Fin pictures in which people are writing, listening, speaking, looking in a dictionary, t collaboratively, etc. After the story has been completed, ask learners to circle the

to study English, compare with each other, and even create a consensus list of adv can use to inform your lesson planning.

- Take a picture of your classroom on a typical day. Ask learners to create (draw, as collage, for example) pictures of classes they have attended in the past. Ask them the pictures they create with the picture of your current classroom. Write or discus students like and dislike about each.

- At the end of a class period, ask learners to comment on the various activities in w participated. They can do this by voting yes or no on whether a specific activity w by rating it. Use pictures, symbols, recognizable words or phrases, and refer back handouts or products of the activities to support the learners as they tackle the task

Know when to say "That's all you need to know right now." These beginning-level learners respect when a teacher tells them that they do not need to know all the intricate explanations behind a grammar point or a common, but structurally more advanced, phrase, such as "May I help you?" In fact, they are sometimes relieved simply to memorize what they need to know and proceed to the practice that is more appropriate and necessary for their level. The learners discussed this issue primarily in terms of grammar and a few simple, practical idioms. However, I think it is worth considering when planning other aspects, such as vocabulary or even content to be covered. (For example, do beginning-level learners really need to know "veins" and "arteries" and the differences between them, or can that wait for the next level?) Teachers need to make clear for themselves the knowledge they absolutely need to frame their lessons and the extent of information they actually need to impart to their students.

Watch your "teacher talk." Many of the learners reported that teachers used very complicated language that distracted or confused them in the course of presenting materials and lessons. Teachers often devote a great deal of time to determining what content and material are appropriate for the beginning-level learner. In an ideal situation, they then spend additional time figuring out how to present them in an understandable way. Teachers need to be doubly aware of the vocabulary and language structures that they use to present, explain, and even "fill" the time in and around lessons.

Talk to us about learning and the learning process. Learners wanted their teachers to talk to them about what learners need and what helps them most in the classroom. They were willing to share their strategies for learning, their goals, and their difficulties in order to help the teacher adjust instruction. They were very sophisticated and thoughtful in their analysis of the learning process in their classroom. Teachers may want to look at ways in which pictures, role playing, and similar techniques could

be used to gather feedback on the ways that learners learn best, topics or themes they want to explore, or even the sequence in which learners want to cover chapters or units in a textbook.

Conclusion

These comments are not necessarily innovative ideas for working with beginning-level learners. In fact, most are a part of good teaching practices for students of any level (see Holt, 1995; Wrigley & Guth, 1990). They helped me focus, however, not only on what the learners need but also on what inexperienced teachers often overlook, forget, or do not completely understand about working with beginning-level ESOL learners. In a "church basement" program like ours, the amount of time that you can ask volunteers to contribute beyond their weekly teaching commitment is limited both by their schedules and by the desire not to over-tap their generosity. However, you also want to make sure that volunteers are sufficiently prepared and supported in their teaching efforts. I think these learner comments will help me to focus better the training for teachers in beginning-level classes. Such classes constitute more than 50 percent of our program and tend to attract new, less-experienced volunteers. They remind me to include aspects and strategies that are second nature to me as an experienced beginning-level teacher.

These learner voices were practical and thoughtful. They revealed the cognitive, intellectual, psychological, and social savvy and capability that inexperienced teachers can sometimes overlook in learners with beginning-level English language or literacy proficiencies and skills (Brod, 1999; Shank & Terrill, 1997). They will resonate strongly when used in teachers' preparation and training in our program. I had a distinct advantage in gathering these comments, since I spoke the students' native language. It would be interesting to see if program planners or teachers using role plays, responses to pictures, Language Experience Approach (LEA), or similar techniques might get the same types of responses from mixed native-language groups. These beginning learners have a great deal of useful advice to offer to their teachers as well as to staff developers and trainers like me. It would be worth the effort to find ways to tap that resource.

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About the Author

MaryAnn Cunningham Florez is the volunteer coordinator of St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church's Adult English as a Second Language (ESL) Program in Falls Church, VA. She is also assistant director and web coordinator at the National Center for ESL Literacy Education in Washington, DC. She has more than 10 years experience working with adult English language learners.

Classroom Teacher Language
for
Teacher and Learner Interaction

Independent Study Course

Independent Study Course Outcomes

- ☐ Understand the importance and impact of teacher and learner interaction in creating a supportive environment for purposeful learning
- ☐ Identify categories of teacher language or teacher talk in classroom instruction
- ☐ Identify common problems or concerns for each category of teacher talk
- ☐ Identify classroom strategies that address the identified problems or concerns
- ☐ Practice classroom strategies in three application activities
- ☐ Reflect on personal teacher language to acknowledge strengths and identify needs surrounding effective classroom interaction

To obtain the complete contents of this module by fax or email, please contact the following:

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Introduction

For over thirty years I have worked in Adult English as a Second Language in Colorado. Over half of those years have been devoted to staff development endeavors at program, state and national levels. Therefore, I have had the opportunity to observe over 100 teachers in a variety of instructional environments with the following variables.

- Delivery of instruction included one-to-one lab or tutoring as well as classroom instruction involving from 6 to 50 learners with the same or different cultural backgrounds in leveled or multi-leveled settings.
- Locations varied including schools, libraries, community colleges, universities, workplaces, prisons, jails, church basements, and even beet fields.
- Locations varied from Ft. Collins to Trinidad, from Grand Junction to Holyoke, from Cortez to Sterling and from Craig to Lamar. Other observations took place in San Francisco, Boston, St. Louis and Chicago.
- Teachers were experienced and inexperienced, trained and untrained with educational backgrounds from H.S. diplomas to master's degrees to university professors.
- Observation times varied from 15 minutes to 2 hours.

As you might guess, I learned a great deal from teachers about ESL instruction and am grateful for their dedicated commitment to adult learning. In all of the observations, I listened to, watched for and recorded learner reaction to activities, exercises, and presentations of teachers. **The primary focus of observations was the learner not the teacher. I watched for indicators of language learning, behaviors and comfort levels.** The information shared in this module is based on notes from a sampling of the observations.

Purpose

In all of the situations, locations, and scenarios listed above, I have found one common topic in post-observation discussions with teachers. **Almost everyone wants to talk about teacher talk.** There seem to be several common problems or issues surrounding teacher-learner interactions in classroom and lab settings. The purpose of this module is to identify the problems and to offer classroom strategies that facilitate effective teacher and learner interactions.

Mary Ann Cunningham Flores conducted a series of focus groups with ESOL students at beginning levels from Falls Church, Virginia. She summarized the learners' advice to their teachers in an article for *Focus on Basics*. One piece of advice given by the students was to "Watch your teacher talk." The learners said that teachers used very complicated language that distracted or confused them. Teachers need to be aware of the vocabulary and language structures that they use to present and even "fill" the time in and around lessons.

The language that teachers use in class or teacher talk can have a tremendous impact on the success of interactions they have with students.
-- Parrish

Framework

According to Parish (2004), teacher language or teacher talk falls into these categories:

- Directions for activities
- Direct instruction
- Warm-up chats
- Transitions
- Feedback
- Checking understanding

In this independent study module we'll use the categories listed above to identify common problems with teacher language; we'll call the problems "syndromes" for lack of a better metaphor. For each syndrome, we'll identify classroom strategies.

In addition to my ideas, the strategies are taken directly from the resources listed below. Some information is directly quoted and other information is summarized or paraphrased. For further reading about teacher language in ESL classrooms, please refer to the following references.

Resources

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TESOL Standards for Teachers of Adult Learners (2002)

Standard 2: Instructing

Teachers create supportive environments that engage all learners in purposeful learning and that promote respectful interactions among learners and between learners and their teachers. Performance Indicators:

2.14 - provide corrective feedback

2.15 - model natural language use

Standard 6: Learning

Teachers draw on knowledge of adult language learning to understand the processes by which learners acquire a new language in and out of classrooms. Performance Indicators:

6.5 - adjust teacher talk to the English language level of the learner

6.7 - serve as English language models for learners