Teaching Adult ESL Literacy Study Circle

Teaching Adult ESL Literacy: A Study Circle Facilitator's Guide

Agency
During program year 2001-02, a team from Northampton Community College and Lancaster-Lebanon IU13 worked collaboratively with funding from the Bureau of ABLE to develop *Defining Pennsylvania's ESL Training System: Guiding Principles for Adult ESL Instruction, Indicators of Program Quality, ESL Practitioner Competencies*, and *Pennsylvania Training System Resources and Recommendations*. One of the training system recommendations was professional development targeted for experienced ESL practitioners. In an effort to address that need, the Bureau of ABLE provided funds during 2002-03 to develop this Study Circle.

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Description:
This Study Circle is for experienced ESL teachers who are interested in understanding the theory behind their practice, while being introduced to some new approaches. It examines current theoretical issues and practical ideas for teaching adult ESL literacy learners.

The six sessions of the Study Circle cover:

Session One	Factors important in adult ESL literacy instruction with special emphasis on literacy levels in the first language.
Session Two	A review of different reading process theories.
Session Three	The role of the first language in the acquisition of reading skills in English.
Session Four	Different approaches to phonics instruction.
Session Five	Approaches to teaching adult ESL literacy.
Session Six	Practical ideas on how to teach ESL to adult low literacy students.

Participants will use the sessions to discuss the readings and generate techniques for putting theory into practice. The facilitator will lead the group, modifying activities as needed. The facilitator ill not be expected to be an expert, but rather to engage the group in learning from one another. The Study Circle Guide will be just that, a guide to aid participants in widening their knowledge.

Learning Journal as Product
Study circles are richer when there is a task for the group involved. In this Sudy Circle, the use of a learning journal will be the primary tool for helping participants to incorporate theoretical concepts, reflect on them and develop ways of integrating theory into teaching practice.

Discussion Questions
Discussion Questions were developed to encourage Study Circle participants to thoroughly process the material they are reading and to connect that material to their teaching experience. Some of the questions are challenging, and you, as the facilitator, may not know how to answer them. The facilitator is not expected to have answers to the questions. Rather, the facilitator should guide the participants to grapple with the issues.

Evaluations

The sessions will be evaluated through an informal feedback sheet and the Act 48 form. The informal feedback sheet will be administered at the end of each session, and the Act 48 form will be distributed at the final session of the Study Circle.

Discussion, individual and group activities, as well as the learning journal will all aid facilitators in evaluating the progress and evolving understanding of the study circle material by participants.

Number of Sessions: Six

Time Allotment for Each Session: Three hours

Time Commitment for Study Circle Participants

Recommended meeting time: 18 hours

Approximate reading time: 7 hours

Approximate learning journal time: 3 hours

Hours to be Awarded

28 ACT 48 or Professional Development hours

Act 48 and Professional Development hours will only be awarded to participants who attend all the Study Circle sessions, complete the assignments, and submit learning journal entries. There is no partial credit.

Recommended Number of Participants

The SLA Study Circle is designed for approximately 8 participants; we don't recommend running a Study Circle with less than 5 or more than 12 people, as discussions are harder to facilitate with too few or too many participants.

Articles and Books

Birch, B., (2002). *English L2 Reading: Getting to the Bottom*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Brod, S., (1999). Focus on Teaching: Seven Easy Pieces. *Focus on Basics*, Vol. 3, Issue D.

Bui, T., (1999). How I Wish I Was Taught to Write. *Focus on Basics*, Vol. 3, Issue D.

Burt, M., Kreeft Peyton, J., and Adams, R., (2003). *Reading and Adult English Language Learners: A Review of the Research*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Cunningham Florez, M., (2001). Beginning ESOL Learners' Advice to Their Teachers. *Focus on Basics*, Vol. 5, Issue A.

Gaer, S., (1998). Less Teaching and More Learning. *Focus on Basics*, Vol. 2, Issue D.

Garland, R., (1999). What's Right Rather Than Wrong. *Focus on Basics*, Vol. 3, Issue D.

Kreeft Peyton, J., (2000). Dialogue Journals: Interactive Writing to Develop Language and Literacy. *ERIC Digest*. Washington, DC: The National Center for ESL Literacy Education.

Nieves, M., (1997). Rediscovering Themselves: Learning to Read for Survival. *Focus on Basics*, Vol. 1, Issue B.

Nash, A., Cason, A., Rhum, M., McGrail, L., Gomez-Sanford, R., (1992). Talking Shop: A Curriculum Sourcebook for Participatory Adult ESL. Washington, DC: Center of Applied Linguistics, and McHenry, Illinois: Delta Systems, Inc.

Omniglot – A Guide to Writing Systems. Retrieved from http://www.omniglot.com

Taylor, M., (1992). The Language Experience Approach and Adult Learners. *ERIC Digest*. Washington, DC: The National Center for ESL Literacy Education. (EDO-LE-92-01.)

Wrigley, H.S., Guth, G.J.A., (1992). *Bringing Literacy to Life: Issues and Options in Adult ESL Literacy*. San Mateo, California: Aguirre International.

Session One

Objectives

- Participants get to know one another and learn the overall agenda of the Study Circle.
- Participants learn about adult ESL learners' expectations.
- Participants learn about factors influencing adult literacy development in English.
- Participants learn about types of L1 literacy and effects on L2 literacy learning.

1. Welcome and introductions.

2. Discussion of participant expectations.

3. Overview of the Study Circle, and Session One objectives.

4. Aspects of the adult learning process – a learner's perspective.

5. Break.

6. Factors influencing L2 literacy development.

7. Types of ESL literacy learners who are in need of ESL literacy instruction.

8. Learner profiles.

9. Reading for Session Two, evaluation, closure.

Session Two

Objectives

- Participants learn about significant current models of reading.

- Participants learn about different reading skills.

1. Welcome; Session Two objectives, and agenda.

2. Journal sharing.

3. Discussion of learner profiles.

4. Reading theories in the context of language teaching.

5. Break.

6. The importance of phonological processing, vocabulary recognition, syntactic processing, and schema activating in reading development.

7. Reading for Session Three, evaluation, closure.

Session Three

Objectives:
- Participants examine three major writing systems.
- Participants learn about the potential for positive and negative transfer of L1 reading strategies to L2 reading.

1. Welcome; Session Three objectives, and agenda.

2. Journal sharing.

3. Writing systems (logographic, syllabic, alphabetic).

4. The opacity of English.

5. Break.

6. Transfer of low-level reading skills.

7. Case analysis.

8. Reading for Session Four, evaluation, closure.

Session Four

Objectives:

- Participants learn about different approaches to phonics instruction in the past.

- Participants learn the value of modern phonics instruction in teaching reading to adult ESL learners with limited or no literacy in their first language.

- Participants examine how phonics instruction can be embedded in a lesson built around a social theme meaningful to adult students.

1. Welcome; Session Four objectives, and agenda.

2. Journal sharing.

3. Phonics methodologies.

4. Break.

5. Integrating phonics instruction into a lesson.

6. Reading for Session Five, evaluation, closure.

Session Five

Objectives:

- Participants examine various approaches to adult ESL literacy instruction.
- Participants consider implementing literacy approaches in their ESL classroom.

1. Welcome; Session Five objectives, and agenda.

2. Journal sharing.

3. Approaches to teaching adult ESL literacy.

4. Break.

5. Using one single approach or an eclectic approach.

6. Reading for Session Six, evaluation, closure.

Session Six

Objectives:

- Participants examine effective innovative literacy practices.

- Participants learn how they can provide a rich literacy experience for their ESL low literacy students.

1. Welcome; Session Six objectives, and agenda.

2. Journal sharing.

3. How others do it? - Other teachers' experience with teaching ESL literacy to adults.

4. Break.

5. Tips for ESL literacy teachers.

6. Final evaluation.

Session One - Preparation

Pre-Session Mailing

Mail the following items to participants at least 10 days before the first session:

___ Letter (Use Appendix A Sample Letter)

___ Burt, M., Kreeft-Peyton, J., and Adams, R., (2003). Factors Influencing Adult Literacy Development in English. *Reading and Adult English Language Learners: A Review of the Research.* Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Transparencies and newsprint (Prepare ahead of time.)

___ Overview of the ESL Study Circle

___ Objectives for Session One

___ Session One Agenda

___ Pre-reading Questions #1

Handouts

___ Handout 1: Learning Journal Questions.

___ Handout 2: "Sample Ground Rules" by the Study Circle Resource Center

___ Handout 3: Session One Discussion Questions

___ Handout 4: Cunningham Florez, M., (2001). Beginning ESOL Learners' Advice to Their Teachers. *Focus on Basics,* Vol. 5, Issue A.

___ Handout 5: Learner Profiles

___ Handout 6: Assignment

___ Handout 7: Informal Feedback

Readings

___ Burt, M., Kreeft-Peyton, J., and Adams, R., (2003). Factors Influencing Adult Literacy Development in English. *Reading and Adult English Language Learners: A Review of the Research* (pp. 7-16). Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Materials

___ Blank newsprint sheets

___ Newsprint easel

___ Overhead projector

___ Markers, pens, tape

Session One - Guide

Objectives:

- Participants get to know one another and learn the overall agenda of the Study Circle.

- Participants learn about adult ESL learners' expectations.

- Participants learn about factors influencing adult literacy development in English.

- Participants learn about types of L1 literacy and its effects on L2 literacy learning.

Time:
3 hours

Procedure:

1. Welcome and introductions (10 min.)

   - Welcome participants to the first session of the Study Circle.

   - Introduce yourself and describe what you will do as a facilitator. Tell participants how you came to the position and mention the sponsor of the project.

   - Ask participants to introduce themselves (name, program, function).

2. Discussion of participant expectations. (15 min.)
   - Ask participants to respond to the following question: What do you expect to learn from this Study Circle? Write the responses on newsprint.

   - Sum up the statements and mention how the sessions will respond to their concerns.

3. Overview of the Study Circle, and Session One objectives. (15 min.)
   - Give a brief overview of the six sessions of this Study Circle (Use Overview of Study Circle transparency).

   - Distribute Handout 1: Learning Journal Questions. Explain that throughout the six sessions of the Study Circle each participant will be required to keep a learning journal. Participants will be asked to reflect on the content of each session by writing a two-page entry that will document their thoughts, ideas, and questions that may arise during or after the session. For each session, participants will consider the following questions:

     1. What discoveries did you make during the session?

     2. How did the session resonate with your own teaching practice?

     3. How can you integrate elements of the Study Circle into your own teaching?

- Journal entries will be e-mailed to the facilitator at least two days before the next session. These entries will form the final product of this Study Circle.

- Describe the three subjects that constitute the basis of the study circle:

  1. Primary concepts and theories underlying topic readings and research.

  2. Participants' connections to the topic, particularly in light of their teaching practice.

  3. Participants' thoughts on the implications of the research for their practice, and the practice of others.

- Distribute Handout 2: Sample Ground Rules. After participants take a look at these, ask if there are any they would like to add or delete.

- Present the "Objectives for Session One" transparency. Go over the objectives with the group.

- Present the "Session One Agenda" transparency. Describe each component. Answer any questions about the agenda.

4. Aspects of the adult learning process – a learner's perspective. (30 min.)
   - Distribute Handout 3: Session One Discussion Questions. Explain that participants will discuss the questions in the handout at different points during the session.

   - Tell participants to imagine that they are ESL students they teach. Ask them to make two columns on a piece of paper. Ask them to list the imagined expectations of their students in the left column.

   - Distribute Handout 4: Cunningham Florez, M., (2001). Beginning ESOL Learners' Advice to Their Teachers. *Focus on Basics*, Vol. 5, Issue A. Give participants a few minutes to read this handout. Then, tell them to list the expectations of the students in the article in the right column. Alternatively, assign a different section of the article to each group member to read and then to be prepared to briefly summarize for the group.

   - After that, ask participants to compare their perceived expectations with those of actual students and answer the questions (Handout 3, Part A):

   Q: What differences/similarities do you notice?

   Q: What was surprising?

   Q: How might you adjust your approach based on this activity?

5. Break (10 min.)

6. Factors influencing L2 literacy development. (15 min.)
    *   Refer to Section 1, Factors Influencing Adult Literacy Development in *English in Reading and Adult English Language Learners: A Review of the Research*. Say that as teachers plan classes they need to take into account a variety of factors that influence the literacy development of adults learning English. Ask participants to brainstorm a list of those factors that they take into account while planning lessons for adult low-level iteracy students. Record responses on newsprint. Point to the ones that have received the most attention in the literature on L2 reading, i.e.

        *   L1 literacy

        *   Educational background

        *   L2 proficiency

        *   Learner goals

    *   Ask the following question (Handout 3, Part B):

        Q: Which of the above factors do you consider in planning lessons for your adult low-level literacy students?

7. Types of ESL literacy learners who are in need of ESL literacy instruction. (30 min.)
    *   Explain that you will now take a closer look at the first factor, L1 literacy. Brainstorm different types of L1 literacy background that should be considered in adult ESL instruction, namely:

        *   Preliterate

        *   Nonliterate

        *   Semiliterate

        *   Non-Roman alphabet literate

        *   Roman alphabet literate

        Record the answers on newsprint or transparency.

    *   Divide the participants into five different groups. Assign one or two types of L1 literacy to each group. Ask each group to prepare a short description of their given type, followed by a list of special considerations for teaching reading to this particular type of L1 literacy learners.

8. Learner profiles. (40 min.)
    *   Refer to Handout 5: Learner Profiles. Ask participants to take a few minutes to read it. Tell participants to answer two questions (Handout 3, Part C):

        Q: What type of literacy does each learner represent?

        Q: What strategies would you consider in planning instruction for him/her?

        Ask them to share their responses with two other participants.

- Ask the following questions to the whole group (Handout 3, Part D):

    Q: What types of literacy learners are currently in your class?

    Q: What criteria did you use to determine their level of literacy?

    Q: What are your students' goals?

    Q: What do you do to help your students achieve their literacy goals?

- Distribute Handout 6: Assignment. As an assignment, ask participants to:

    a) Build up a profile of one or more of their students based on the list of criteria provided below. They can add other information they consider relevant.

        *   Literacy in L1
        *   Country of origin
        *   Age
        *   Years of formal education in L1
        *   Length of time in the US
        *   Job in the US
        *   Goals
        *   Proficiency in spoken English
        *   Current level of reading skills in English

    b) Comment on how their teaching methods relate to this profile of student needs.

9. Reading for Session Two, evaluation, closure. (15 min.)
    - Go through the readings for Session Two:

        Burt, M., Kreeft-Peyton, J., and Adams, R., (2003). *Reading and Adult English Language Learners: A Review of the Research.* Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.

        Section 2: "The Process of Learning to Read in a Second Language," pp. 23-32.

    - Present the "Pre-reading Questions #1" transparency. Have a brief discussion of the following pre-reading questions:

        Q: Are you familiar with any particular reading theory?

        Q: What kind of processes occur as we read?

        Q: How did you learn to read? Was it a positive or a negative experience?

    - Remind participants to reflect on the subject of today's session in their learning journals, and to e-mail these to you.

    - Distribute Informal Feedback forms (Handout 7), and ask participants to fill them out. Explain that suggestions provided by participants will be used to make the Study Circle more useful for practitioners.

    - Repeat the date, time, and place for the next session. Find out if they have any questions. Thank them for their preparation and participation in this session.

Session Two - Preparation

Transparencies and newsprint (Prepare ahead of time.)
___ Objectives for Session Two

___ Session Two Agenda

___ Bottom-up Models/ Top-down Models/ Interactive Models

___ Pre-reading Questions #2

Handouts
___ Handout 7: Informal Feedback

___ Handout 8: Session Two Discussion Questions

Readings
___ Burt, M., Kreeft-Peyton, J., and Adams, R., (2003). The Process of Learning to Read in a Second Language. *Reading and Adult English Language Learners: A Review of the Research* (pp. 23-32). Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Materials
___ Blank newsprint sheets

___ Newsprint easel

___ Overhead projector

___ Markers, pens, tape

Session Two - Guide

Objectives

- Participants learn about significant current models of reading.

- Participants learn about different reading skills.

TIME: 3 hours

Procedure

1. Welcome; Session Two objectives, and agenda. (10 min.)
   - Welcome participants back to the Study Circle.

   - Present the "Objectives for Session Two" transparency. Go over the objectives with the group.

   - Present the "Session Two Agenda" transparency. Describe each component. Answer any questions about the agenda.

2. Journal sharing. (15 min.)
   - Ask participants to share journal reflections with a partner. Then, comment on particular participants' insights.

3. Discussion of learner profiles. (15 min.)
   - Refer to the last session's assignment: profiles of low-level literacy students. Invite participants to share their profiles and comments on how identifying different literacy levels might help them to understand the needs of their students better, and, as a consequence, develop teaching strategies that would support their students in their literacy development.

   - Tell participants that they will use the learner profiles again in Session Three during the discussion of low-level transfer of reading strategies.

4. Reading theories in the context of language teaching. (40 min.)
   - Refer to the discussion of Models of Reading in Section 2, pp. 24-25 of *Reading and Adult English Language Learners*. Explain that these models "describe the reading process in general, and are not specific to the process of how adults learn to read in a second language. However, understanding the fundamental nature of the reading process is necessary to recognizing how reading in English is learned."

- Ask about the three different models. Hang three newsprint sheets labeled Bottom-up Models, Top-down Models, and Interactive Models. Divide the participants into three groups and assign one model to each group. Tell each group to discuss the characteristics of a given model and then list them on the newsprint sheets displayed on different walls in the session room. Groups should decide who will record the information and who will report out to the participants as a whole.

- After reporting out, distribute Handout 8: Session Two Discussion Questions. Refer to Part A of this handout, and ask the following questions:

  Q: What are the advantages and disadvantages of each of these models?

  Q: Which model do you think you bring to your teaching practice of reading? Why?

  Q: Is there a model that you think you should pay more attention to when teaching reading to adult ESL students? Why?

- Ask the participants to indicate the model that most resembles their teaching of reading. Then, ask them to consider which model is most appropriate for their adult ESL low literacy students. Facilitate a discussion by asking the following questions (Handout 8, Part B):

  Q: Was it easy to indicate which model seemed the most like your own? Explain.

  Q: For those of you who reconsidered your model, can you explain why?

- It is important to acknowledge that one model is not necessarily preferred over other models. Each model has merits, depending on the particular learner and the specific learning goal.

5. Break. (15 min.)

6. The importance of phonological processing, vocabulary recognition, syntactic processing, and schema activating in reading development. (60 min.)
   - Explain that the participants are going to work in pairs to discuss the importance of different skills in reading development. Assign one reading skill to each pair. Give one piece of newsprint to each pair. Ask the pairs to label their newsprint – one pair will have Phonological Processing, one pair will have Vocabulary Recognition, one pair will have Syntactic Processing, and one pair will have Schema Activating. Also, ask each pair to divide the newsprint into two sections, "description" and "teaching suggestions." Remind them that they should keep in mind different types of adult ESL literacy learners identified in Session One.

   - Ask each pair to give a short presentation on a given reading skill.

- Facilitate a group discussion. Ask the following questions (Handout 8, Part C):

  Q: In your opinion, is the development of all the reading skills discussed here equally important? Explain your point of view.

  Q: Which of the reading skills do you consider the most important? Why?

  Q: Which reading skills are you currently teaching to your students?

  Q: What activities do you use to build specific reading skills? How do you select these activities? How do they relate to your broad objectives? Give reasons for your choices.

7. Reading for Session Three, evaluation, closure. (25 min.)
   - Go through the readings for Session Three:

     1. Birch, B., (2002). *English L2 Reading: Getting to the Bottom.* Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

        Chapter 2: "Writing Systems," pp. 12-26.

        Chapter 3: "Low-Level Transfer of Reading Strategies," pp. 28-38.

   - Present the "Pre-reading Questions #2" transparency. Ask some of the pre-reading questions from these chapters. For example:

     1. What writing systems do you know about?

     2. What type of writing system is English?

     3. Do you hear sounds in your head when you are reading words? Do you have a sense of pronouncing words even though you are reading silently? If so, do you think it slows down your reading? Is it a disadvantage to read slowly?

   - Remind participants to reflect on the subject of today's session in their learning journals, and to e-mail these to you.

   - Distribute Informal Feedback forms (Handout 7), and ask participants to fill them out.

   - Repeat the date, time, and place for the next session. Find out if they have any questions. Thank them for their preparation and participation in this session.

Session Three - Preparation

Transparencies and newsprint (Prepare ahead of time.)

___ Objectives for Session Three

___ Session Three Agenda

___ Pre-reading Questions #3

Handouts

___ Handout 7: Informal Feedback

___ Handout 9: Session Three Discussion Questions

___ Handout 10: A Guide to Writing Systems

___ Handout 11: Venn Diagram

Readings

___ Birch, B., (2002). Writing Systems. Low-Level Transfer of Reading Strategies. *English L2 Reading: Getting to the Bottom* (pp. 12-38). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Materials

___ Blank newsprint sheets

___ Newsprint easel

___ Overhead projector

___ Markers, pens, tape

Session Three - Guide

Objectives

- Participants examine three major writing systems.

- Participants learn about the potential for positive and negative transfer of L1 reading strategies to L2 reading.

TIME: 3 hours

Procedure

1. Welcome; Session Three objectives, and agenda. (10 min.)
   - Welcome participants back to the Study Circle.

   - Present the "Objectives for Session Three" transparency. Go over the objectives with the group.

   - Present the "Session Three Agenda" transparency. Describe each component. Answer any questions about the agenda.

2. Journal sharing. (15 min.)
   - Ask participants to share journal reflections with a partner. Then, comment on particular participants' insights.

3. Writing systems (logographic, syllabic, alphabetic). (25 min.)
   - Explain that participants will discuss various writing systems in the world and their differences. Say that, a critical point ESL teachers must recognize is the difference of English from all other writing systems. As a result, positive transfer or facilitation from L1 might be either limited or nonexistent, but negative transfer may be great. Teachers who are unaware of this situation may not have realistic expectations for their students, and may also have difficulty in designing helpful assignments to assist their students in a successful development of L2 reading. The knowledge of various writing systems will give teachers necessary understanding of the causes of problems that their ESL students encounter while learning how to read.

   - Ask participants about the three main types of writing systems discussed in the reading assigned for today's session. Write their names – Logographic Systems, Syllabic Writing Systems, and Alphabetic Writing Systems—on three separate sheets of newsprint. Tell participants that they will work in three groups. Assign one of the above writing systems to each group and give the group a sheet of newsprint with an appropriate writing system. Each group will prepare a short description of the given writing system and provide examples of script names and region of the world where this writing system is used. After they have finished their task, tell each group to hang their newsprint around the room. Ask volunteers from each group to present their writing system. Distribute Handout 9: Session Three Discussion Questions. Ask the following questions to the whole group (Handout 9, Part A):

Q: How many of your students come from the part of the world that uses logographic systems? What is their first language?

Q: How many of your students come from the part of the world that uses syllabic writing systems? What is their first language?

Q: How many of your students come from the part of the world that uses alphabetic writing systems? What is their first language?

4. The opacity of English. (30 min)
    *   Tell participants that you would like to concentrate now on the characteristic features of English and its comparison to other languages typically used by ESL students, such as Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, Chinese, etc.

    *   Brainstorm all the ideas (coming from the reading about writing systems assigned for today as well as participants' knowledge) that refer to the description of the English language, for example:

        *   the writing system it uses (Roman alphabetic)

        *   a small number of symbols (26) used to represent all of the words

        *   segmentation (flow of speech segmented into words, spoken words segmented into phonemes)

        *   its opacity (the correlation between letter and sound is not consistent)

        *   its horizontal spacing (words written from left to right) between words, etc.

        Record their responses on newsprint or transparency.

    *   Distribute Handout 10: A Guide to Writing Systems. Explain that they will be working in pairs to discuss the differences and similarities (if any) between English and two of the languages that are most commonly represented in their ESL classroom. They will use a two-circle Venn diagram. Distribute two copies of Handout 11: Venn Diagram to each pair. Tell them to compare English and one of the two languages at a time. For example, if they choose Spanish and Vietnamese, first, they have to examine differences and similarities between English and Spanish, and then between English and Vietnamese. To make sure that there is a variety of languages discussed, ask participants about their choices. If too many of them choose the same language, for example Spanish, assign other languages, such as Arabic, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Chinese, Amharic. Tell participants that they are not expected to be linguists. The idea is to build their understanding of the problems low-level literacy students face. Explain that the handout can assist them with the task.

        Ask them to share the results of their discussion with another pair.

5. Break. (15 min.)

6. Transfer of low-level reading skills. (40 min.)
    *   Make a comment: "Given the differences in writing systems in the world, it is not surprising that learning to read a new script can be problematic for the language learner." Then, conduct a quick poll by asking three questions discussed by B. Birch in Chapter 3 (Handout 9, Part B):

        Q: Do you agree that the knowledge stored in the knowledge base as a source for reading is different for each L1 writing system?

        Q: Do you agree that different writing systems cause students develop different low-level reading strategies when they are learning to read in L1?

        Q: Do you agree that these processing strategies transfer from L1 to L2?

        Comment on the results of the "poll".

    *   Explain that, since readers do develop different strategies to cope with different writing systems, you would like participants to examine these strategies. Divide them into three groups, with one group discussing a low-level strategy that might be used by readers of logographic scripts, one group discussing a low-level strategy that readers of consonantal scripts might develop, and one discussing a low-level strategy that readers of transparent scripts might be using. Each group will also consider the answers to the following questions (Handout 9, Part C):

        Q: How does this low-level strategy facilitate the development of reading skills in English?

        Q: How does this low-level strategy interfere with the development of reading skills in English?

        Q: What strategies would you use to help readers of particular scripts to learn how to read in English?

    *   Ask each group to be prepared to share their responses to these questions with two other groups. Then, as a whole group discuss the following questions (Handout 9, Part D):

        Q: What transfer of low-level processing strategies might you expect to find in low-level literacy students you are currently teaching? Would you consider it to be facilitation or interference?

        Q: How would the knowledge/understanding of different writing systems assist you in setting the appropriate objectives for teaching reading to your low-level ESL literacy students?

7. Case analysis. (20 min.)
    *   Ask participants to look at learner profiles they developed after Session One. Tell them to consider these profiles in light of the information on low-level transfer. Ask them to focus on the following factors:

        * low-level decoding strategies a student might have developed in L1

        * possible transfer (positive or negative) of these strategies from L1 to English

        * the areas in which the student needs the teacher's assistance

        * implications for teaching reading

    *   Invite participants to share their analysis with the rest of the group.

8. Reading for Session Four, evaluation, closure. (25 min.)
    *   Go through the reading for Session Four:

        Birch, B., (2002). *English L2 Reading: Getting to the Bottom.* Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

        Chapter 7: "Approaches to Phonics", pp. 91-104.

    *   Present the "Pre-reading Questions #3" transparency. Ask some of the pre-reading questions from this chapter. For example:

        1. How old were you when you learned to read?

        2. What activities do you remember? Make a list of activities and evaluate their purpose and effectiveness?

        3. Do you know how your students learned how to read in English?

    *   Remind participants to reflect on the subject of today's session in their learning journals, and to e-mail these to you.

    *   Distribute Informal Feedback forms (Handout 7), and ask participants to fill them out.

    *   Repeat the date, time, and place for the next session. Find out if they have any questions. Thank them for their preparation and participation in this session.

Session Four - Preparation

Transparencies and newsprint (Prepare ahead of time.)
___ Objectives for Session Four

___ Session Four Agenda

___ Pre-reading Questions #4

Handouts
___ Handout 7: Informal Feedback

___ Handout 12: Session Four Discussion Questions

___ Handout 13: Long, L., Gillespie, M., (1992). Phonics in Context: Using Grapho/Phonemic Cues in a Learner-Centered ESL Literacy Classroom. In Wrigley, H.S., Guth, G.J.A., *Bringing Literacy to Life: Issues and Options in Adult ESL Literacy* (pp. 281-290). San Mateo, California: Aguirre International.

Readings
___ Birch, B., (2002). Approaches to Phonics. *English L2 Reading: Getting to the Bottom* (pp. 91-104). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Materials
___ Blank newsprint sheets

___ Newsprint easel

___ Overhead projector

___ Markers, pens, tape

Session Four - Guide

Objectives

- Participants learn about different approaches to phonics instruction in the past.

- Participants learn the value of modern phonics instruction in teaching reading to adult ESL learners with limited or no literacy in their first language.

- Participants examine how phonics instruction can be embedded in a lesson built around a social theme meaningful to adult students.

TIME: 3 hours

Procedure

1. Welcome; Session Four objectives, and agenda. (10 min.)
    - Welcome participants back to the Study Circle.

    - Present the "Objectives for Session Four" transparency. Go over the objectives with the group.

    - Present the "Session Four Agenda" transparency. Describe each component. Answer any questions about the agenda.

2. Journal sharing. (15 min.)
    - Ask participants to share journal reflections with a partner. Then, comment on particular participants' insights.

3. Phonics methodologies. (60 min.)
    - Explain that participants will work in two groups, with one group made up of those who are "in favor" of phonics instruction, and the other group made up of those who will "criticize" phonics instruction. Each group will consider the reading assigned for today's Study Circle and their personal experience.

    - Distribute Handout 12: Session Four Discussion Questions. Refer to Part A of this handout. Ask the groups to discuss their responses to the following questions:

    Q: What are the values/limitations of teaching phonics to adult ESL students with little or no formal education in L1?

    Q: What are your thoughts about the opinion that phonics instruction is a) useless, b) pointless, c) a waste of time, and d) boring?

    Q: Can we expect our low literacy ESL students to unconsciously acquire certain phonic strategies (for example, phonic generalizations, blending, or analogy to frames) or should these strategies be explicitly taught?

- Ask each group to build a case for their assigned point of view. Each group should choose a reporter to take notes and another person to present their case. After 30 minutes of discussion in each group, ask the members of each group to share their responses. Then, discuss the following questions with the whole group (Handout 12, Part B):

  Q: How is modern phonics instruction different from traditional approaches to phonics instruction?

  Q: Do you see the value of utilizing phonics instruction in teaching reading to adult ESL low-level literacy students? Explain.

  Q: Which phonics strategies are you currently using in teaching reading to your students? Why?

  Q: Which phonics strategies would you like to implement in your teaching practice? Why?

  Q: What are the benefits of instruction and practice in using analogy to frames? (See Birch, p. 100.)

4. Break. (15 min.)

5. Integrating phonics instruction into a lesson. (65 min.)
   - Distribute Handout 13: Phonics In Context: Using Grapho/Phonemic Cues in a Learner-Centered ESL Literacy Classroom. Ask participants to read the first part of it, "Background". Explain that participants will be working in small groups (possibly of 3) to discuss the answers to three questions. Each member of the group will be expected to find the answer to one of the questions and discuss it with the other members (Handout 12, Part C).

   Q1: What are characteristics of fluent readers?

   Q2: What strategies can teachers use to develop these characteristics in their low-level ESL literacy students?

   Q3: What are the challenges of learning to read for low-level ESL students?

   - After 20 minutes of group discussion, ask volunteers from each group to answer these questions. Then, tell participants to read the second part of the handout, "ESL Literacy in Action", and discuss in their same groups the following questions (Handout 12, Part D):

   Q: What activities were used to develop which characteristics of fluent readers?

   Q: What activities were used to address the needs of adult ESL literacy students?

   Q: How was phonics instruction incorporated into the lesson plan? What phonic strategies were used?

   Q: Do you use any of these activities in your teaching practice?

   Q: In what ways could you adapt these activities to fit your own teaching? What would you do differently?

   - After individual groups have discussed these questions, open the discussion to the whole group.

6. Reading for Session Five, evaluation, closure. (15 min.)
   - Go through the readings for Session Five:

     1. Handout 14: Taylor, M., (1992). The Language Experience Approach and Adult Learners. *ERIC Digest*. Washington, DC: The National Center for ESL Literacy Education. (EDO-LE-92-01)

     2. Handout 15: Wrigley, H.S., Guth, G.J.A., (1992). Examples of Meaning-Based Approaches to Teaching ESL and Literacy. *Bringing Literacy to Life: Issues and Options in Adult ESL Literacy* (pp. 27-35). San Mateo, California: Aguirre International.

   - Present the "Pre-reading Questions # 4" transparency. While looking at Handout 15: Examples of Meaning-Based Approaches to Teaching ESL and Literacy, ask the following pre-reading questions:

     1. How would you describe your approach to teaching ESL?

     2. What methods do you use in your practice?

   - Remind participants to reflect on the subject of today's session in their learning journals, and to e-mail these to you.

   - Distribute Informal Feedback forms (Handout 7), and ask participants to fill them out.

   - Repeat the date, time, and place for the next session. Find out if they have any questions. Thank them for their preparation and participation in this session.

Session Five - Preparation

Transparencies and newsprint (Prepare ahead of time.)
___ Objectives for Session Five

___ Session Five Agenda

___ ESL Literacy Instruction

___ The Functional Approach/ The Natural Approach/ The Communicative Approach/ The Whole Language Approach/ The Language Experience Approach/ The Freirean or Participatory Approach/ The Ethnographic Approach

___ Single Approach/ Eclectic Approach

Handouts
___ Handout 7: Informal Feedback

___ Handout 16: Session Five Discussion Questions

___ Handout 17: Signup Sheet

Readings
___ Handout 14: Taylor, M., (1992). The Language Experience Approach and Adult Learners. *ERIC Digest.* Washington, DC: The National Center for ESL Literacy Education. (EDO-LE-92-01)

___ Handout 15: Wrigley, H.S., Guth, G.J.A., (1992). Examples of Meaning-Based Approaches to Teaching ESL and Literacy. *Bringing Literacy to Life: Issues and Options in Adult ESL Literacy* (pp. 27-35). San Mateo, California: Aguirre International.

Materials
___ Blank newsprint sheets

___ Newsprint easel

___ Overhead projector

___ Markers, pens, tape

Session Five - Guide

Objectives

- Participants examine various approaches to adult ESL literacy instruction.

- Participants consider implementing literacy approaches in their ESL classroom.

TIME: 3 hours

Procedure

1. Welcome: Session Five objectives, and agenda. (10 min.)
   - Welcome participants back to the Study Circle.

   - Present the "Objectives for Session Five" transparency. Go over the objectives with the group.

   - Present the "Session Five Agenda" transparency. Describe each component. Answer any questions about the agenda.

2. Journal sharing. (15 min.)
   - Ask participants to share journal reflections with a partner. Then, comment on particular participants' insights.

3. Approaches to teaching adult ESL literacy. (90 min.)
   - Distribute Handout 16: Session Five Discussion Questions. Refer to Part A of this handout. Ask participants to brainstorm ideas related to answering the following question:

     Q: What is ESL literacy instruction? Record their responses on newsprint.

   - Present the "ESL Literacy Instruction" transparency. Explain that ESL literacy instruction "could be defined as supporting adults with little English and little formal education in their efforts to understand and use English in its many forms (oral and written, including prose, document, and quantitative literacy), in a variety of contexts (family, community, school, work), so that they can reach their fullest potential and achieve their own goals, whether these be personal, professional or academic." (Wrigley, et al., 1992, p. 7)

   - Explain that participants will examine several successful approaches to teaching English literacy to adults:

                    The Functional Approach

                    The Natural Approach

                    The Communicative Approach

                    The Whole Language Approach

                    The Language Experience Approach

                    The Freirean or Participatory Approach

                    The Ethnographic Approach

- Post seven newsprint sheets labeled: The Functional Approach, The Natural Approach, The Communicative Approach, The Whole Language Approach, The Language Experience Approach, The Freirean or Participatory Approach, The Ethnographic Approach around the room. Each newsprint sheet should be divided into two sections: Main Points, and Appropriate for My Students. Depending on the group size, invite participants to find a partner they have not worked with, or participant may work alone. Explain that each pair or participant will go to a separate newsprint sheet on one of the approaches to adult ESL literacy instruction, and generate a list of main points about this particular approach. They will also comment on how it will or will not be appropriate for teaching literacy to their low-level ESL literacy students. Each pair or participant will be given 10 minutes to work on a particular approach, and then move to the next newsprint to either build on what was already written by the previous pair or participants or to begin with new newsprint to make a list of main points and comments. After another 10 minutes the pairs or participants will be asked to move again to another newsprint, and this will be repeated until each pair or participant has had a chance to visit each newsprint and add their comments.

When the pairs or participants have looked at each newsprint, ask the whole group to take a few minutes to silently read all the information about different approaches, considering main points and their usefulness for their low-level ESL literacy students. Facilitate a whole group discussion by asking the following questions (Handout 16, Part B):

Q: What common characteristics do most of these approaches share?

   a. respond to learners' goals, interests, needs

   b. literacy is presented in a meaningful context (family, community, workplace, school)

   c. activate the background knowledge of learners, so that they can use this knowledge in dealing with literacy tasks

Q: How do they differ?

   Each approach tends to address different dimensions of literacy (personal, social, cultural, political, economic), while de-emphasizing others.

Then, ask participants if anyone would like to reflect on any of the comments listed on the newsprint sheets. Continue the discussion by asking the following questions (Handout 16, Part C):

Q: What are your thoughts on implementing any of these approaches to your teaching practice?

Q: What factors do you need to take into account before implementing any of these approaches?

Q: Which approach might work best with your students? Why?

4. Break. (15 min.)

5. Using one single approach or an eclectic approach. (30 min.)
   - Explain that participants will now discuss the pros and cons of using one single approach to adult ESL literacy instruction vs. an eclectic approach.

   - Post the Single Approach newsprint. Ask the group to brainstorm all the pros of implementing one approach. Write each response under the "plus" sign on the left side of the newsprint. Then, ask the group to brainstorm all the cons. Write these on the right side of the newsprint, under the "minus" sign.

   - Post the Eclectic Approach newsprint. Ask participants to brainstorm all the pros of using an eclectic approach. Write each response under the "plus" sign on the left side of the newsprint. Then, ask the group to brainstorm all the cons. Write these on the right side of the newsprint, under the "minus" sign.

   - Lead a discussion with the whole group that will answer the questions (Handout 16, Part D):

     Q: Considering all the pros and cons, is it better to implement one particular approach or combine aspects of various approaches?

     Q: What can be the basis for bringing together various approaches in a coherent fashion? (A literacy framework links various approaches together through a common understanding of what a program is about.)

6. Reading for Session Six, evaluation, closure. (20 min.)
   - Go through the readings for Session Six:

     1. Handout 18: Wrigley, H.S., Guth, G.J.A., (1992). Promising Practices. *Bringing Literacy to Life: Issues and Options in Adult ESL Literacy* (pp. 67-72). San Mateo, California: Aguirre International.

     2. Handouts 19-31: Various articles.

   - Explain that the last session will provide examples of effective literacy teaching based on practices coming from experienced teachers. Each participant will be expected to choose one long article and one promising practice as described in Handout 18. After reading these, participants will prepare presentations, including at least one way of utilizing an approach or practice that would be applicable for their specific group of low-level literacy students. Encourage participants to use audio-visual aids, and to create one or more group activities that embody the practice they are working on. Each participant will be given about 10 minutes for his/her presentation. Ask participants to take a few minutes to look through different articles and make their choices. Make sure that there is only one participant per article to avoid overlapping. Note who will be reading which article on a signup sheet (Handout 17: Signup Sheet). If the group is larger, two participants can co-present one article.

   - Remind participants to reflect on the subject of today's session in their learning journals, and to e-mail these to you.

   - Distribute Informal Feedback forms (Handout 7), and ask participants to fill them out.

   - Repeat the date, time, and place for the next session. Find out if they have any questions. Thank them for their preparation and participation in this session.

Session Six - Preparation

Transparencies and newsprint (Prepare ahead of time.)

___ Objectives for Session Six

___ Session Six Agenda

Handouts

___ Handout 7: Informal Feedback

___ Handout 32: Session Six Discussion Questions

___ Handout 33: Wrigley, H.S., Guth, G.J.A., (1992). Tips for ESL Literacy Teachers. *Bringing Literacy to Life: Issues and Options in Adult ESL Literacy* (pp. 42-46). San Mateo, California: Aguirre International.

___ Handout 34: Final Thoughts

Readings

___ Handout 18: Wrigley, H.S., Guth, G.J.A., (1992). Promising Practices. *Bringing Literacy to Life: Issues and Options in Adult ESL Literacy* (pp. 67-72). San Mateo, California: Aguirre International.

___ Various articles (Handouts 19 to 31), chosen by participants.

Materials

___ Blank newsprint sheets

___ Newsprint easel

___ Overhead projector

___ Markers, pens, tape

Other

___ PDC Evaluation Forms (Contact your PDC for this form and for any special instructions on filling out the form)

Session Six - Guide

Objectives
- Participants examine effective innovative literacy practices.
- Participants learn how they can provide a rich literacy experience for their ESL low literacy students.

TIME: 3 hours

Procedure

1. Welcome; Session Six objectives, and agenda. (10 min.)
   - Welcome participants back to the Study Circle.
   - Present the "Objectives for Session Six" transparency. Go over the objectives with the group.
   - Present the "Session Six Agenda" transparency. Describe each component. Answer any questions about the agenda.

2. Journal sharing. (15 min.)
   - Ask participants to share journal reflections with a partner. Then, comment on particular participants' insights.

3. How others do it? – Other teachers' experience with teaching ESL literacy to adults.(100 min.)
   - Distribute Handout 32: Session Six Discussion Questions. Refer to Part A of this handout. Explain that in addition to the major approaches to ESL literacy instruction, there are several effective literacy practices that some innovative programs or teachers are using in their classrooms. Ask participants to brainstorm examples of these practices. (They include dialogue journals, learner-generated materials, storytelling, cooperative learning activities, neighborhood surveys, field trips, etc.) Record their responses on newsprint. Then, ask a question:

   Q: What common characteristics do these successful literacy practices share?

   (These successful literacy practices allow learners to:

   *   work with whole texts as opposed to isolated words and letters

   *   provide a wide range of texts, from functional materials to literature to "visual texts"

   *   explore various dimensions of literacy

   *   utilize four language skills as learners look at how language/literacy affects their world

   *   be involved in decisions about the context/structure of their learning.)

   Record the responses on newsprint.

- Invite the first participant to give his/her presentation on an article or articles he/she read. Ask the rest of the group to take notes and make comments after the presentation. Also, tell participants to make a list of the practices discussed and choose the ones they found particularly inspiring/interesting and worth implementing in their teaching practice.

- After all participants present their articles, facilitate a whole group discussion by asking the following questions (Handout 32, Part B):

  Q: What stands out for you in terms of usefulness of these practices in supporting your ESL students in their language and literacy development?

  Q: What appeals to you about these practices? What concerns you?

  Q: How can you modify these practices to teach literacy to different types of literacy learners identified in Session One?

  Q: In what way could you adapt these practices to fit your own teaching practice?

4. Break. (15 min.)

5. Tips for ESL literacy teachers. (30 min.)
   - Remind participants that during the first session, they were asked to imagine that they were ESL students they teach. Explain that you would like to finish this Study Circle by asking them to be, who they really are – experienced ESL teachers with lots of theoretical knowledge and practical ideas on how to teach adult low-level literacy ESL students. Ask them to imagine now that they have to give advice to their less experienced colleagues, who are just starting their teaching career in the field of adult ESL literacy. Tell them to answer the following question (Handout 32, Part C):

     Q: How can ESL literacy teachers provide effective instruction to improve the English language and literacy skills of ESL literacy students?

     Ask them to discuss this question with a partner, and then prepare a list of suggestions for ESL literacy teachers. Tell them to write those suggestions on sheets of newsprint.

   - After 10 minutes, ask each pair to share their lists with the rest of the group. Make comments and invite the participants to make comments.

   - Tell participants that you would like them now to take a look at tips for teachers who want to provide a rich literacy experience for their students given by Heide Spruck Wrigley and Gloria J. A. Guth in their book *Bringing Literacy to Life*. Distribute Handout 33: Tips for ESL Literacy Teachers. Tell participants to take a few minutes to read it and compare their suggestions with those in the handout.

     Generate a discussion by asking the following questions (Handout 32, Part D):

     Q: How do these tips compare to your lists?

     Q: Did any of these tips surprise you? How so?

     Q: Which tips did you find most useful? Least useful?

6. Final evaluation. (10 min.)
   - Distribute the PDC and Informal Feedback (Handout 7) evaluation forms and ask partici-
     pants to fill them out.

   - Remind participants to reflect on the subject of today's session in their learning journals,
     and to e-mail these to you.

   - In addition, tell participants to provide their comments about the study circle as a whole, by
     answering the questions below and e-mailing them to you. Distribute Handout 34: Final
     Thoughts.

     1. What have you found most valuable?

     2. How will the knowledge you have gained in this study circle help you to improve your
        own teaching practice?

     3. Finally, feel free to make any other comments about this study circle.

   - Thank everyone for participating in this ESL Study Circle.

Index of Handouts & Appendices - Section D

Handout 1

Learning Journal Questions

QUESTIONS

1. What discoveries did you make during this session?

2. How did this session resonate with your own teaching practice?

3. How can you integrate elements of the study circle into your own teaching?

Handout 2

Sample Ground Rules

- Everyone gets a fair hearing.

- Seek first to understand, then to be understood.

- Share "air time."

- If you are offended, say so; and say why.

- You can disagree, but don't personalize it; stick to the issue. No name-calling or stereotyping.

- Speak for yourself, not for others.

- One person speaks at a time.

- What is said in the groups stays here, unless everyone agrees to change that.

Handout 3

Session One Discussion Questions

PART A

1. What differences/ similarities do you notice?

2. What was surprising?

3. How might you adjust your approach based on this activity?

PART B

1. Which of the above factors do you consider in planning lessons for your adult low-level literacy students?

PART C

1. What types of literacy does each learner represent?

2. What strategies would you consider in planning instruction for him/her?

PART D

1. What types of literacy learners are currently in your class?

2. What criteria did you use to determine their level of literacy?

3. What are your students' goals?

4. What do you do to help your students achieve their literacy goals?

Handout 4

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 textbook. I give each learner a three-column chart and I draw a similar one on the board. The first column will be filled in with items we studied in the unit. Learners put a check in one of the other two columns to indicate if 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") to head these columns, depending on the proficiencies of my learners and their comfort with

the process.

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

Depending on the learners' language levels, I might use words, symbolic drawings, or a combination of both to list the items that we brainstorm. As I list items, I make sure that I point to the page or pages in the book where they were covered, to remind learners of the context and to make sure everyone is clear about what we are naming. Learners then indicate individually what they have learned and what they need to practice more. Afterward, we debrief, either as a whole group or in pair or small groups that then report back to the large group, to determine the items that people had in common. On that basis, we decide what we may need to review as a class or as individuals.

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 con-texts. For some learners, this meant a better balance of opportunities to engage in speaking, listen-ing, 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 class-room, but you do not share a native language with them?

*

Use picture or word prompts to stimulate role plays or brainstorming sessions to preface a new topic. As you and the learners do this, you will gather clues about what they already know or have experienced and any special needs or interests they may have in relation to the topic.

*

Create a Language Experience Approach (LEA) story about studying English. Find or draw pictures in which people are writing, listening, speaking, looking in a dictionary, talking collaboratively, etc. After the story has been completed, ask learners to circle the ways they like to study English, compare with each other, and even create a consensus list of advice that you can use to inform your lesson planning.

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

*

At the end of a class period, ask learners to comment on the various activities in which they participated. They can do this by voting yes or no on whether a specific activity was helpful, or by rating it. Use pictures, symbols, recognizable words or phrases, and refer back to concrete 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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Holt, G. (1995). *Teaching Low-level Adult ESL Learners*. Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education.

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Wrigley, H. & Guth, G. (1990). *Bringing Literacy to Life: Issues and Options in Adult ESL Literacy*. San Mateo, CA: Aguirre International.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Handout 5

Learner Profiles

The following profiles represent low-level ESL literacy students at one of the ESL programs in Pennsylvania.

LEARNER PROFILE 1

Manuel is a 41-year old man from Puerto Rico who has been in the United States for 16 years. He went to school for two years, but his attendance was pretty irregular. After his grandmother, who took care of him, died, he quit school and went to work on the family farm. As a result, he never learned how to read and write in Spanish, and he now relies on others, especially his brother to do it for him.

After his arrival in United States, he worked for various companies as a manual worker. He is able to communicate and understand spoken English in his daily activities.

Manuel has been attending ESL classes for five months. He is starting to read and write in English (and Spanish). He finds reading and writing very difficult.

He has very specific goals for improving his literacy skills in English, namely to help his children with their schoolwork, as well as communicating with his doctor about medical problems.

LEARNER PROFILE 2

Tho is from Vietnam. He is 28 years old, and has been is the United States since 1995. He never attended school in Vietnam, because he was not allowed to – his father is American. He taught himself how to read and write a little Vietnamese.

Since his arrival to the United States he has worked in many different places and has learned English quickly.

Tho is reasonably fluent in spoken English, although he has never attended an English class. He has been an ESL student for a few weeks and he is just starting to learn the written form of words he knows orally.

LEARNER PROFILE 3

Teblese has lived in the United States for 17 years since arriving from Eritrea at the age of 21. She reached the fourth grade, but fled Eritrea for the Sudan because of the war with Ethiopia. She reads easily in her own language, but writes with difficulty.

Teblese can communicate in everyday situations in English. She can read English and has a good knowledge of sight words, but cannot write sentences by herself. She has been studying ESL for five months, and would like to be able to help her children with their homework.

LEARNER PROFILE 4

Hayat is a 34-year old Iraqi woman who has lived in the United States for two years. In Iraq she attended school for twelve years, but had to stop because of the war with Iran. She reads and writes in Arabic fluently. In the United States, she works in a day care center.

Hayat speaks English quite fluently. She has a good knowledge of sight words, as well as beginning to have some ability in sounding out words. She finds reading easier than writing.

She has been studying English for six months. She would like to read the newspaper, help her children with homework, get a driver's license, and eventually get a better job.

LEARNER PROFILE 5

Jose is a 33-year old Mexican man who has lived in the United States for fourteen years. He reached sixth grade in a one-room schoolhouse in Mexico, but his educational experience was confusing because of the many students at different levels. He has difficulty in reading and writing in Spanish.

Jose struggles with reading and writing in English and is beginning to read sight words. He understands a fair amount of what is said to him, and can communicate reasonably well in everyday life situations.

He was doing construction work, but quit in order to focus on learning English. He wishes to improve his English in order to have a better life. For example, he has been offered foreman positions, but cannot accept because he cannot read.

Handout 6

Assignment

1. Build up a profile of one or more of your students based on the list of criteria provided below. Feel free to add other information you consider relevant.

    *   Literacy in L1
    *   Country of origin
    *   Age
    *   Years of formal education in L1
    *   Length of time in the United States
    *   Job in the United States
    *   Goals
    *   Proficiency in spoken English
    *   Current level of reading skills in English

2. Comment on how your teaching methods relate to this profile of student needs.

Handout 7

Informal Feedback

The moment I felt most engaged during this session was …

The moment I felt least engaged during this session was …

To make this session better in the future …

Handout 8

Session Two Discussion Questions

PART A

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each of these models?

2. Which model do you think you bring to your teaching practice of reading? Why?

3. Is there a model that you think you should pay more attention to when teaching reading to adult ESL students? Why?

PART B

1. Was it easy to indicate which model seemed the most like your own? Explain.

2. For those of you who reconsidered your model, can you explain why?

PART C

1. In your opinion, is the development of all the reading skills discussed here equally important? Explain your point of view.

2. Which of the reading skills do you consider the most important? Why?

3. Which reading skills are you currently teaching to your students?

4. What activities do you use to build specific reading skills? How do you select these activities? How do they relate to your broad objectives? Give reasons for your choices.

Handout 9

Session Three Discussion Questions

PART A

1. How many of your students come from the part of the world that uses logographic systems? What is their first language?

2. How many of your students come from the part of the world that uses syllabic writing systems? What is their first language?

3. How many of your students come from the part of the world that uses alphabetic writing systems? What is their first language?

PART B

1. Do you agree that the knowledge stored in the knowledge base as a source for reading is different for each L1 writing system?

2. Do you agree that different writing systems cause students develop different low-level reading strategies when they are learning to read in L1?

3. Do you agree that these processing strategies transfer from L1 to L2?

PART C

1. How does this low-level strategy facilitate the development of reading skills in English?

2. How does this low-level strategy interfere with the development of reading skills in English?

3. What strategies would you use to help readers of particular scripts to learn how to read in English?

PART D

1. What transfer of low-level processing strategies might you expect to find in low-level literacy students you are currently teaching? Would you consider it to be facilitation or interference?

2. How would the knowledge/understanding of different writing systems assist you in setting the appropriate objectives for teaching reading to your low-level ESL literacy students?

Handout 10

a guide to writing systems

Alphabetic writing systems

Alphabetic writing systems come in two varieties:

1. **Abjads** (consonant alphabets)
2. **Alphabets** (phonemic alphabets)

Abjads

Abjads, or consonant alphabets, represent consonants only, or consonants plus some vowels. Full vowel indication (vocalisation) can be added, usually by means of diacritics, but this is not common. Most of abjads, with the exception of Divehi hakura and Ugaritic, are written from right to left.

Some scripts, such as Arabic, are used both as an abjad and as an alphabet.

Dhives akuru
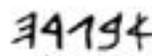
Aramaic
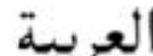
Arabic
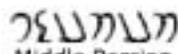
Middle Persian
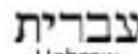
Hebrew
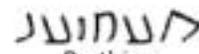
Parthian

Nabataean

Sabaean

Psalter
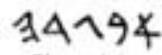
Phoneician

Syriac
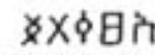
South Arabian
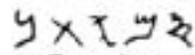
Samaritan
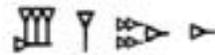
Ugaritic
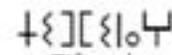
Tifinagh

Alphabets

Alphabets, or phonemic alphabets, represent consonants and vowels.

Armenian
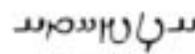
Avestan
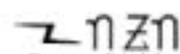
Bassa (Vah)
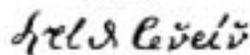
Beitha Kukju

Coptic

Cyrillic

iHᴍᴠꙅᴛᴠ
Elbasan

A813ᴲㄋ
Etruscan

PdBΓW
Fraser

ႱႱႵჂႠႠႱჂႱႭႦჂ
Georgian (Asomtavruli)

ჩუხიცჷ-ცუცური
Georgian (Nuskha-khucuri)

მხედრული
Georgian (Mkhedruli)

ⷩⷬⷡⷶⷈⷮ
Glagolitic

ᒪⵇΨⰊℜ
Gothic

Ελληνικά
Greek

ᐱꟼⰏꙘИ
Hungarian Runes

ɪntəˈnæʃənˈl fəˈnɛtɪk ˈælfɑˌbɛt
International Phonetic
Alphabet (IPA)

한국어
Korean

abcdefg
Latin/Roman

Manchu   Mongolian

ᒡᴧᑕᕽ
N'Ko

ВꙄⰎКНⰓ
Old Church Slavonic

··—//··—·⟋
Ogham

ᴎꐹ>ᴙƎꓭ
Old Italic

Ꙁⱷᴦⱴ
Old Permic (Abur)

>ᐱ𝐀>ᴪ
Orkhon (Turkic runes)

Υꓶꓕ"
Pollard Miao

ꓜᴨꝑꓞꓥ<
Runic

ꙮꝒ ᙠᒿᑌᒿꙮ
Santali (Ol Cemet')

ꝅꝹ꓾ꝵ꓾ꝵꝵꝵ
Somali

ᦅᦸᦰᦎ ᦵᦷ ᦵᦋ
Tai Lue

Thaana

Please note: transcriptions in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) are used extensively throughout this website. The IPA transcriptions are the letters and other symbols which appear in square bracketts, like this [b], [p]. etc.

You can learn which sounds are represented by these letters and symbols at:
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http://www.unil.ch/ling/phon/index.html (Français)

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Syllabic writing systems

- Syllabic alphabets
- Syllabaries

Syllabic alphabets

Syllabic alphabets, or alphasyllabaries, consist of symbols for consonants and vowels. The consonants each have an inherent vowel which can be changed to another vowel or muted by means of diacritics. Vowels can also be written with separate letters when they occur at the beginning of a word or on their own.

When two or more consonants occur together, special conjunct symbols are often used which add the essential parts of first letter or letters in the sequence to the final letter.
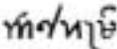
Ahom

Balinese

Batak

বাংলা
Bengali

Brahmi

Buhid

Burmese
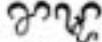
Cham

Dehong (Tai Nua)

देवनागरी
Devanāgarī

ગુજરાતી
Gujarāti
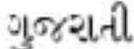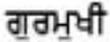
ਗੁਰਮੁਖੀ
Gurmukhi (Punjabi)
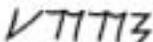
Hanunoo

Hmong
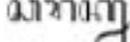
Javanese

ಕನ್ನಡ
Kannada

Kharosthi

ភាសាខ្មែរ
Khmer
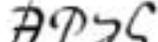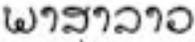
ພາສາລາວ
Lao
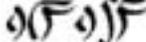
Lepcha (Róng-Ríng)

Limbu
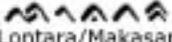
Lontara/Makasar

മലയാളം
Malayalam

Modi

Old Persian Cuneiform

ଓଡ଼ିଆ
Oriya

Phags-pa

Ranjana

Redjang (Kaganga)

සිංහල
Sinhala

Sorang Sompeng

Soyombo

Syloti Nagri

Tagalog

Tagbanwa

Tai Dam

Tamil

Telugu

ภาษาไทย
Thai

Tibetan

Tocharian

Varang Kshiti

Syllabaries

Syllabaries consist of separate symbols for each syllable of a language.

Carrier (Dakelh)

Celtiberian

GWY
Cherokee (Tsalagi)

Cree (Nêhiyaw)

Cypriot

Ethiopic

ひらがな
Hiragana (Japanese)

Iberian

Inuktitut

カタカナ
Katakana (Japanese)

Kpelle

Ndjuká

Ojibwe (Anishinaabe)

Vai

Yi (Lolo)

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Logographic writing systems

The fundamental difference between logographic writing systems and other scripts is that in addition to representing sounds, each logographic or logosyllabic symbol also means something. As a result, logographic writing systems generally contain a large number of symbols: anything from several hundred to tens of thousands. In fact there is no theoretical upper limit to the number of symbols in some logographic scripts, such as Chinese.

Logographic scripts may include the following types of symbol:

- **Logograms** - symbols which represent parts of words or whole words. Some logograms resemble the things they represent and are somethimes known as pictograms or pictographs.

- **Ideograms** - symbols which graphically represent abstract ideas.

- **Semantic-phonetic compounds** - symbols which include a semantic element, which represents or hints at the meaning of the symbol, and a phonetic element, which denotes or hints at the pronunciation.

- Sometimes symbols are used for their phonetic value alone, without regard for their meaning.

Ancient Egyptian

中文
Chinese (Zho¯ngwén)

字喃
Vietnamese (Ch?-nôm)

夏
Jurchen
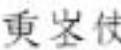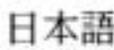
日本語
Japanese (Nihongo)
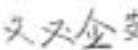
Khitan
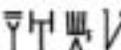
Linear B

Mayan
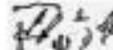
Naxi

Tangut (Xi¯xia/Hsi-hsia)

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Other types of script
Alphabetic, Syllabic, Logographic, Undeciphered, Alternative, A-Z index

Handout 11

Venn Diagram

Handout 12

Session Four Discussion Questions

PART A

1. What are the values/limitations of teaching phonics to adult ESL students with little or no formal education in L1?

2. What are your thoughts about the opinion that phonics instruction is a) useless, b) pointless, c) a waste of time, and d) boring?

3. Can we expect our low literacy ESL students to unconsciously acquire certain phonics strategies (for example, phonic generalizations, blending, or analogy to frames) or should these strategies be explicitly taught?

PART B

1. How is modern phonics instruction different from traditional approaches to phonics instruction?

2. Do you see the value of utilizing phonics instruction in teaching reading to adult ESL low-level literacy students? Explain.

3. Which phonics strategies are you currently using in teaching reading to your students? Why?

4. Which phonics strategies would you like to implement in your teaching practice? Why?

5. What are the benefits of instruction and practice in using analogy to frames?

PART C

1. What are characteristics of fluent readers?

2. What strategies can teachers use to develop these characteristics in their low-level ESL literacy students?

3. What are the challenges of learning to read for low-level ESL literacy students?

PART D

1. What activities were used to develop which characteristics of fluent readers?

2. What activities were used to address the needs of adult ESL students?

3. How was phonics instruction incorporated into the lesson plan? What phonic strategies were used?

4. Do you use any of these activities in your teaching practice?

5. In what ways could you adapt these activities to fit your own teaching? What would you do differently?

Handout 13

Phonics in Context: Using Grapho/Phonemic Cues in a Learner-Centered ESL Literacy Classroom

By Lynellyn Long & Marilyn Gillespie

INTRODUCTION

Within the field of reading, the debate continues between those who advocate teaching reading by emphasizing the relationships between letters and sounds - or phonics - and those who advocate the use of whole texts to stress reading as a meaning-making process. This module describes how phonics-related activities (or, to be more accurate, "grapho/phonemic cuing systems") can be usefully integrated into lessons built around social themes that have meaning to adult students.

BACKGROUND

Our experience has suggested that there is no single best approach to teaching reading. A learner-centered teacher employs a variety of reading and writing techniques, always keeping in mind the central concern that the content addressed in the classroom be meaningful to students. By meaningful, reading and writing needs to reflect both the immediate and larger concerns and literacy activities of the learners. Finding out what those concerns and activities are requires going into the learners' communities and actively watching, listening, and asking questions over an extended period of time. The teacher needs to be an applied ethnographer and he or she needs to ask the learners to be their own applied ethnographers as well. This understanding can then be blended with what we know about how reading is learned and how it can best be taught.

Over the past two or three decades researchers have learned a great deal about the process of learning to read by closely examining what effective readers do. Good readers, they found, construct meaning during the reading process, drawing on prior knowledge and experience to understand the text. Using what they already know (the context) they make predictions about what they will read, confirming them as they go along.

Readers use three kinds of language cues to predict meaning from text. They use "semantic cues" to predict a word that is meaningful in context and "syntactic cues" to predict a word that is grammatically acceptable. When they come to a word they cannot predict using these cues, they may then slow down to use "grapho/phonemic" cues to sound out the word. In fact, all these cuing systems work together virtually simultaneously during the process of making sense of text. According to a growing group of reading specialists, the issue of phonics has to do not so much with whether it should be taught, but when and how. They see phonics not as a "method" of reading in and of itself but one cuing system. It is usually more efficient (and less time consuming) to predict a word from the context, but, when that is not possible, some basic phonics knowledge can be invaluable. For this reason, many believe some basic symbol/sound relations should be taught, especially for single consonants, consonant digraphs (e.g., "ch" and "th"), and consonant clusters (e.g., "st" and "bl").

This understanding of reading provides yet another compelling rationale for learner-centered adult education. Reading (and writing) the kinds of whole texts adults use in their everyday lives provide adult students with chances to try out using all of the cuing systems together in ways that fragmented exercises cannot. What's more, materials that are of immediate interest and concern to learners will also be easier to read because they are predictable. Adults, for example, can use what they know about families to guess how the following sentence might be completed. "Juan is my son and Maria is my _____."

For many adult learners this way of seeing reading will be quite new. Many may come to the classroom with the belief that reading is sounding out words. It makes common sense that in order to read, they must first learn all the sounds of the letters and how to pronounce them. Phonics is the "missing key" and if they haven't learned to read before, they may believe that it is because they just haven't learned the "laws" of phonics. In many societies, the traditional way of teaching reading may have focused on memorizing religious texts, reading aloud, and decoding skills. Learners may also have been taught to read slowly and methodically, one word at a time, stopping themselves if they come to a word they don't know (but often losing the "sense" of what they read in the process). They may even believe its "cheating" to guess at a word they can't sound out.

Adult learners need special help to understand that reading is more than pronouncing words. One way to help them to begin this process is to ask students to discuss (possibly with an interpreter and/or in the native language) how people learn to read in their cultures. For example, do literacy activities traditionally take place on temple grounds through menomic chants? Are these activities individually or collectively accomplished? Who traditionally imparts this knowledge? Who is expected to learn to read and write? What happens when one learns to read and write? Students may then want to talk more about someone they know who is a good reader and what makes that person a good reader. A process for doing this is called the Burke Reading Interview (see Weaver, 1988).

Another way to increase students' awareness of language is to help them to brainstorm reading strategies, clues people use to help them figure out the meaning of words. Teachers can help learners to explore how they already employ strategies such as using what they know about a topic to predict a word; relying on illustrations, photos, and titles; using what they have already read to guess what comes next; using the words around the word that don't know to make guesses; and using analogies or "rhyming words" to make guesses.

Students can also be helped to get phonics "know how" both directly and indirectly. With guided observation, learners can internalize many correspondences and patterns well enough to apply them. Teachers can discuss some of the prominent sound features in texts students are reading. They may want to begin with consonants for which there is a single sound, followed by consonant blends. Generally, beginning sounds are taught first and then ending sounds. Many reading specialists believe that it is less useful to teach vowels sounds, although frequently consonant-vowel-consonant clusters, consonant-vowel or consonant-vowel-consonant-silent "e" clusters will be introduced. Especially with vowel patterns, researchers have found that there are too many exceptions for the teaching of particular "rules" to be useful. Some specialists claim explicit teaching of all but a few rules is not necessary since most new readers will unconsciously induce the common patterns given plenty of opportunities to read environmental print and predictable materials and to write using invented spelling. Using rhymes, songs and stories in which various sound elements are prominent is one way to develop the awareness of the system of letter/sound relationships.

Involving students in writing is another way. Teachers can comment on letter/sound relationships as they help students to write letters for words they want to represent. In helping students to take the risk of using invented spelling it may also be helpful to teach a short lesson on history of English.

Later on in the learning process, teachers can show students how many words in English are not phonetically regular and describe the many linguistic roots of common words (e.g., that "kn" as in "know," "knew," and "knee" come from __ our Danish roots, and "gnaw" and "gnat" come from our Greek roots). Learning about homophones (words that mean different things but sound the same like as "main" and "Maine") and homographs (words that sound different but have the same spelling, like "read" and "read" and "desert" and "desert") can also help illustrate the fact that the "magic key" of phonics may not unlock all the doors to reading.

As with so many other learning issues, the challenges of learning to read are compounded for ESL learners. Each of the cuing systems presents difficulties. Grapho/phonemic cues presuppose that the learner knows the sounds of the language to start with, something we as ESL literacy teachers know is not always the case. Not only must the initial consonants "r," "l," and "w" be taught, but students will often need to learn to discriminate between the three sounds. ESL saa learners may also find it harder to use syntactic or grammar-related cues when they don't understand the syntax of English sentences or semantic cues when they don't understand the meaning of the words in English. The ability to predict can only improve as the learners' second language proficiency improves. But this is all the more reason for learner-centered lessons around themes which have been found to have deep meaning to students. Not only do they engage their hearts and minds, but they provide a rich resource for predictable texts.

In what follows, we outline a process for both the teacher and the learners which is reflected in a lesson plan format. While one could take this lesson and try to use it, the actual content may or may not be relevant to your class and it is bound not to be relevant to at least some of the learners. The point in outlining a series of activities is to suggest a process, not an actual plan. The topic chosen, "parenting," reflects the concerns of many adult learners in various classes we have taught.

ESL LITERACY IN ACTION

A. Getting Things Started

Let's assume that you live and work in the community and/or one way or another have spent a lot of time there. You have spent some time doing applied ethnographic research and have been invited to visit various learners in their homes at various times of the day, see the places where they work, attend their religious and social activities, and join various community organizations. You have developed a rapport with the community and think that you are beginning to know the language and ways of its place.

In the course of your work, you notice that parents are complaining that their children are not well-behaved, that children do not have enough respect for their elders, and that the parents are at a loss to know how they can and should "discipline" their children. A recent incident - a social worker has charged parents who hit their teenage son with child abuse - has generated some debate and concern about "American ways." The learners in your class are worried. Some wonder if by following their customary practices of disciplining the child, they could be arrested for child abuse.

This is a loaded issue so you may not want to address the particular incident initially. The discussion which follows about "parenting" and the particular questions asked may seem simplistic, but by keeping the questions simple, it gives all involved the chance to decide how much they want to discuss, analyze and ultimately, address on this issue.

Before the class begins, you suggest that the theme for the next class could be "parents." You write the word on the board and people agree or have already agreed that it is a worthwhile topic. (Through translation, you have reached an understanding that the learners have the final say in the content of the topics to be addressed in class.) You then ask the class to bring in photographs of their own parents and their children, letters and documents they write for their children or children write on their behalf (e.g., notes to school), and any other written material related to parenting.

Within the context of previous lessons, students had become familiar with many of the initial consonant sounds. You had also used the Glass Word Analysis technique to help students to see patterns of initial consonant and vowel-consonant sounds. Most students can now use these grapho/phonemic cues to identify words with which they are unfamiliar, although, from writing samples, you had noticed that some learners have trouble distinguishing "b" from "d." Since the class knows for the most part the consonant and short vowel sounds, you decide to be ready to pull out consonant-vowel-consonant patterns from language they will create in the upcoming lesson. Using various resource materials, you come up with a list of words you expect can be used during the class: dad, mom, at, fat, cat, sat, got, tot, lot, not, pot, had, bad, sad, mad, lad, etc. Note that you will practice only two short vowels (and their phonetic variations) in this list. The "bad" and "dad" provide a chance to highlight the difference between "b" and "d" and left to right orientation.

B. Making Things Happen

You begin the class with a few questions and with the word "parent" written on the board. "Who are your parents?" "Do they live with you?" Ask learners to show their photographs and use the photographs to write a few descriptive phrases or sentences (e.g., "Tuy's mother and father in Vietnam").

After you have generated a good discussion and written material on their parents, you decide to ask about their parenting. "Are you a parent?" At this point, write the words "child" and "children" on the board. "Do you have any children?" Point to the word. "How many?" "One child?" "Three children?" Write the words "father" and "mother" on the board. Ask "What do mothers do for their children?" "What do mothers do?" At this point, you can begin to generate stories to illustrate their photographs and discussions. Given the concerns and interests of the class, the discussion may lead to issues of children and discipline, i.e., "Can parents hit children?" The discussion could deepen by shifting into the learners' first languages (here the teacher would need to speak the first language(s) and/or involve an interpreter).

You can help the discussion themes move from oral to written expression by recording stories the learners recount and by summarizing the main points of the discussion in writing. You need to ensure that the writing remains in context and is comprehensible to the learners so that they can practice reading what they have written at home. One way of doing this is to write captions for photographs or drawings. You may also want to summarize in a chart format, like this:

Parents

Our Parents   Us

Father/ Mother   Father/Mother

Live

Work

Do with children

Such charts provide cues for learners to decode the written language later. The phrases within the charts can be illustrated, and a narrative can be developed from the chart. You may want to have students copy the narrative so it can be used for further reading practice.

As you move from discussion to writing, you can work on introducing some of the words that you want to practice. For example, when introducing "Father" and "Mother," you can also write "Dad" and "Mom" and let the "" '"3" learners decode these words themselves. When discussing issues of discipline, you can introduce words such as "bad," "sad," "had," and "mad," and again have the learners decode these words independently based on their prior knowledge of the sound system. (If you add the word "glad" you will probably need to assist them with the initial blend.)

You can then follow up with some recognition games. For example, the learners with flash cards of the various letters can form their own words from the given patterns [again using a Glass Word Analysis Technique]. They can also take turns dictating different words from a list of three possibilities (e.g., one learner dictates "bad" and the learners choose the word from a list of three words - dad, bad, and bid). The purpose of such games is to practice the left to right orientation and to distinguish "b" from "d". In addition, the learners are gaining the experience in certain word patterns which will enable them to read and write these patterns independently.

Next, ask the learners to share the written materials they have brought about being parents (e.g., children's books, notices from school, letters, forms, etc.). Discuss what literacy strategies they use to negotiate writing and reading of these materials. "Who reads this book?" "Who answers this letter?" Help them to expand their repertoire by analyzing a form to determine which parts they may now be able to decode and answer. Point out where "parents" or "children" is located on several forms, for example, and the visual clues that suggest such questions (e.g., a list for children). If time allows, learners can also work together on other activities such as drafting a simple note to a teacher explaining that their "child is sick."

C. Winding Down

For homework and/or to review the material, you can prepare a list of questions about their narratives which allow students to practice both the word patterns and the language generated from their narratives. (You should use question words that have already been introduced and read the questions over with orally with the learners.) They can also dictate their own questions from the narratives.

During the course of the lesson, make copies of their work so you can analyze it in developing the patterns, structures, and themes for the next lesson. Finish the class with a brief discussion of subsequent topics and materials. For example, if from the discussion, issues about "children and school" emerged, that could be a theme for a later lesson.

COMMENTS

A. Assessment and Evaluation

As teachers, we use learners' writing samples to assess which themes and patterns need to be developed. The more experience we gain in both the learners' own contexts for reading and writing and with their particular linguistic systems, the g», more effectively we can be in analyzing their progress. We need to keep a vision of what it means to be an independent reader and writer and gradually move learners towards increasing levels of independence. Through this process, learners begin introducing more of their own questions and assist the teacher by being ethnographers themselves.

As teachers, we have also found that the introduction of relevant themes is also an interactive process. As in any learning process, themes emerge and re- emerge, often acquiring increasing levels of complexity. This spiralling process is an integral part of learning. Each theme will have several elaborations and increasing literacy content.

In addition to analyzing learners' texts, it is also useful to use miscue analysis techniques. In miscue analysis learners are asked to read a passage aloud while the teacher notes the kinds of errors they make. This can then be used to as diagnose areas where further instruction is needed (see Weaver, 1988).

B. Resources

The following texts helped us in preparing this unit and may be useful to you in learning more about reading and the role of phonics and in planning your own lessons:

Celce-Murcia, M. (Ed.) (1991). *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language.* Second Edition. New York, NY: Newbury House.

Intended as a basic introduction to the profession of teaching English to speakers of other languages, this text contains several useful articles devoted to the teaching of reading in ESL. *In Teaching Children to Read in a Second Language*, Barbara Hawkins describes recent research on how second language learners become readers. The article overviews special considerations in the use of phonics and whole language approaches for ESL learners.

The Center for the Expansion of Language and Thinking (CELT) Crisis Hotline, (602) 929-0929, 325 E. Southern Avenue, Tempe, Arizona 85282.

Call this free hotline to obtain copies of short fact sheets on issues related to the use of phonics and whole language, the meaning of literacy, and issues in evaluation of students. Although most topics directed toward educators and parents of school-aged children, the same issues can be applied to working with adults.

Gillespie, M. (1989). *Many Literacies: Training Modules for Adult Beginning Readers and Tutors*. Center for International Education, 283 Hills House S., University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003.

The reading chapter describes a series of short activities to use with small groups ll of adult students, including activities to help students examine their own reading j§ history, discuss their beliefs about what good readers and leam about reading strategies. There is also a description of the language experience approach and tips for deriving word recognition activities from student-written texts.

Long, L. and Spiegel-Podnecky, J. (1988). *In Print: Beginning Literacy Through Cultural Awareness*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

In Print is written especially for adult ESL students who are just beginning to learn to read and write. Each chapter is organized around a theme which reflects the lives and experiences of adult learners. In addition to a series of critical questions around the theme and the introduction of sight words, integrated into HBB each lesson is a "Listen" section in which the learner works on phonics skills and "Analyze" section in which focuses on structural analysis skills such as how to put syllables, prefixes, and suffixes together to form words. The Teacher's Guide describes the rationale for each activity.

Traub, N. & Bloom, F. (1983). *Recipe for Reading*. Cambridge, MA: Educators, Publishing Service, Inc.

This traditional phonic texts provides a basic sequence of phonics activities and examples which can be used by teachers to design their own lessons. It also describes a series of phonics-related activities such as sound cards, word games, and sequence charts.

Weaver, C. (1988). *Reading Process and Practice: From Sociolinguistics to Whole Language*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books.

This comprehensive text was designed to help teachers better understand the theory and practice of the reading process. It is an excellent resource for a general description of contrasting models of the reading process, including whole language and phonics-based approaches and for details on language cues, reading strategies and miscue analysis. Although the book is addressed to those who teach children, the basic principles also apply to instruction of adults.

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Handout 14

The Language Experience Approach and Adult Learners

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by Marcia Taylor, JobLink 2000

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

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

FEATURES OF THE LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE APPROACH

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

* Materials are learner-generated.

* All communication skills--reading, writing, listening, and speaking--are integrated.

* Difficulty of vocabulary and grammar are determined by the learners own language use.

* Learning and teaching are personalized, communicative, creative.

LEA WITH ESL LEARNERS

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

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

TWO VARIATIONS OF LEA

The Personal Experience

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

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

The Group Experience

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

With beginning learners, teachers can

* have students copy the story themselves;

* have students match words with pictures or definitions;

* delete every nth word (4th, 5th, 6th, etc.) to create a cloze exercise. Have the students fill in the blanks either with or without the assistance of a word bank, depending on their literacy level;

* select words from the story for vocabulary, spelling, or sound-symbol correspondence activities;

* use the texts to review a grammar point, such as sequence of tenses, word order, or pronoun referents;

* dictate the story for learners to write;

* write the sentences in scrambled order and have students rewrite them, restoring the correct sequence;

* scramble key words and have students unscramble them.

More advanced learners can

- * use the group-produced text as the basis for individually written texts about the same topic, about a similar experience, or as a critique of this experience. Then they might read each others' texts;

- * revise and edit the texts and prepare them for publication;

- * read other texts related to the topic;

- * generate comprehension questions for classmates to answer;

- * write other types of texts--songs, poems, letters (for example, a letter to the editor), or directions for how to do something.

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

CONCLUSION

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

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Handout 15

Examples of meaning-based approaches to teaching ESL and literacy

There are a number of meaning-based approaches that can be used effectively in the ESL literacy classroom. While some were developed by linguists focusing on second language acquisition (the communicative approach and the natural approach), others were developed by educators concerned about literacy development in general (whole language, language experience, the participatory approach). The ethnographic approach was developed out of collaborations between anthropologists, linguists, and educators.

Each approach tends to emphasize some dimensions of literacy while de-emphasizing others, and thus may be more appropriate for some programs than for others. The seven approaches outlined are (1) the functional approach (2) the natural approach, (3) the communicative approach, (4) the whole language(5) the language experience approach, (6) the participatory approach and (7) the ethnographic approach.

FUNCTIONAL APPROACH

The functional approach as developed in the United States was designed to teach the life skills needed in everyday life and at the workplace. Teaching units and learner outcomes are often expressed in the forms of competencies. Functional skills to be taught often derive from a needs analysis in a particular domain (workplace, for example) that outlines the contexts in which language and literacy are needed. Functional skills are outlined and prioritized for each context and appropriate instructional strategies are developed.

The approach is most common in programs that focus on workplace literacy or life skills and works well when students want to focus on everyday survival skills such as reading a bus schedule, writing a check, or filling out an official form. As a rule, this approach focuses on "coping skills" and tends to neglect the expressive and creative functions of literacy. As used in most programs, it tends to shy away from controversial social issues, such as lack of affordable housing discrimination, or poor working conditions.

NATURAL APPROACH

The natural approach, popular in ESL classrooms in California and elsewhere tries to teach languages and literacy the "natural way," that is, in a way that parallels the way young children learn their first language. Developed for students who speak little or no English, the approach stresses listening before speaking and reading before writing. Students who are new to English are believed to need a "silent period" in which they focus on listening before they speak and reading before they write.

Instruction is highly structured and follows a linear sequence, moving from non- verbal communication to single words, then to two and three word combinations, and, finally, on to sentences. The approach stresses communication but does not specify what kind of language or literacy is to be taught. Teachers try to provide a supportive environment so that learners won't fear making mistakes, and errors is not explicitly corrected as learners speak. Based on the principles of language acquisition popularized by Krashen, the approach was developed in reaction to the traditional grammar-based model of ESL teaching.

The natural approach works well for students and teachers who prefer a meaning- based approach that is clearly sequenced. As originally developed, it de-emphasizes the socio-cultural and political dimensions of literacy, focusing instead on language as a tool for general, all-purpose communication. Aspects of the functional, communicative, and natural approach are found in chapter 9 of this handbook in the curriculum modules by Maria Malagamba-Roddy, Nancy Hampson, Gail Weinstein-Shr, and Laima Maria Schnell.

COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

The communicative approach, as developed in Europe, focuses on the socio-cultural aspects of language use and teaches students what to say, to whom, and under which circumstances. This approach places a special emphasis on cultural and linguistic appropriateness. Teaching units are presented as "notions" and "functions." Notions explain how abstract concepts, such as time, distance, and quantity, are expressed. Functions explain expression of communicative intent in ways that are appropriate for a given culture.

Examples of functions include apologizing (e.g., for being late or drinking the last beer), complaining (e.g., about slow service or bad weather), requesting (e.g., that one's teenage son turn down the music or that neighbors control their dog), and contradicting (e.g., the boss who maintains no overtime was worked or the spouse who claims that all housework is women's work). Popular in many beginning ESL classrooms, the communicative approach integrates socio-cultural norms with the vocabulary and language forms used to express ideas between native speakers.

This approach works well when students want to compare cultures and understand "how things are done" in English. Similar to its U.S. counterpart, the functional approach, the communicative approach tends to neglect literacy for self-expression and often ignores the creative and cognitive functions of literacy.

WHOLE LANGUAGE APPROACH

The whole language approach, based on research in psycho- and socio-linguistics, also supports a natural way of learning language and literacy, but it does not support the idea of a linear sequence from listening to speaking and from reading to writing. Learners may be encouraged to speak right away, using a combination between the native language and whatever English words or phrases they may have "picked up." Learners may "write" before they read, composing stories orally and putting down approximations of print that they later "translate" back to the teacher or to the group. Whole language teachers do not move from words to phrases to sentences but provide a variety of oral and written messages and then watch carefully to see which students might need additional support and which students would benefit from greater challenges. The basic tenet of

whole language is that language must be taught and learned as a whole. Any attempt to break it into parts (vocabulary lists, phonics patterns, grammar exercises) destroys the spirit of language. A second principle holds that the four language modes - speaking, writing, listening, and reading - support each other and must not be artificially separated.

A beginning whole language class may listen to a song in English and give it a title based on the feeling expressed in the music or create a giant birthday card for a classmate expressing wishes through "invented spelling." Another class may explore themes, such as "people migrating to different places," "countries gaining independence," "families helping each other," or "the history of work in our community." Learners talk about ideas and concepts related to these themes, collect pictures and symbols, make timelines, tell their personal histories, and interview friends and family members to get their views. Information is collected, discussed, analyzed, categorized, and then put into book form (pages H stapled together with illustrated cover pages) to be shared with others. (See the curriculum modules in chapter 9 by Ana Huerta-Macias, Pat Rigg, and Janet Isserlis for other examples of using aspects of whole language.)

The whole language approach focuses on the social and cognitive aspects of language, giving learners the opportunity to talk, read, and write together, and discuss their own way of learning (often in conferences with the teacher). A highly reflective approach, whole language uses demonstrations and group interactions to explore how people use language and literacy to express thoughts and interpret ideas, in the process building "language awareness."10 Carefully planned, whole language activities often focus on particular strategies for reading and writing (brainstorming, predicting, and connecting one's personal experience to the experience of others) while providing learners with many options of what they want to read and write.

The approach works well with learners who want to develop a broad foundation for literacy. Teachers and learners who prefer "direct teaching" may initially find it difficult to fully implement all aspects of the whole language approach.

LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE APPROACH

The language experience approach (LEA), developed in part as a reaction to phonics-based reading, uses the language of the learner as a basis for literacy development. Although developed before the whole language movement, it is now often regarded as part of whole language. Since it lacks a strong theoretical foundation and learning philosophy, it is regarded by many as a method or technique and not a full-fledged approach.

As a rule, the language experience approach follows this process: learners discuss an experience or describe an event (either individually or as a group). The story the learners generate is transcribed by either a teacher, an aide, a volunteer, or a literate student. The "scribe" then reads the story together with those who have composed it. These learner-generated texts are then used as a basis for discussion, further reading and writing, and, where appropriate, focused language development activities.

In an ESL literacy classroom, an LEA story may derive from a common experience or an event (e.g., a Cinco de Mayo celebration, Chinese New Year, or an earthquake), from photographs that capture a feeling, or from videotapes and dramatizations of learner experiences. As a group, learners discuss ideas and later dictate the story to the teacher who negotiates with the students as to how the sentences are written down ("How do we want to start? What should the first sentence be?"). As a rule, the teacher writes down only sentences generated by the students and does not correct the grammar, since the point is not to write correct English sentences but rather to build an awareness that "whatever can be said can be written down." The process continues until learners end their story.

Next the teacher might read the story as dictated and then ask the group to read the story along with her several times. Learners will discuss the details of the story. Then, encouraged by the teacher ("Is there anything that is not quite clear? Where would you like to make changes?"), the group revises the text and reads the new version either orally or silently and alone or in pairs. Rereading increases the learners' speed, enabling beginning readers to practice fluent, efficient reading. If learners have a strong background in oral English, they may go on to suggest editing changes (fixing the grammar, correcting misspellings, etc.). Depending on the focus of the class, learners might spend some time on focused language and literacy activities, such as cloze exercises, putting paragraphs in sequence, or making flash cards for "favorite words."

To move the LEA stories beyond the personal, the group might relate their story to the experiences of others. The group might listen to a song or a jazz chant read a simple poem, look at photographs, watch a video, and then compare experiences. This approach works especially well with students who are new to print but can express their ideas in oral English. LEA lacks the strong theoretical foundation of whole language and thus cannot be implemented across all program components." (The curriculum modules by Gail Weinstein-Shr and Janet Isserlis illustrate aspects of the Language Experience Approach.)

PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

The participatory approach, originally developed by Paolo Freire in Brazil emphasizes shared decision-making and seeks to examine issues critical to learners' lives. The participatory approach focuses on problem posing and communal problem solving with the goal of developing the skills and strategies necessary to participate in a new culture and effectively confront problems Unlike the functional approach, where life skills are taught for individual competence, a Freirean approach emphasizes collective knowledge.

In a classroom using the participatory approach, the group may discuss themes that have a strong emotional content for the learners, such as the changing relationships between teenagers and their immigrant parents. Learners may respond to a picture, story, or dialogue that illustrates that theme, then discuss the differences in parent/child relationships in the home culture and in the United States, and talk about reasons for these differences. Learners then might describe their concerns about raising children in this country and discuss ways in which the community can support strong family relationships. As appropriate, the teacher might integrate language development activities with these discussions (See the curriculum modules by Ana Huerta-Macias, Celestino Cotto Medina and Deidre Freeman, and Maria Malagamba-Roddy.)

Many programs that use the participatory approach include phonics to show students how words and word families are related. The class chooses a "key word" that has strong meaning for the group and, after discussing the concepts that underlie this word, breaks it into syllables. These syllables are then used to "generate" new words. (See the curriculum modules by Peggy Dean and Lynellyn Long & Marilyn Gillespie.) While this method has been used successfully with Romance languages, such as Portuguese, Spanish, and Creole, it is less effective with Germanic-based languages, such as English, where basic words (house, food, school, children) are not easily generated out of common syllables.

This approach works best with groups who share the characteristics of the people that Freire worked with: learners who share a common language and culture, and teachers and learners who both share concerns for fairness and justice and are willing to work toward social change. The approach is less effective with groups of learners who do not share the same language and who are not prepared to discuss social or political issues in English.

ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH

The ethnographic approach draws its ideas from anthropology, education, and socio-lingui sties. It is designed to develop linguistic and cultural awareness of the uses and functions of literacy in the society, particular communities, special settings, and in the learners' lives. When used in conjunction with a participatory approach, it often explores the power structures that validate or invalidate certain forms of literacy (e.g., standard English has greater prestige than non-standard variations). The approach is often used by teachers to find out more about the "literacy practices" of their students. Some teachers also use ethnographic strategies to explore how their non-literate, non-English speaking students negotiate meaning in a print rich, English speaking environment.

In some classrooms, students learn to observe and investigate how English is used in their homes, at work, at the doctor's office, and in other places. For example, a workplace literacy group may decide to investigate what people do and say when a problem arises, such as someone's being late or a supervisor's accusing a worker of making a mistake. The group would then investigate (1) what kind of problems commonly occur at their work sites, (2) who is involved, (3) the language used to introduce and explain the problem, (4) why such problems occur in the first place, and (5) possible strategies for resolving such problems.

The ethnographic approach emphasizes the socio-cultural dimensions of literacy and is often part of both the communicative and the participatory approach. This approach works well with teachers and students who are interested in exploring cross-cultural issues or patterns of communication. It is also an excellent starting point for needs assessment and curriculum development. It is less effective in classrooms where learners come from different communities and do not yet have the oral language skills required to explore the social dimensions of language in English. (For examples, see the modules by Celestino Medina and Deidre Freeman, Ana Huerta-Macias, and Maria Malagamba-Roddy.)

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

In addition to these major approaches, there is a number of effective literacy practices that innovative teachers are using in their classrooms. These include dialogue journals, project work, using learner-generated materials (by their own students as well as by others), cooperative learning activities, field trips, and neighborhood surveys. For examples of some of these practices, see "Tips for Teachers" at the end of this chapter and the promising practices in other parts of this handbook.

Whether an approach is used exclusively or in combination with others, successful literacy events in the classroom share some common characteristics. They provide opportunities for learners to

- interact with print in a meaningful way, using "whole" texts and not just isolated words and letters, and allow learners to explore the various dimensions of literacy

- engage in wide variety of literacy experiences through a broad range of reading and writing experiences that include not only functional materials but literature and "visual texts" as well

- use listening, speaking, reading, and writing throughout the program and examine the roles language and literacy play in their lives and in their community (in English as well as in the native language)

- negotiate meaning in interactions with others and discuss the strategies they use in reading and writing

- participate in making decisions about their own learning, including decisions about program structure, curriculum content, and learner/teacher interactions • explore language and literacy in its many forms and gain a sense of the role that literacy can play in their lives and in the larger communities in which they participate

CHOOSING APPROACHES

Exploring program goals, the nature of their communities, and the needs and interests of their students will help programs decide which approach might work best. Such explorations can also show whether a program is better served by implementing one particular approach or combining aspects of several meaning- based approaches. The discussion outlined here is designed to facilitate this decision making process.

USING ONE APPROACH

Some programs support the "strong form" of an approach, implementing the philosophy that the approach is based on across various program components (needs assessment, curriculum, teaching, and evaluation) and adhering to the principles the approach spells out in all aspects of the program. Thus, a program adhering to a participatory approach may involve learners in decision-making throughout the program while a whole language program may use only holistic assessment and teaching in its program. Choosing one approach and adhering to its principles often strengthens a program and brings staff and teachers together through a common philosophy. Such a program, however, is only effective if the goals and assumptions of the chosen approach are continuously examined to ensure that the approach continues to meet the needs of the students.

COMBINING APPROACHES

Since it is difficult to implement a new literacy approach across all program components, most literacy programs have chosen to implement an "eclectic approach" instead. In these programs, teachers pick and choose from various approaches combining aspects of one with features of another. Eclecticism of this kind carries some dangers:

- there may be lack of consistency from day to day within a class as well as across the program

- an ad-hoc approach to teaching may place greater emphasis on what to do on Monday morning than on consistent literacy development

- assessment may become fragmented since each approach might require a different assessment strategy.

A FRAMEWORK FOR ADULT ESL LITERACY

In an effort to minimize the shortcomings of the eclectic approach and to benefit from its flexibility, some innovative programs have developed a literacy framework that links various approaches through a common understanding of what the program is all about. Elements of a framework for ESL literacy " include:

- an educational philosophy that outlines the pedagogical principles a program holds dear and the social goals it supports

- a set of literacy definitions that explain the assumptions the program makes about the nature of language, literacy, and learning

- the dimensions of literacy that the program wants to emphasize as it tries to be responsive to the needs of learners

- a curriculum focus that spells out whether the program has a general focus or whether it wants to limit literacy to specific contexts (e.g., community literacy or workplace literacy)

- a perspective on biliteracy that examines the program's stance on using the native language of the learners in its literacy education

- assumptions about learner participation that discuss the role that learners play in the program regarding decision making, curriculum development, classroom interactions between teachers and learners, and assessment

- assumptions about teacher participation that discuss the role that teachers and staff play in the program in respect to decision making, curriculum development, classroom interactions between teachers and learners, and assessment.

A literacy framework of this kind forms the basis of a well-articulated literacy education program that can bring together various approaches in a coherent fashion.

Handout 16

Session Five Discussion Questions

PART A

1. What is ESL literacy instruction?

PART B

1. What common characteristics do most of these approaches share?

2. How do they differ?

PART C

1. What are your thoughts on implementing any of these approaches to your teaching practice?

2. What factors do you need to take into account before implementing any of these approaches?

3. Which approach might work best with your students? Why?

PART D

1. Considering all the pros and cons, is it better to implement one particular approach or combine aspects of various approaches?

2. What can be the basis for bringing together various approaches in a coherent fashion?

Handout 17

Signup sheet

Name	Article	Promising Practice

Handout 18

Promising practices

The following are examples of promising practices used in innovative programs to build a community of learners among those who are just "awakening to literacy" and those who are well on their way to becoming independent readers and writers. These examples come from experienced teachers whom we have talked to or read about. These promising practices are meant to illustrate what has worked for some teachers and may serve to inspire other teachers of multilevel classes to create their own.

INFORMAL ASSESSMENT AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH CLASS

More than anything else, teachers learn from observing and listening to learners as they read and write. Innovative teachers often open each class with an activity that brings the class together and allows the teacher to see who is making progress and who needs special help. One example of an opening activity is social chat," a dialogue between teacher and students before class. For the beginning student, this social chat may consist mainly of listening but the intermediate and advanced students may decide to both listen and speak The teacher takes mental notes on who speaks up and who needs further encouragement and then designs appropriate activities for each group.

At the Lao Family Literacy program in St. Paul, for example, the teacher often asks learners about the previous night. As learners talk, she finds out about the aunt who had to go to the hospital, the children who had fallen ill, and the young men who played soccer in the park. She responds to each learner in either English or Hmong (or both) and asks follow-up questions. In this way, she not only finds out who is getting better at English and who still prefers the native language, she also gets a good sense of the accomplishments as well as the worries and concerns of the group. This teacher has also developed a daily log for her group in which she documents the "anecdotal evidence" gleaned from these talks. Documenting accomplishments and concerns allows her to adapt her lessons to the needs of the different groups in her class.

PICTURES DO THE TALKING

Pictures and other visuals work very well in multilevel classes because they have two important benefits.

1. Pictures present an important avenue to reading and writing for those who may still struggle with literacy.
2. Pictures offer a challenge for those who can read and write a little.

Strip stories, for example, in which a series of pictures tell a story, give learners the idea of a narrative before print is introduced. Those who are new to English and literacy may talk about the story in their mother tongue before offering ideas in English. Once texts are introduced, the accompanying pictures allow beginning readers to look ahead and predict what the text might say while stronger readers can focus on the printed page.

Asking students to comment on a Freirean "code"10 or problem represented in pictures, movies, collages, or songs, works in a similar manner. The code can be discussed in small groups in the mother tongue and ideas can then be shared in English. Learners for whom English is still difficult can give one word answers while those more fluent can provide greater details. The challenge for the teacher then becomes to respond to either group in authentic ways such as commenting on meaning, responding to affect, and encouraging learners to link the code to their own lives. (See also the curriculum module by Maria Malagamba-Roddy.)

STORYTELLING

Storytelling and associated approaches such as language experience allow learners to use the language that they know, controlling the vocabulary and structures that hey use. Storytelling also gives beginning learners the opportunity to present themselves as individuals who have ideas, charm, and a sense of humor who will not be Judged solely as being "limited" in their skills. Storytelling may include a, sharing folk stones, myths, personal experiences, or thoughts of what might be happening in a picture. It can also include simulations that involve role plays such as your teenage daughter wants to stay out past midnight with her friends' what do you tell her?"

Storytelling can also close the culture gap as learners from one culture come to see commonalities with students from cultures that appear vastly different The Refugee Women's Alliance program in Seattle, for example, gives refugee women from around the world the opportunity to share personal experiences as well as folk tales through a Storytelling curriculum. A facilitator or teacher encourages the women to explore cultural events (weddings, births, funerals) and then helps them to discover common themes among accounts from different cultures.

SKILL SHARING THROUGH PEER TEACHING

Pair activities that match learners with different types of knowledge can be used sharing- Activities which learners can showcase their strengths and effectively teach each other have two significant advantages—they help learners to share what they know and allow them to benefit from someone else's experience. In the multilevel classroom, such activities can link the sharing of a non-linguistic skill (e.g., administering home first aid) with literacy activities. Working in pairs, one student may talk about a particular procedure while another writes down each step. The roles can be reversed as well, so that obliterate students act as interviewers using a tape recorder, illustrations, or their own system for remembering information to report information back to the class.

There are many variations of this approach. Workplace literacy programs often ask workers to share their knowledge about tools. In an ESL literacy program in San Diego, learners who have been in the class longest act as a "welcoming commitee for new students, orienting them to classroom routines (See the curriculum module by Nancy Hampson.)

Pair activities that encourage learners to share skills, knowledge, and information are also effective in multilevel classes with learners from different countries In one activity one learner acts as the interviewer and scribe for an important event such as the first day of school. The other learner acts as the "cultural informant describing the event. At KEEP in Arlington, Virginia, skills sharing sometimes takes place in front of the computer where a learner with keyboarding skills inputs a story for a non-literate student.

LEARNERS GENERATE THEIR OWN MATERIALS

Stories written by other students can bring learners together around the shared opportunities of reading, talking, and writing about personal experiences. While the stories are read aloud, non-readers can listen, new readers can follow along, and proficient readers can volunteer and take turns giving a voice to the author. In the discussions that follow, non-writers can contribute ideas and share their own hopes, sorrows, and dreams. Learner-generated stories often have the ring of authenticity and the strong sense of voice that "textbook stories" lack. Using learner-generated themes as a basis for discussion and literacy development also helps beginners to see that their ideas count as much as the ideas of those who are more proficient,

LEARNERS MAKE THEIR OWN DECISIONS

Group or pair activities that allow learners to decide who should carry out what sag tasks help them decide for themselves the roles they want to play. At El Barrio Popular Education Program in New York, learners take pictures in the community and label what they see. As students strike out in pairs, they decide who should gag be the picture taker and who should be the recorder, changing roles as appropriate.

At REEP, for example, learners are asked to interview someone in the class to find out more about their preferences in foods, movies, weekend activities, etc. Kg Interviewer roles are not assigned. As the activity gets under way, the "bolder" students naturally take the lead, moving across the room and engaging others in conversation. Many times, the "initiators" of the interview then coach their partners on how to ask questions and help them record their answers. Workplace programs often use interview grids to find out more about the range of jobs that people have had in the past or the various skills required in their present jobs. Family literacy programs often have parents interview each other about their children and use the information to find out more about their experiences with schools.

Interview strategies can also be used in "contact assignments" that ask learners to interview family members or acquaintances. Since the interview is private, learners may choose the language they prefer and take down notes in any mode they like (mentally or in their own code). Since no one will see their notes, learners need not be embarrassed about using invented spelling or incomplete sentences. As the semester progresses, these interview notes can turn into biographies where learners can express their knowledge of the person through a variety of media, including drawings, photographs, songs, poems, or stories.

READING AND WRITING FOR AN AUDIENCE

Setting up a message board can also help all learners get involved in the social aspect of literacy. The teacher can start by leaving a message for one or two people in the group, and individual learners can leave messages for each other. They must recognize that in order to get a message, they may need to leave a message first. Messages can be in any form and can include secret notes, announcements, birthday greetings, or "for sale" signs. Like dialogue journals, message centers show learners that language and literacy exchanges are ongoing and that reading leads to writing, which may in turn lead to action.

REEP has set up a "gallery" in the hallway where student work is displayed. These include photographs captioned by students, proverbs from different cultures, poems, and collages produced by students. The gallery also includes a large sheet with a message or a question to which passing students are encouraged to write a response. Other students, in turn, either respond to the original message or to what previous students have written.

BILINGUAL COMMUNICATION HELPS UNDERSTANDING

In programs where the teacher speaks the language of the students, learners sometimes switch between using English and the mother tongue. Not being constrained by their limited English, students can freely express their ideas and opinions while learning English. David Spener tells of an activity called "inquietudes" in which students ask (in Spanish) about English expressions or words they did not understand. The teacher or the group then provides explanations in English or Spanish. In some programs, learners spend part of class discussing ideas or problems in their mother tongue and then select a spokesperson to report the results to the larger group in English.

COMPUTERS FACILITATE WRITING

Learners who have a difficult time with the mechanics of literacy can be greatly helped by computers. Stories that they have dictated or painstakingly written can be word processed and printed out, resulting in a "professional look" that can compete with papers written by more proficient students. Stories can be printed in large type for students who have difficulty with small print. In addition, learners can suggest changes to their stories that can be easily made on the computer, saving hours of time rewriting. Templates of different kinds of notes or letters can be stored on the computer, serving as examples for students who would like to see what "professionals" have written under similar circumstances.

El Barrio has examples of letters written to authorities in a computer file. Learners can call up these letters on the computer and get a sense of what an official greeting or closing might look like. The Lao Family Literacy program in St. Paul has examples of notes from parents to teachers on the computer. These notes have blank spaces that the parent then fills in by hand with the name of the teacher and the child.

Handout 19

Focus on Teaching: Seven Easy Pieces
by Shirley Brod

WRITING ACTIVITIES FOR BEGINNING ESOL LEARNERS

It is often difficult to develop writing activities that beginning learners can handle. The suggestions below are very simple, but give students increasing confidence that they can, after all, write on their own. I hope the activities will trigger ideas that you and your learners will enjoy.

Since beginning-level English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) students run the gamut, you will want to pick the activities appropriate for your students. The easiest, which focus on pencil holding and letter formation, come first.

1. Vanishing Letters: Using words that learners will face frequently, write the complete word. Then write the word with one letter missing, replaced by a blank that learners fill in. Keep adding blanks until learners are writing (and spelling) the entire word on their own.

    NAME

    _AME

    _A_E

    _A_ _

    _ _ _ _

2. Document Literacy (Form Language): All our learners have to fill out forms, whether they are ready to or not. Instead of subtracting letters, add items, one at a time, beginning with NAME (first, middle initial, last), which learners always want to learn first. In another lesson, when you have taught the meaning of address, give them a new form that repeats NAME and adds ADDRESS. Continue this simple spiraling until they can complete a simple form with their own personal identification items.

3. Labeling Pictures: This activity works well with a picture dictionary, such as the Oxford Picture Dictionary from Oxford University Press. After your learners have worked with new vocabulary, such as parts of the body, have them transfer what they've learned. Give them a new and different picture, with blanks beside targeted body parts, and have them copy the appropriate words from the picture dictionary, or from a labeled work sheet you have provided. This is a good starting place for learning how to use a dictionary, and the completed page provides each learner with a vocabulary list to keep for review.

4. Dictation Pairs: Give your learners practice in speaking and listening, reading and writing, and asking for/giving clarification through paired dictation. Make a worksheet that can be folded in half vertically, so each student sees only one side of the page. One side is for Student A; the other, for Student B. The top of A's sheet has the items that A is to dictate to B. The bottom of A's sheet has blank lines for words B will dictate to A. B's page is the reverse. When you model the exercise, be sure to model ways to ask for clarification: Please speak slowly. Please repeat. When both students have dictated and written, they spread the page out and check their work. Learners can be introduced to this activity very early on, using such simple items as numbers, letters of the alphabet, times, dates, or simple words they spell to each other.

Student A	/	Student B
SAY.	/	WRITE.
1. 3:00	/	1. _____
2. 5:45	/	2. _____

5. Lists: Take learners a step forward by providing an opportunity for them to choose their own items. The simplest way to do this is with lists.

    a. Shopping lists — Learners write a list of things they want to buy. Then the class can take a field trip to a store where they locate the items and their prices, or learners can do this as an outside activity. If food items are used, they can locate them on an aisle directory.

    b. Family lists — After studying family vocabulary, learners make a list with the names of members of their families, including their ages and relationship to the writer. If they add telephone numbers, this can be their emergency contact information.

    c. 'Who am I?' lists — Learners list all the naming words they know that refer to their identity: wife, student, mother, refugee, female, daughter, Mexican, etc. A reader can read the lists while the class tries to guess the identity of the writers.

6. Scaffolded Writing: A satisfying first prose writing assignment can be an extended fill-in-the-blanks activity. Perhaps learners want to write notes for their children when they have been absent from school. Learners copy a basic note, filling in blanks for the date, child's name, and the reason for the absence, and sign their names. They select items from a word bank, or ask you for additional items if needed. The final product is a complete handwritten letter. Thank you notes are another good choice, and are especially motivational if they are actually mailed.

7. Tiny Books: Individual Composition: This activity is an outgrowth of a show-and-tell class. Students bring a favorite object to class and tell the other learners about it. My learners used photographs, hand-crafted items, ethnic costumes, musical instruments, and even special foods. You take notes as learners talk, and provide a simple story that each learner copies into a tiny book

    (3"x 5") with construction paper covers and several lined pages, adding a signature. Here is an actual example: "Nyoua's Picture."

    My husband took the picture at my home. This picture is from 1984. I went to a party for Hmong people's New Year. My dress was White Hmong. I wore a black dress and a green sash. I wore a Hmong "sao" or necklace. My hat was red, white, and black. This was a happy day.

Type the stories, one to a page, and have each learner sign his or her story. If they wish, they can draw the item on their page. Combine the stories in a booklet and give each learner a copy. These booklets can form the basis for individual reading practice.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Handout 20

How I Wish I Was Taught to Write
by Thanh Bui

A teacher draws on her experience as an ESOL learner to craft a writing curriculum for beginning ESOL students that meets their academic and social needs

You ask me how I learned to write when I first came to this country. I didn't learn very well. After one year of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) in Shreveport, LA, I had to take English 101. My first composition came back red from all the corrections the teacher had marked. The second one came back unmarked, with just one word on it: "Awkward." I didn't know what awkward meant, so I decided to become a plant in my class so as not to attract too much attention. I also gave up my confidence in writing, something I thought I had done very well before coming to this country as a refugee of war.

During my years of teaching beginning ESOL, I incessantly asked myself how I learned to write. Please don't think that I'm boasting here. The truth is I still don't think I can write. As a teacher, I stay focused on the basics. I divide my school year into roughly ten thematic writing projects. Here are some examples from my writing curriculum.

SEPTEMBER

September is the time for "My name is," "I am from," or "I was born in." During this month, we do drills on everything from the colors (of hair, skin, eyes, clothes) to the American measurement system, using pounds and ounces to reveal sometimes not so desirable information like our weight. The second week, we start our first journal writing assignment using the parallel writing approach. I write and say aloud each word on the board; the students follow the movement of my hand. Many of my students haven't had much formal education in their own languages, so I try to write only when they can see the actual action of writing, be it on the board or on paper. This gets them accustomed to what writing looks like.

We start with a topic such as "The most special person in my family is my mother." The following day, the topic changes to "The most special special person in my family is… because he/she is very good to me." The students replace my words with their own. They learn to write a few words of their own every day, and feel a great sense of achievement. I've learned that it's easier for students to write about matters of the heart than about the economy of a country. Also, when my students write about a subject they know, it gives them a sense of worthiness, a balance to the sense of having no family, no money, and no future. I also make sure that the language I use is simple enough so that most of them can understand it without having to translate, and that is a boost to their confidence. I have them continue to write about the same person, and they begin to anticipate: at school every day they will write more about that special person so dear to their hearts. On Friday, we look back at our week's writing, compile the sentences, and add "I like/love him because… ." Unbeknownst to them, my students have just written an essay.

OCTOBER

October is the time of changes: in personal development, in the surroundings. For most of the students, it's an exciting month. Leaves change their colors. The temperature drops. They find themselves wearing big, thick jackets, and are tickled with the idea that they are new people, "Americanized." Our topics this month are differences, descriptive language, and simile. We study about different shades of colors, different weathers, and different feelings. We learn comparative words. I bring in various leaves, give each student one, have them examine their leaves, and write on the board "My leaf is... ." The students describe their leaves in the simplest way, using shapes, colors, and textures. Over the course of the week, we expand our leaf activity into simile with, for example, "My leaf is round like a ..., and it's green like a ... ." Towards the end of the month, we make a trip to the Old Dutch Church, just two blocks away, to learn about Washington Irving's Legend of Sleepy Hollow. After the trip, we brainstorm about what we've learned, using the mind webbing technique. I draw on the board a circle with the title in it, and a few rays around it. I ask some students to volunteer to come up to write their words about the story. I make sure not to draw too many rays so as not to intimidate them, because this is often the first time they are writing on the board, and it can be either a chance to get greatly humiliated in public, or a chance to be proud. Most times, the rest of the class volunteers to add more rays and words to the circle. Then we sequence the words, and the students dictate the story to me to write on the board, using their vocabulary words. At the end, the more advanced students copy this and type it up. We put all the students' names at the bottom of our story, and I show them how to initial their names. To some students, initialing is a godly action, similar to signing their names. I explain that in this country, once established, they will encounter initialing as a way to identify themselves.

For a Halloween activity, I bring in a small pumpkin for each student to carve. Year after year, they never fail to show amazement as well as excitement at taking part in this American custom. I have had a few cases where the students do not want to cut up the pumpkins for fear of wasting such good food. For a writing activity, I ask the students to describe their pumpkins, then to state what or who they think their pumpkins look like. This leads us into the simple form of metaphor that we learn along with simile. I help the students type up their work, paste it on their pumpkins, and display them in the hallway. To prevent apprehension, I make sure that the students know that their work is perfect because they are exposing themselves to the larger public this time.

NOVEMBER

November is the month of self-examination. We learn about thankfulness. Our topics are about the things and people for which we are grateful. I provide the beginning of a sentence: "The thing I appreciate most in life is....," and ask the students to include in their writing the five W's (who, what, when, where, why) and the H (how). Starting the second week, I introduce them to the story of Thanksgiving. We discuss the vocabulary, the history, the culture, and the people. Then I give them a thought-provoking question to write about each day. For example, "How would you feel if you were a mother with sick children on the Mayflower?" Or "What would you do if you were a Native American gathering wood and found white men setting up camp near your home?" We talk about our reactions to different circumstances. The following week, I put all the topics on the board and we categorize them according to time sequences. As you can see, I insert writing techniques such as categorizing or sequencing without making it into a separate lesson, which could reduce a learning experience to the most confusing time for beginning ESOL students.

I ask the students to volunteer to act out a scene for each topic, and I record what they say and type it into a script. Again, unknowingly, my students are writing their first play, which they will act in. We take turns acting every day until everyone feels comfortable and natural. Then I propose that we use this as our class presentation for the school's Thanksgiving celebration. Their first reaction is often negative, but their pride has always won. And by the last Thursday of November, I'm the proudest teacher on earth.

DECEMBER

December is the make it or break it month for most students. Either their enthusiasm, or their allocated budgets, or their visas, or everything is running out. Then there is also the sense of bewilderment. They feel cold, sad, and without futures. To build self-confidence, we teach each other. Topics are invariably about how to do something they know well, for instance, cook a family recipe. We learn about conversion from metric to US measuring systems, about kitchen verbs, and American kitchen appliances. Then we collectively write a recipe book, grouping together students of the same country as much as possible. The students, through this activity, always realize that they are much alike.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

We continue to write in this fashion, through thought- and feeling-provoking questions, throughout the year. Here are some other activities I do with my beginning ESOL class.

At the beginning of the year, to introduce the students to the alphabet and also to break the ice, I group students in fours or fives. I give each group an adjective that they've learned that week, and ask them to use body language to write it. The words should be short enough so not to discourage them from getting up and forming them with their bodies.

After the lesson on past tense, I bring in animal-shaped Beanie Babies. Each student picks a Beanie, and writes about that animal "In my former life I was a... and I lived in... ."

To practice the conditional, "If I am..., I will...," each student retells a folktale from his or her country. Then they convert it into a modern version. They end their writing with advice to their characters, again using the conditional tense "If I meet him, I will tell him... ."

On a snowy day, I bring in a bucketful of snow, have the students touch it, feel it, and then we write a cinquain about it. Cinquain, a five-line stanza, is a form of poetry that I find easily applicable to beginning ESOL writing. Step by step, I ask them to give one noun to name the object, two adjectives to describe it, three progressive verbs to state what it does, four words in a sentence to say what they think about it, and one new word to name the subject again.

On Earth Day in April, we listen to Louis Armstrong's "What a Wonderful World." I provide the lyrics with blanks for them to fill in. Blanked out words are colors, present tense verbs, or nouns, depending upon what I want to emphasize. Then we sing along with Louis.

To develop a vocabulary of feelings, I play the silent French film The Red Balloon, and have the students write down five feelings the main character must have felt, and five feelings they felt for the character. The assignment is "Have you ever felt that way and why?" I consciously slip in more advanced use of grammar and vocabulary without much fanfare so that the students don't get worried.

To do creative writing, I draw a red dot on the board and ask the students to write about it. I repeat this exercise a few times a year to measure their language growth. A beginning writer writes something like "I see a red dot." Later she might write, "I see a red sunset." A more skilled writer might write "it's a sunset over the horizon." I sometimes use meditative writing with my students. I have the students sit with their eyes closed and ask them to count their breaths while I read them a short story. Then I ask them to write one part that touched them most and to state what sensation they experienced. Lots of times, the students feel very funny in the beginning of the activity, but after a few minutes, they are really drawn into the meditation mood with its relaxing sensation.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The sole wish I have is to see my students pick up a piece of paper and a pencil to write unafraid. I forbid myself to let the three "y's" — philosophy, accuracy, and policy — interfere with my teaching. I ignore the philosophy that writing means the students will produce an acceptable essay-like composition. I leave that to my advanced ESOL colleagues. I also ignore the rules of accuracy. I try not to correct their work; rather, I show them my interest in their writing and in what they have to say. For I know that if I focus on mechanics, I will reduce them to just the capital letter at the beginning of the sentence and the period at the end. Lastly (and discreetly), I pretend to forget the curriculum policy. How can I apply the Department of Labor's Scan Skills with my students where they don't even have enough basic skills to survive? All I want is to help them develop a sense of self worth and pride about being in this country. All I want is for writing to become an enjoyment that they can do while struggling against sadness, loneliness, homesickness, and, at times, despair.

Toward the end of the year, I recognize lots of change in my students. They tackle critical or analytical topics, in their own limited English. I can see that they have grown, and that this growth has taken root in their unconscious.

I think that if my students learn with me, it's not because I can teach any better than other teachers, but because they feel that I can relate to them and understand their difficulties. I understand the fear of revealing one's ignorance. In June, my students have gained enough confidence to go out and get a job. They may be dishwashers, seamstresses, housekeepers, or gardeners. The jobs don't require Scans Skills as much as they demand a lot of understanding about oneself and the work environment. And I imagine that from time to time, during break, my students pick up paper and pencil to write cinquains about...their bosses.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Thanh Bui is short for Bui Thi Nguyet Thanh. Born in Vietnam, she came to the United States in 1975 as a refugee at the age of 19. Her first job in ESOL was as an after-school big sister, helping Southeast Asian high school kids with homework. She was one of the first ESOL teachers for the Caddo Parish School Board in Shreveport, LA, and helped developed the program's curriculum. She has taught English for the Berlitz School in Lausanne, Switzerland, and started the Berlitz for Kids Program in Europe. She has been teaching mainly lower ESOL levels with Southern Westchester BOCES, New York, since 1990.

Handout 21

Less Teaching and More Learning
by Susan Gaer

Turning from traditional methods to project-based instruction, the author found that her students learned more

I was a traditional teacher using a grammar-based curriculum along with dialogues and drills to teach English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) to immigrant populations when I arrived at the Visalia Adult School in central California in 1989. There I found a population of Southeast Asian Lao, Hmong, Mien, and Lahu refugees who had been in beginning-level ESOL classes since their arrival in the United States in the early 1980s. Most of the instructors were using the type of instruction I did; it was not working with the group at all. The students seemed resistant and had little confidence in their ability to learn English.

Reading all I could on different types of learning, I came across Elsa Auerbach's work. In her book Making Meaning, Making Change, she describes ways to help students develop language skills while conducting a meaningful project. I was intrigued about the possibilities of using a project-based curriculum and decided to try it. I described some projects from Making Meaning, Making Change to my students, explaining that I would like them to do something similar. They agreed to give it a try. In searching for a topic, we talked about the concerns they had that their children were losing their cultures. The students wanted to do something about this. We decided they could write down recipes they knew from Southeast Asia, recipes that were, until then, passed orally from cook to cook. Students brought ingredients to school, learned the terms for how to measure them, then made the food. We wrote down the recipes as the food was prepared and compiled them into a cookbook. This project helped my students develop a sense of community and an interest in attempting a more complicated project.

Although, in theory, students should choose projects themselves, in lower level ESOL classes, students quite often do not have the language or confidence to develop project themes. I listen to my students to identify underlying issues that are meaningful to them. To get things about what will engage them, I pay attention to what they read, write, and say about their lives, their families, and their jobs. I have found that, in the beginning, sometimes even with more advanced ESOL students, I choose the project, but as time goes on, the choice of project shifts to them.

FOLKTALES

Following the cookbook effort, I wanted another project that would put the students in the role of expert. Most of the students had minimal reading and writing skills but very strong oral traditions. At the time, I was working with a family literacy program as a volunteer. The program focused a lot on storytelling. I realized that the students could be experts and pass on some of their culture by telling the Lao, Hmong Mien, and Lahu folktales that they had learned as children.

The original idea was to have the students practice the folktales and then tell them to elementary or pre-school children. Looking for information on how American folktales are told, I went to the district librarian. She informed me that the eighth grade curriculum had a unit on folk tales and suggested that I team up with a class at the middle school to develop a joint project. I contacted the appropriate teacher, who was enthusiastic. Together we defined the project: my students would tell folktales from their countries to the middle school students. The middle

school students would write them down and illustrate them and we would try to get them published. My language objectives for the class were to have students tell a sequenced story using pictures as a storyboard that would be understandable to the eighth graders. My students would read what the middle school students had written and critique it for accuracy.

A HMONG FOLKTALE

Once upon a time in Laos there lived two people who were very much in love. Their names were Tongni and Saemi. The young sixteen-year-old couple wanted desperately to get married. The only thing standing in the way of the couple's happiness was Tongni's parents' strong disapproval of Saemi. Tongni's parents refused to let their beloved son marry her because she was from a Hmong clan different from their own.

Tongni's love for Saemi was so great that he died of a broken heart. He could not accept the fact that he would never be able to marry his true love, unless his parents changed their minds about her. Saemi sang mournful songs expressing her feelings about how she had no place to go and how she didn't know what to do now that she must live without her only true love. After Tongni was buried, Saemi went to see him. She couldn't see him while he was being buried because in the Hmong custom, it is wrong for the women to see the burial. For seven days Saemi took rice, chicken, and pies to Tongni's house. At his house, Saemi cried and called frantically for him to wake up. She did this six times and still he did not wake up. But the seventh time she called him, Tongni rose from the dead and Saemi was overwhelmed with joy.

The couple went to Tongni's house and begged his parents' approval of their marriage. They reminded his parents that Saemi had proved faithful to Tongni by waking him up. His parents were pleased that their son was finally getting married. At Tongni and Saemi's joyful wedding, they received beautiful new clothes and had a lot of fun. The wedding was very festive with many joyful people. Tongni and Saemi rejoiced their life together and lived happily ever after.

- told by Hmong students at the Visalia Adult School and written by students at Green Acres Middle School in Visalia, CA

When I first approached my students with this project they were not sure it would be possible, concerned that their language skills were not good enough. If I thought it would work, however, they wanted to do it. They wanted to get these folktales written in English for their children and grandchildren. They knew that their oral traditions were dying and this would be a way to preserve some of their culture.

The district librarian came to class and, telling tales such as The Three Little Pigs and Cinderella, showed the students the various ways that folktales could be told using puppets, visuals, body language, and role play. This was foreign to my students. Their storytelling customs included very little use of body language and no visuals. To engage eighth graders, however, I suspected they would need something in addition to their oral skills. We decided on using visuals to supplement the storytelling.

After the librarian's visit, the eighth grade class hosted a get together so they could get to know my students. The middle school students were fascinated by my students' childhoods. They were particularly intrigued by the early age of marriage in the Hmong, Lahu, Lao, and Mien communities. While only a handful of my students had shown up for this activity, all who attended seemed to have a wonderful time.

When we next met in the classroom, a discussion developed among the students. I did not take part. After it was over, those who were not at the party apologized for being absent, admitting they did not come for fear of being ridiculed by middle school students, who were the same age as their children. They had heard about how well the party had gone and about how interested these children were in their lives and cultures. They asked me to schedule another meeting, promising to attend. This is, indeed, what happened. Not only did every one of my students come, they brought some of their family members as well.

MEANINGFUL LANGUAGE

Once the two classes had met, the real work began. I divided my students into language groups: Lahu, Lao, Hmong, Mien. Each group chose a folktale to tell. Then they had to find pictures to go with story. This required research in a local library looking for appropriate pictures. My students prepared storyboards visuals depicting the story and practiced telling their stories. They practiced in class and with other classes. They practiced and practiced and practiced. This is when I first started seeing meaningful language development grow out of project-based instruction. Usually when I asked my students to practice a language structure, they do so for only a few minutes. With this activity, I asked them to stop and they begged me to let them continue. They really wanted to do their best in front of those eighth graders. In addition to practicing, I had borrowed many American folktales from the district library and read these on a regular basis with my class. At the same time, the middle school students were learning how to ask for clarification and what types of details make for a good written story, and studying the cultures of the students.

Finally, the day arrived. My students told their folktales to the middle school students, who recorded them on audio tape. Although the tales were never officially published, I label the project success. I believe that by practicing to present a folk tale, my students improved their oral skills; their presentations in English were the proof. In earlier ESOL classes, my students were trying to learn grammar and failed. This project allowed them to be in control, as they once were in their native countries. They had a successful interchange with native speakers of English. In addition, during this project, my students were content experts and the middle school students were learning from them. I believe this raised my students' self esteem. My students also expressed satisfaction in seeing a previously unwritten tale documented. The eighth graders seemed to get a lot out of this experience, as well. It was one of their first exposures to the Lao, Hmong, Mien, and Lahu cultures.

A NEW SETTING

Six years and many projects later, I joined the staff of Santa Ana College, School of Continuing Education, Centennial Education Center. Located in an urban setting, it has about 36,000 ESOL students, most of whom are Latino. Enamoured as I was with project-based education, I wanted to develop a project that would work here, with these students. Because Santa Ana had very structured curricula with set standards that had to be met, I started out by integrating small projects into the curriculum. Lower level students developed a photo essay about their families; upper level students wrote about their families and made class books.

I wanted to do something that would have a larger impact on the student body as a whole. In the spring, 1996, I interviewed students involved in student government about what they felt was lacking in the school. The consensus was that a student newspaper was needed. So, I decided to propose a class that would develop one. It was approved by the curriculum committee and my department by the end of summer, 1996. The class I created was called Computers and Writing. It began in the fall, 1997.

I advertised the class; about 12 students enrolled. Despite the late afternoon schedule, the 12 were there everyday. We formed an editorial committee and wrote a survey that we distributed to all students via their teachers. The survey was in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese so that everyone could respond. Survey questions listed topics that the newspaper could cover, such as art, sports, games, articles about the community, articles about school events, school calendar. Students checked the topics in which they were interested. We received about 500 responses, tallied them, and used the information to decide what features we would run in the first issue of our newspaper. We then issued a call for articles and got quite a few articles from students on all campuses of the college.

While the students were creating the issue, I spent a lot of time working with them on the skills needed to write articles, using the writing process approach. For example, in one issue, students interviewed our Dean. First, they wrote questions, next they interviewed her, taping the interview. Finally, they wrote the article. At each step of the way, I critiqued their work, helped them develop the articles, and worked on necessary grammar points related to their articles. We also studied the Los Angeles Times and learned about photo captions and headlines.

The first issue, in fall, 1997, was nine pages long. Although class met for only five hours a week, between work done at home and in class, the students worked on the paper for about 12 hours a week. When we were close to finishing the first issue, we stayed long hours into the night. I was surprised that the editorial group was willing to do this. We published the paper by Thanksgiving and, after a publishing party of sparkling apple cider and chips, we evaluated the process. Students in the class wanted to do more writing. We had received so many articles from other classes that few articles from the class were needed. We have gradually worked more class writing into the newspaper. Our administration was so pleased with the product that they provided a newspaper stand in which we could place copies of the newspaper. We have now published three issues of the newspaper and hope that this school year brings at least three more issues.

CRUCIAL ELEMENTS

Reflecting on my experiences using project-based instruction, I realize that a number of elements are crucial to success.

The project must be geared to the population. The folktale project would not have worked with my young urban Latino population. The newspaper would have been a disaster with my mostly non-literate Southeast Asians.

The students must see value in a project. The folktale project was developed to save oral stories from extinction. The cookbook project documented traditional recipes. The newspaper was a need identified by the students at the Centennial Education Center. If the project resonates with the students, then they will work to complete it.

Flexible timeliness are necessary. I have had the most success when projects can start and end within a four- to six-week time frame. This allows students a sense of completion and success. Although my newspaper project is a semester-long course, I try to get the students to produce a newspaper every six weeks.

n Although, in theory, students should choose projects themselves, in lower-level classes, students quite often do not have the language or confidence to develop project themes. I listen to my students OT identify underlying issues that are meaningful to them, I pay attention to what they read, write, and say about their lives, their families, and their jobs. I have found that, in the beginning, sometimes even with more advanced ESOL students, I choose the project, but as time goes on, the choice of project shifts to them.

STUDENT POETRY

Praying

by Maria Mendez

I can't find ease or calm for my soul

Where can I find them? Oh Lord.

My restless spirit doesn't find peace.

Surrounded by materialism, lust, sensuality,

Egoism, rivalry and all them set me aside from you

Where? Where can I find you? Oh Lord.

So much hate, so much violence, so much

noise, enough to silence your voice.

The world involves me, his arms catch me.

Oh, God, please console me.

Make me free; break all the ties

That joins me to this materialist and

vain world.

- Adapted from the student newsletter, Centennial News, vol.1, Iss.3, June, 1998

With beginning level students, I need to take a fairly active role, providing examples of completed projects to encourage the students to produce their own. With more advanced classes, it is easier to get the class to develop a project that meets a need they have identified. In these situations, I take the role of a facilitator. Classes can do multiple projects if the class has multiple needs. In a multilevel class, learners can be grouped and a number of different projects can be run at the same time. If a class identifies a number of needs, they can also work in groups clustered around different needs.

I have found that, as I work through the first projects with new students, they are rather skeptical. But once they see the finished product, whether it is a cookbook, a newspaper, a performance, or something else, their skepticism evaporates. At my school, word of mouth has brought me classes ready to embark on a project.

CONCLUSION

Using a project-based approach has helped motivate students to learn language for a purpose. I have also found that this methodology promotes community among class members. In both the folktale and the newspaper projects, a developing sense of community helped foster the motivation needed to see the project to completion.

I have since started integrating mini-projects into all my general ESOL classes at the Centennial Education Center at Santa Ana. Projects that students choose to do are based on material in their textbook. For example, in my beginning class, we devote much time to learning how to talk about the family and daily life. The class produces a small book which includes stories about family, work, and weekend life. These types of projects require the students to use the material in a meaningful way. Projects need not be as extensive as the newspaper or folktale efforts.

I believe that using a project-based approach to language learning gives meaning to the learning that normally goes on in a classroom. I have taught a traditional teacher-centered classroom using a textbook and was always dismayed at how little language was learned. The instruction in project-based learning, at least the way I do it, is less direct than in a traditional class. Students develop language and literacy skills by working on a product that will exist beyond the classroom walls. This creates excitement and motivation that I have not seen in a traditional, text-based only class. In project-based learning, I do a lot less teaching and see a lot more learning in the classroom.

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Auerbach, E. (1992). *Making Meaning, Making Change*. McHenry, IL: Delta Systems and Center for Applied Linguistics.

Connect to the Project Web Site

I have developed a web page that lists a variety of projects that students can participate in or classes can replicate.

Click here to connect to project web page. If you are interested in adding a project to this page, contact Susan Gaer at: sgaer@earthlink.net.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Susan Gaer has taught English for speakers of other languages for the past 20 years. She is currently an assistant professor at Santa Ana College, Santa Ana, California. Besides project-based education , she is also interested in the integration of technology into the curriculum, and edits the CATESOL Newsletter Online Column. You can e-mail her at sgaer@earthlink.net.

Handout 22

What's Right Rather Than Wrong
by Rebecca Garland

USING JOURNALS TO TEACH WRITING AND TO BUILD SELF CONFIDENCE

I teach adult literacy at Dorcas Place, a community-based organization in Providence, RI. My class runs 20 hours per week and is comprised of approximately 15 women, ranging in age from 18 to 60 and including both native and non-native speakers of English. To be eligible for my class, a student must be on welfare, must be a parent, and must be reading and writing at around the fifth grade level. Many students bring to class a history of failure in the public school system and a resulting sense of inadequacy regarding their academic skills. They have difficulty recognizing their academic, and even personal, strengths.

I was concerned by this lack of confidence because I suspected that it might have a negative impact on my students' ability to learn. When working on goal-setting activities, many were unable to articulate what they were good at or even what they enjoyed doing. They looked at me blankly when I told them that the classroom was a place where we could all learn from each other. They assumed that since I was the teacher, my job was to tell them the answers, and their job was to listen. They accepted almost everything they read as truth, even articles that made sweeping negative generalizations about welfare mothers. Since learning occurs best when the students are actively engaged, I was concerned that their lack of confidence would result in passive attitudes that would hinder their progress.

How could I help my students recognize and celebrate the wealth of experience and knowledge they already possessed? How could I help them to use this knowledge base to become more actively engaged in their own learning? I thought that one entry point might be through the telling of their life stories. If I could help students to write about the details of their lives and to develop an appreciation for their own personal histories, perhaps they would begin to place a higher value on their own experiences. Most formal writing assignments brought on anxiety in my students. For this reason, I wanted to avoid essays or autobiographies. I was looking for a medium that would allow students to relax and let their stories flow naturally. I decided their journals would be an ideal place to begin this process.

For years, journal writing has been a daily ritual in my classroom, followed by a time of optional sharing. I usually write a guiding question on the board to elicit students' reactions to texts we have read or topics we have studied, or to help them relate what they are learning to their own lives. They write their responses in special books, knowing that no one will read them without their permission. Sometimes they choose to share with the class. Sometimes they give them to me to read and respond to. Other times they choose to keep private what they have written. The fact that students were already comfortable with this medium was one reason I decided to use the journals. Another reason was the personal nature of journal writing. By definition, I felt journals would be conducive to personal storytelling.

NEW FOCUS

I began by changing the focus of the guiding questions from what students were thinking presently to their past experiences. Before, questions had been geared toward eliciting writing about students' preferences, values, and goals. Now, I made them a place for students to explore their personal stories and the stories of their families. Every morning as the students came in I wrote a question on the board about some aspect of their lives. I asked for stories about their births and about their children's births. I asked them to write about how they got their names and how they chose names for their children. I asked them to write about a happy childhood memory, and a sad one. I asked them to write about family traditions and stories. I had them write 15 things that they remembered from their lives, short little details that came to them only when they were writing fast without thinking too much about it. I was hoping that by exploring their personal histories, students would begin to appreciate the richness of their lives and develop the confidence they needed to approach their studies in a more proactive way.

Three indicators would tell me that this new journal focus was indeed helping my students to become more self confident. First, I was hoping to see an increase in students' willingness to express their opinions about class content and structure. Second, I was looking for an increase in their ability to offer alternatives. Third, I was hoping to see an increase in students' willingness to lead the class, even teach each other. I wanted concrete evidence that students were beginning to take a leadership role in how the class was run and in the content of their learning. This would tell me that their confidence was indeed increasing.

SPELLING

The first hurdle to arise from these assignments was one I had expected and encountered many times previously: students' anxiety over spelling. When students first come to my class, I ask them to tell me the characteristics of a good piece of writing. They invariably respond by saying it must have everything correctly spelled, periods in the right place, and use proper grammar. They never mention content, the most important part of any good writing and the part where they could immediately excel. This class was no different. They told me they couldn't write because they couldn't spell. They were very anxious about writing and reluctant to put even one sentence on paper until they could spell it perfectly.

Years ago as a new teacher, I spent a lot of time trying to convince my students that spelling was relatively unimportant. I repeatedly told them not to worry about spelling or punctuation; they could go back later and fix that. Their ideas were precious and could not be retrieved once lost, so I emphasized the importance of getting their thoughts down first and to correct spelling and grammar later. I soon learned that I was wasting my breath. Even as I was telling them this, the erasers and the White-Out were appearing on their tables. They surreptitiously looked words up in the dictionary and tried to get the correct spelling from classmates and other staff members. They stopped in the middle of sentences and completely lost their trains of thought to get a word spelled right. They were obsessed with writing perfectly the first time, even though they knew that their journals could be private.

With this class, too, I realized that I needed to find creative ways to combine direct instruction in the mechanics of writing with an emphasis on the importance of content. I decided to try integrating lessons on spelling and grammar into the journal assignments. I first obtained permission from the students to share selected writings from their journals with the class. Then, I chose examples

from these entries to teach spelling and decoding sequentially, using the phonics-based Orton-Gillingham approach. For teaching other aspects of writing mechanics, such as punctuation, I used a combination of teacher-made worksheets, prepared materials from commercial textbooks, and journal entries. I retyped some of their entries, leaving out all the punctuation, and they had to fill in the missing parts. Finally, I experimented with teaching paragraph structure using a hand as a model and a metaphor. The thumb represented the main idea, the three middle fingers the supporting details, and the pinky the concluding sentence. After they became comfortable with this model, I required them to use it when they wrote in their journals. Teaching writing skills directly, while constantly referring back to the content in their journals, allowed students to practice their new skills within a context that was meaningful to them. They were happy because they were getting spelling and grammar instruction; I was happy because the materials used were their own.

PAINFUL TOPICS

A second difficulty that arose from these personal journal assignments surprised me, although in retrospect it was completely understandable. Some students found the topics painful. They told me that nothing good had happened in their lives. They said that writing about their lives made them remember hurtful things that they wanted to forget, and they didn't want to write about their pasts anymore.

Their negative comments disconcerted me. I thought the personal histories they were creating in their journals were wonderful. How could they not like them? Then I began to see their comments as a sign that they were beginning to take control of their learning. For the first time, they were openly critical of an assignment, one of the behaviors I was looking for. I reminded myself that, hard as it might be, the students were doing what I wanted them to do. And I needed to encourage them. So I responded by asking them what they would like to write about in their journals instead. This was hard for me because I liked what we were doing and I didn't want to stop the autobiographical journal writing. But I had wanted them to suggest alternatives and, uncomfortable as it was, I was prepared to accommodate them when they did.

A class discussion arose: people argued for and against continuing this type of journal writing. Many acknowledged that writing about the past could be painful. But they added that it could also help people come to terms with painful experiences. The result was that people agreed that we should continue, but they stipulated that nobody had to write if they didn't want to. There would always be the alternative journal suggestion: "Write me a letter. Tell me what's on your mind. I will write you back."

As time went by, the students became more comfortable with writing about their lives. When people voluntarily shared out loud, others found the courage to do so, too. They began to get ideas from each other. They seemed to enjoy most the stories about day to day events because the details were so much fun to listen to. What emerged were intimate snapshots of daily life, rich with detail. The results were so much better than I had expected. Some examples from different students are in the box on this page. These are the writings of people who told me they had nothing to say.

I kept telling them that their writing proved they had much to share, and I began to notice changes. First, their obsession with mechanics started to diminish. If they couldn't figure out how to spell a word, they did the best they could and kept going with a minimum of fuss. They began writing longer entries. And they shared what they had written much more willingly. As their confidence

increased, the students started acting differently in the classroom. People were getting to know each other through the journal sharing. The class was beginning to develop a real sense of community. And they began to take more of a leadership role in the classroom. They began to tell me the things they wanted to study and to insist that we take the time to study them.

One result that I had not foreseen was that they became fascinated with each others' cultures. They started by asking each other questions about their countries of origin. This curiosity led to the idea of holding "Culture Days" each Friday. On these days, each ethnic group in the class took turns sharing food, clothing, music, and other customs from their culture. Among other things, the class ate pastelles and other delicacies on Puerto Rican Day, watched a video of an African-American family reunion on Black Culture Day, modeled German clothes, and saw the wedding of one of my Cambodian students on video.

I also began to notice changes in students' behavior in their personal lives as well. One student got a restraining order against an aggressive partner. Another had herself and her children tested for learning disabilities. Two got their drivers' permits. Four applied for and got employment. Obviously, these changes cannot be attributed solely to the writing the students were doing. But I am certain that the writing was one important factor in a series of things that contributed to their beginning to appreciate themselves more fully and to have the confidence to make positive changes in their lives.

A SUCCESS

I consider the personalized journal writing experiment a success. The stories the students wrote provided a motivating context to teach writing mechanics as well as to increase student confidence. Students no longer argued when I asked them to take more of a leadership role in the class. There was a sense of increased pride in themselves and their cultural identities as they shared with each other aspects of their heritage. And the journals were valuable for their own sakes as well. The stories of the students' lives were wonderful pieces of their personal histories: treasures for them to share with their children. I gave them the assignment to write their autobiographies using the journal entries.

Did the use of the journals as a medium for personal exploration help students to make measurable academic gains? On standardized tests, students made the same grade level gains as students did in classes where I had focused journal writing on more generic topics and taught spelling and punctuation using commercial materials. So the journals were effective in helping students learn the mechanics of writing. In addition, the journals taught them something that my other journal approaches had not. They taught students to value their own history, and to communicate this history to others. My students grew in self confidence and self awareness, as demonstrated by their increased willingness to be more proactive in the classroom and in their lives. They learned to listen to and care for each other in a classroom community as the sharing led to increased understanding and empathy. I would encourage teachers to try some of these assignments as a way to shift students' attention away from what's wrong with them and to emphasize what's right.

WHY I LIKE WRITING IN MY JOURNAL

by Chhoeup Chhoeun

I never wrote in a journal before. At first I didn't like it because I don't feel like writing about my life in a journal. It is not a good life that I have. But when I started to write I felt comfortable. I wrote about my life the good and the bad. When I wrote in a journal I got a lot of things that I thought in my mind out of my head.

My teacher had me write about where my name came from. I came to the US from Cambodia when I was six. My sponsor to this country gave me the name. The name that I have is the same sound as my father's name. Before my sponsor named me when I was six, I don't know what they called me.

The teacher also asked us to write about my kids. I have three beautiful daughters. Also a memory from when I was young. It was when I met my first boyfriend and we went to the carnival and we walked around in a park. Also something funny that happened to me when I was young. When I threw a snowball at my brother and it hit him in the butt. Then I took him inside and tried to put him in the shower.

We wrote about 15 things we remember. I wrote I remember when I said goodbye to my dad in Philadelphia when I moved to Providence. When I wrote in my journal it helped me a lot because it was sad.

Also I wrote about my culture Cambodia. The way we dance and the way we dress. The way we go to the temple and then put powder on our faces on Cambodian New Years. I danced for the class at the Christmas party. I wish I could visit my country now to see what it looks like.

I like to write about my life because I can get some things out of my mind. It helped a lot because I could get some problems out. When I wrote in the journal, that's when I started to realize I need to make some changes in my life. Move on in my life. Now I'm living upstairs so I don't have trouble with my sister and brothers. I'm still having trouble with my boyfriend, but I have hope that things will change.

Now I write a lot in my journal when I have something in my mind. I write a lot of poetry.

I never wrote poetry before, but now I do.

SAMPLES FROM STUDENTS' JOURNALS

Write about when you were born. Where was your mother? What happened?

> *I was born on December 28, 1974. There was a Christmas party at one of my aunt house. Everybody was drinking.*

> *A fight broke out with two of my uncles. My mother try to get between them and one of them push her by mistake and she fell down the stairs and three days later she had me.*

> *I was born in Cambodia in the forest when the war start. When my mom was in labor a lion follow my mom. The lion watch my mom in labor. When I came out my mom want to throw me to the lion. That time she was carrying clothes and something else. She throw the clothes instead of me, but I have a feeling that the lion is close to me. Everywhere I go is like it watch me from somewhere. The lion look after my mom and me.*

Write about a funny thing that happened when you were a child.

One day I ask my sister for a needle. So when I got finished with the needle I put it in the arm of the chair so I forgot about it. When my sister came over she sat on the needle and jump up. I laugh so hard because the way she sat on it. She was so mad and thought it was so funny. She took the needle and threw it out on Chad Brown Street.

Write a story that people in your family tell over and over again.

When we came to this country [from Poland] in 1965, we took a big ship. My mom and my sisters and brother were seasick, so my mom told me to go to the dining room to eat because they were getting chicken soup. I went to get something to eat so I sat down to eat. So the man asked me where my family was, so I told him. He started laughing. Then the man brought my dinner. I started to eat and then I looked up. There was a window and I saw a big wave. Then I got sick too. So I went to join my family.

Make a list of 10 wonderful things your mother, partner, teacher, or kids would say about you.

1. *My baby that's 3 year old says mom I love.*

2. *My oldest daughter says I'm the best mother that she ever had.*

3. *My teacher say keep up the good work.*

4. *Mother she miss me, and loves me.*

5. *People would tell me how nice I am, the way I like to help people.*

6. *Me I say I'm a strong-minded person love to help people.*

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Handout 23

Rediscovering Themselves: Learning to Read for Survival

by Melissa Nieves

I came into the ESOL classroom ready to instill the English language into the minds of my students. I believed that I needed to drill and drill the grammar and sounds of English to teach efficiently. As a fledgling teacher at the University Settlement Society of New York, in New York City, I had a lot to learn about meeting the needs of learners.

That year, I learned that my students were real people with pasts and a lot of pain from their childhoods. Many had limited views of the world and the possibilities available to them in the future. Many of the women -- primarily immigrants from the Caribbean, Latin America, China, and Bangladesh -- had less than a fifth grade reading level in their native languages and had not been to school for years. Many were in school because they were mandated by welfare to attend classes or have their welfare cases closed. Many felt contempt for the 'system' for forcing them to attend classes. As a teacher I represented the system to them, so they were ready to take their anger and frustration out on me.

A LARGE TASK

Setting out to develop a level of trust and communication in my class, I asked the students why they were coming to school. One student replied that she needed to learn English, but she didn't know why. A second told me she needed to get her check from welfare. A third student said she was on welfare but she wanted to get her GED and possibly go to college. I came to realize that my task as a teacher was larger than I ever imagined. Teaching words and sounds was the easy part; my true challenge would be to inspire my students to rediscover themselves, for some to regain inspiration for the future and for others to develop their path for success.

The program director was a mentor to me and taught me how to begin the process of true education. I started learning to take into account my students' pasts and the issues that were relevant to them. I began to see that students bring to class every day concerns that act as barriers to learning. Throughout the year I observed behavior that reflected my students' ongoing struggles. One student would start to cry when she was asked to read aloud. One student came to the classroom angry and refused to participate. Another student tried to belittle students whom she perceived as vulnerable. I also had students who were constantly late and absent. I knew that I had to deal with all this or I would never have a viable class.

I had the students talk about their problems, develop solutions, and plan for the future by writing their own stories and reading them aloud. As the teacher, it was essential for me to participate in the dialogue and to share stories about my struggles and accomplishments. I shared my experience as a child of parents who were factory workers, and talked about how my father was an alcoholic, how I began working at the age of 13, how I worked full-time to make it through college, and how I had to struggle in this country. I told them that they all could achieve what they wanted if they planned for their goals.

The students began talking about their hopes and dreams for themselves and their children. We developed text based on the topics we discussed. We did follow-up reading activities using literature written by other literacy students or magazine or newspaper articles that dealt with the issues we were discussing. In the following months, we continued our dialogue. Tears were shed as students re-lived their experiences: stories about being beaten by teachers when they were children, stories about being raped by step-fathers, stories about dealing with abusive husbands, and many others.

BILINGUAL TEACHERS

The fact that I am bilingual really enhanced the class. At the lowest levels of ESOL, students feel more comfortable talking about their lives in their native languages. At our program we offer classes taught bilingually in Chinese, Spanish, and Hindi, so teachers can use their native languages to talk about personal issues and also to explain fine points of grammar, which are easier to teach in the students' native languages. The bilingual environment does not mean that English is not learned, because all activities include English writing activities as well as translation of dialogue into English. Higher level ESOL classes are taught completely in English.

The model of teaching and learning we use challenges learners and teachers alike to be vulnerable in the learning environment. It expects everyone in the group to begin to respect and trust each other. It forces individuals to explore the difficulties of the past and deal with their fears of the future. Our method is not easy to implement: it is easier for teachers just to teach and students just to learn words and sounds. But our approach is truly effective.

Many of the students in our program come from traditional educational backgrounds where the teacher was the sole source of information. They were told what to write and were taught to memorize information. They expect to see red ink corrections on their writing samples and want to compare grades on tests given back by the teacher. As a result, many of the students initially

could not see the relevance of using their lives and issues as part of a curriculum. This comment illustrates their perspective: "Look, I am a poor woman with little education, I just need to learn a little English so I can survive in this city. My life is not what I want to talk about."

Three Phases

Working with my colleagues at University Settlement Society, we developed a three-phase model that addresses the tension between this view and our interest in using the lives of teachers and learners as part of the curriculum..

PHASE 1

In the first phase, to get the students accustomed to talking and reading about issues in their lives, and to build relevant English vocabulary, teachers use learning materials in which fictional characters deal with issues such as child abuse, domestic violence, limited education, and lack of health care. Classroom activities include debates, dictations, and writing. Students share their beginning writing activities with their classmates. They are exposed to theme-based learning and critical thinking activities, and develop portfolios of their work.

PHASE 2

In the second phase, with the teacher facilitating, the class begins to talk about issues as they pertain to their own lives. Students work on theme-based activities about their children, families, or communities. They create group texts, bring in relevant articles, and make presentations in English about their themes. Teachers lead traditional grammar and writing lessons addressing specific needs that arise in the course of the class. In this phase, students write one-page stories and use complete sentences in English, with minimal grammar mistakes.

PHASE 3

In the third phase, the students develop journals and personal dictionaries -- their own word lists -- and may be ready to begin independent projects. Students choose a theme they want to work on by themselves and develop a presentation or piece of writing. Teachers assess the progress of the projects and create activities that support students in completing their projects. Students, working with their teachers, analyze their portfolios and journals, and begin developing written plans on how to reach their future goals. Students begin to work as peer teachers in the lower level classes, assisting teachers in taking the new students through the process they have experienced.

CONCLUSION

The rate at which a class or an individual can move through this process depends on many variables. It depends on the teacher's ability to assess students' needs and progress and plan lessons accordingly. It depends on the teacher's ability to create a safe and comfortable learning environment for all his or her students. It also depends on the needs and goals of each individual student and on the commitment which the student has to his or her own education. Some students take two years to progress; others take six. Feeling that our program is their second home, many of our students visit us years after they have finished. It is a place where they were given the chance to rediscover themselves as they learned to read. As one of my students told me, "You taught me that I can have whatever I want in life if I want it and plan for it. I will never forget this."

Handout 24

Dialogue Journals: Interactive Writing to Develop Language and Literacy

Revised December 2000

ERIC

Q & A

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by Joy Kreeft Peyton

National Center for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE)

Teachers of adults often wish that they had more time to communicate with the learners in their classes-to learn about their backgrounds, interests, and needs; to share experiences and information; and to track and document learners' developing knowledge and abilities. The need to communicate is intensified with adults learning English as a second language (ESL). They bring to the classroom extensive life experience and proficiencies in different languages and cultures. At the same time, they may have limited literacy skills in their native language, have had little or no schooling in their country, and have suffered trauma in their transition from their native country to the United States (Isserlis, 2000), all of which affect their learning. If they are new arrivals to the United States, they are adjusting to a new way of life at the same time that they are learning a new language and beginning to function in a new educational or work setting. It is with these learners that one-to-one communication is crucial-as part of a larger ongoing adjustment process and as a way for teachers to get to know them, understand their levels of knowledge and language skills, and address their particular language and literacy needs.

Many teachers of adults learning English have found dialogue journals, interactive writing with a teacher or other individual, to be an important part of their classes. Dialogue journals not only open new channels of communication, but they also provide natural contexts for language and literacy development. When adult learners write with their teachers, they have opportunities to use English in a supportive, nonthreatening interaction with a proficient English speaker who has knowledge of life in the United States. Because the interaction is written, it allows learners to use reading and writing in purposeful ways and provides a natural, comfortable bridge to other kinds of writing.

Dialogue journal writing is consistent with a learner-centered curriculum orientation, in which learners write to express themselves, to make sense of their own and others' experiences, and to develop their abilities (Auerbach, 1999; Isserlis, 1996). This type of writing can also be an important component of a critical inquiry approach (Van Duzer & Florez, 1999), as learners and teachers think critically together about texts and events that affect them and respond in writing.

WHAT ARE DIALOGUE JOURNALS?

Dialogue journals are written conversations in which a learner and teacher (or other writing partner) communicate regularly (daily, weekly, or on a schedule that fits the educational setting) over a semester, school year, or course. Learners write as much as they choose on a wide range of topics and in a variety of genres and styles. The teacher writes back regularly, responding to questions and comments, introducing new topics, or asking questions. The teacher is primarily a participant in an ongoing, written conversation with the learner rather than an evaluator who corrects or comments on the quality of the learner's writing. Topics for or types of writing may be specified to enhance the curriculum, and some correction may be given by the teacher, but the primary goal of the writing is communication.

The first documented use of dialogue journals was in the 1980s with sixth grade students, both native and nonnative English speakers, in California (Peyton & Reed, 1990; Peyton & Staton, 1993). Many teachers, however, report having communicated with their adult learners through journal writing before this. They are now used in many different educational settings--with adults and children, with native and nonnative English speakers, in many different languages, and in teacher and volunteer training programs (Peyton & Staton, 1996).

The following example, excerpted from dialogue journal entries written by an adult learner and her teacher, illustrates the nature of the writing and ways it can fit into the larger curriculum. This interaction, which continues for over a month, occurred when "Elizabeth" (a pseudonym) responded to a comment by the teacher about the health of her child. Elizabeth wrote at length about the fact that the child had been born prematurely. This led to discussion in class about health care, prenatal care, and women's issues generally, and to this written interaction about "Sami" (a pseudonym), Elizabeth's son.

October 2

Elizabeth:…Sami is better because He take medice. thank for your answer. I and my family are well. And we had a good weekend. thank my Dear teacher. …

October 23

Teacher: …How old is Sami now? Does he sometimes watch TV in English? I think he's lucky, because he is growing up hearing 2 languages-he'll be able to know Spanish and English. Do your other kids speak both languages, too?

October 23

Elizabeth: … Sami have 2 1/2 year old. When He Born He weingh 2 Pounds now he have 27 Pounds. he Barn from only sixth month. Some times he watch cartoons But he like played with her toys. He Can said some words in English. Yes my other Kids speak English and Spanish.

October 30

Teacher: … and about Sami-I'm happy that he's growing up. I didn't know that he was born 3 months early. He's a great kid. Do you think you'll want to have any more children?

October 30

Elizabeth: …I'm very happy too by my son Sami he is very active and entilgent I want more chdren. My husband want a girls. But the Doctor's say I can have not more because is danger for me. But anyway I want more children.

November 16

Elizabeth: [In response to the teacher's questions about the possible danger of having more children] …the Doctor say is dangerous By my Hight Pleasurre [high blood pressure]. Now I have another Doctor is a woman Doctor But she is very nice.

(From Isserlis, 1996, pp. 58-59. Reprinted with permission.)

As this example illustrates, learners can write in dialogue journals about topics that are important to them in the genres and styles matched to their needs and abilities. The writing may include descriptions, narratives, complaints, or arguments with supporting details, as the topic and communicative purposes dictate. It does not need to be constrained by teacher- or curriculum-established topics or by a preset schedule of topics and genres that must be covered in sequence. Sometimes it might focus on personal and family concerns and interests, at others on academic or work-related issues. In this example, the journal writing grew out of a theme (personal and children's health) that the class was working on together. In other cases, topics raised in the journal can lead to themes that the class then pursues together. (See McGrail, 1996, for an example.)

There is no initial pressure for learners with limited literacy skills to write. They may begin their journal work by using a few words or by drawing pictures, with the teacher drawing pictures in reply, perhaps writing a few words underneath or labeling the pictures. Learners may also dictate their entries to the teacher, an aide, or another learner who writes them down, writes a reply, and reads the reply aloud. The move to writing and reading letters, words, and longer texts can be made when learners are ready. (See Holt, 1995, for discussion of ways to work with adult learners with limited literacy.) In classes focusing on native language literacy, the writing can be done in the learners' native languages. The move to English can occur in line with course goals and learner readiness, or, if the goal of the course is native language development and the teacher is proficient in the language, the journal interaction can continue in the language throughout the course.

Because the teacher is attempting above all to communicate with the learner, the teacher's writing is roughly tuned to learners' language proficiency levels. In most cases, overt error correction is not done in the journals. This is one place where learners may write freely, without focusing primarily on form and correctness. There are many other opportunities-on extended assignments for which multiple drafts are written and commented on-in which teachers and learners can focus on correct form.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Extended contact time with learners. Teachers have very little time to spend with individual learners, and dialogue journal writing extends that time. This time can not only build strong personal and intellectual ties, but it can also give learners access to the knowledge of a member of the new language and culture, and to the teacher, detailed knowledge about the learner's strengths and needs. The writers, may, for example, write about the learner's native culture and language, problems adjusting to the new culture, and educational and employment opportunities and procedures in this country. Through this relationship, the learner has regular opportunities to reflect on new experiences and emerging knowledge and to think through with another individual ideas, problems, and important choices.

Management of classes with learners of varying language, ability, and interest levels. All learners, no matter what their language or literacy levels, can participate in the dialogue journal activity to some extent, from the first day of class. Because learners' dialogue journal entries give continual direct and indirect feedback about what they understand in class as well as about their language progress, the teacher receives information that can lead to individualized instruction for each learner.

Assessment of learner needs and progress. Having learners write about what they want to learn and why is an excellent way for teachers to conduct needs assessments. Learners can respond in the journal to questions like, "Where do you use English?" "What language skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening, use of vocabulary, use of grammar) are you interested in developing?" and "Where are you having the most difficulty with English?" (See Bello, 1997; Weddell & Van Duzer, 1997 for ideas.) The writing itself, of course, gives teachers valuable information about what learners know and are able to do in writing. If learners agree, specific dialogue journal entries can be included in a portfolio to demonstrate progress.

Facilitation of language learning. The primary focus of dialogue journal writing is topics and issues of interest to learners rather than correct form. The teacher's written language serves as input that is modified to, but slightly beyond, the learner's proficiency level; thus, the teacher's entries can provide reading texts that are challenging but also comprehensible, because they relate to what the learner has written. Beyond the modeling of language form and structure, the teacher's writing also provides continual exposure to the thought, style, and manner of expression of a proficient English writer. As learners continue to write and read the teacher's writing, they are likely to develop confidence in their own ability to express themselves in writing. Many teachers using dialogue journals report that the learners' writing becomes more fluent, interesting, and correct over time, and that the writing done in dialogue journals serves as the basis for other writing (McGrail, 1996).

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

Correctness of the writing. Some teachers and learners worry if the form of the learners' writing is not perfectly correct. There are a number of ways in which writing form and correctness can be taken into consideration without interrupting the communication or distracting from the meaning. The teacher can point out to learners that his or her response to their writing in the journal can serve as a model of correct English usage and show them how to compare this model with their own writing. For example, if a learner writes, "Yesterday class go library look at picture books," the teacher might respond with, "Yesterday our class went to the library to look at picture books for parents to read with their children. Did you find some books that you want to read with your children?" The teacher might also add a "grammatical P.S." to the end of the message and let learners know that they can check that area for corrections. For example,

"Yesterday we go." "Yesterday we went."

"I have four son, two daughter." "I have four sons and two daughters."

The teacher might also conduct a brief class lesson on spelling, grammatical, or stylistic errors that are commonly made in the journals of several class members or discuss these in individual conferences with learners.

Even with these nonintrusive methods of "correcting," it is important to let learners know that their errors are not being pointed out because they are expected to write perfectly. They are expected to write meaningfully, and their journal writing provides a context for examining the form of their writing, if that is appropriate and helpful. Learners often want explicit correction; working out ways in which to provide correction in the journal or during class can be an important component of the dialogue journal process.

Time to respond to learners' writing. Many teachers find it difficult to find time to read and respond to learner entries. To address this, some teachers respond during class while learners are writing or working on an assignment or test. Some respond regularly but not to all entries, or to some classes and not others, or to different classes at different times. Some create writing groups among learners who write and respond to each other, with the teacher entering in from time to time. Teachers who have been successful with dialogue journals have worked out ways to manage the process (see Peyton & Staton, 1996), and they report that the time is well spent. The knowledge they gain about learners' interests and problems and the feedback they receive about ongoing work and activities serve as the basis for planning and instruction.

Writing that is overly personal. The writing of some learners may become more personal than the teacher feels comfortable with. Issues of privacy, confidentiality, and self disclosure should be worked out clearly with learners so that they and the teacher are comfortable. Of course, if a learner reveals information about situations that may be harmful to anyone in the class or program, this information must be reported and dealt with. (See Mlynarczyk, in press, for discussion of levels of privacy and confidentiality of the writing; Peyton, 1996, for further discussion of ways to address challenges generally.)

WHAT ARE THE LOGISTICS?

Materials. Dialogue journals may be exchanged on paper in bound, easily transportable notebooks or electronically. Teachers and learners in programs with access to computers may exchange computer disks or interact through e-mail. E-mail and listserv messages allow for group as well as one-on-one interactions.

Frequency of writing. The writing must be done regularly, but the frequency depends on the number of learners involved, the length of the class, the teacher's schedule, and the needs of the teacher and learners. Most teachers prefer to give learners time to write during class-at the beginning as a warm-up, at the end as a wind-down, or before or after a break as a transition-or the teacher may let the learners choose a time for writing in their journals. Ten to fifteen minutes is usually adequate to read the teacher's entry and write a new one.

Length of writing. Some teachers initially set a minimum (e.g., three sentences) that learners must write, and after the process is in place, leave the amount of writing up to the learner. Learners should understand that long, polished pieces are not required.

Writing instructions. Learners can be told that they will be participating in a continuing, private, written conversation with the teacher (or with another learner or group of learners, depending on the desired set up), who will write back regularly. The mechanics of when to write, when to turn the journals in or give them to the writing partner, and when they will be responded to and returned should also be worked out.

Writing topics. Topics for dialogue journal writing may be left up to learners and evolve freely or may be shaped by curriculum topics and goals (see Bello, 1997; Mlynarczyk, in press, for ideas). If needed or desired, the teacher might suggest one or two possible topics, hand out a list of ideas, or lead the class in brainstorming topics together. The class might also create a list of vocabulary related to a topic, which learners can then use in their journal writing. If the class is working on a particular theme (such as health), journal topics might relate to and expand on that theme. Writing might also respond to a stimulus such as a piece of music, a photograph or drawing, a field trip, a movie, a piece of literature (a story or a poem), or other types of writing (newspaper articles, essays, writings of other learners).

Journal partners do not have to be teachers. Learners can write with each other, with program tutors or aides, or with other classes of learners (e.g., adult learners who are more proficient in English and more familiar with U.S. culture; see, for example, Strever & Newman, 1997). The teacher or writing partner should enter into the journal interaction as a good conversationalist, an interesting writer, an engaged listener, and a colleague. The goal is to be responsive to topics and concerns, to ask questions, to introduce topics, and to write about oneself. Teacher entries that simply echo what the learner wrote or that ask a lot of questions can stifle rather than promote interaction.

Finally, everyone involved should relax and enjoy the writing. For many teachers, reading and writing in dialogue journals is one of the best parts of their instruction-a wonderful time to reflect, find out about the people with whom they are spending the term or year, and think together with learners about where their work is taking them.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

An online bibliography lists publications about dialogue journal practice and research with many different learner populations (Peyton & Staton, 2000) http://www.cal.org/ncle/dialogj.htm

ERIC/NCLE Digests and Q&As are available free from NCLE, 4646 40th Street NW, Washington, DC 20016; 202-362-0700, ext. 200; email: ncle@cal.org; and on the Web at http://www.cal.org/ncle/DIGESTS.

Documents with ED numbers can be ordered from ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS) at 1-800-443-ERIC (3742) or 703-440-1400; fax: 703-440-1408; email: service@edrs.com; Web: http://edrs.com.

Handout 25

Getting Things Started
Expressing Feelings Teaching a True Survival Skill

•••

by Andrea Nash

With almost every group I teach, I work, at the start, on the language to express feelings. Since I want to build a curriculum around students' concerns and experiences, I believe I must provide students with the tools not only to report these experiences, but to interpret and react to them as well. For this reason, I consider learning to describe feelings to be very much a part of "survival" English. It is also an opportunity for people to recall and share emotional experiences if they so choose, although the lesson is not designed to be therapeutic. In fact, there are many options for participating in ways that are safely impersonal.

We started with a pile of photographs that depict people showing a range of emotions. I showed them to the group to elicit the words they already knew about feelings. The list was pretty long, as I had developed this vocabulary in many other lessons by discussing how story characters felt and how the students felt. We learned a few new words (proud, guilty, embarrassed) when the group was stuck on a picture and didn't have the language to describe it. Since many of these pictures were ambiguous, we spent a lot of time puzzling over the images and making our own associations.

At this and many other points along the way, we stopped to listen to people's memories. Since we didn't yet know each other very well, the stories were a fascinating introduction to our classmates. At times I have used these memories to skip the entire middle portion of the lesson and get to writing. But this time, knowing that we would get to writing, I continued on with oral activities that past students had enjoyed very much.

These activities were designed to use the new vocabulary in the sentence pattern I feel ___ when ___, by matching two sets of cards to build sentences. The first set were the 1 feel x statements, and the second set were causes or situations that began with when... At first, the I feel cards were mounted around the room. I held up the when cards one at a time and the students read them together collaborated in interpreting them, and then called out feelings they believed would be evoked by such a situation. For example, for the card, when my mother calls me/students said they felt-sad," "happy," "surprised," "lonely," and "excited," and then shared the parts of their lives that explained their responses. Most people could relate to most of the situations, and there was much oohing and ahhing as they recognized familiar predicaments. Everyone was eager to express their reactions to each card, and search for the new words that could help them convey their feelings.

Below are some "I feel" cards and some "when" cards.

I feel happy	I feel depressed	when I get a raise	when I hear salsa music
I feel excited	I feel lonely	when I speak English on the phone	when my son won't speak Spanish
I feel proud	I feel worried	when I talk about my country	when I can't find a job

To make sure the activity didn't force an uncomfortable intimacy, I included many options for creating less revealing sentences, such as I feel ___ when it snows. Also included were many sentences that described our classroom experience: I feel ___ when we speak Spanish in class; I feel ___ when everyone comes to class on time; or I feel ___ when class is over. In this way, we could discuss our positive and negative feelings about the only experience that we all shared-our class time together. This was especially important to me, as the classroom is the only place I can give students a forum for voicing their needs and dissatisfactions, and practice in negotiating creative alternatives. These often-neglected life skills help people act in their lives outside the classroom.

Next, we took down the I feel cards and replaced them with the when cards. To reinforce the vocabulary and group sentence building, I handed out the I feel cards and asked students, individually, to browse around and match their cards to the when cards on the wall. Finally, everyone wrote their own sentences, borrowing from the phrases on the cards. Here is what some of them wrote:

I feel happy when am with my children.

I feel happy when understand.

I feel happy when work.

I feel happy when finish work.

I feel happy when speak on the phone to my child.

I feel worried when I can't understand English.

I feel worried when I don't have letters from my country.

I feel worried when my children are sick.

I feel worried when I speak English on the phone.

I feel worried when I don't have money.

I feel confident when people understand me.

I feel confident when I speak English on the street.

I feel confident when I make a lot of friends at work.

The group learned how similarly they felt about many things, and people identified strongly with one another. My role in the discussion just about faded away. I had started out matching cards and writing sentences with everyone else. But the most compelling worries and joys that people wanted to talk about were not ones I shared-they were about the anxieties that stem from poverty and not understanding the dominant language. I became a listener, noting the issues that we could address in future classwork.

In this particular class, I did not ask people to write more about the experiences and feelings they had shared, although this is usually a very effective follow-up activity. Instead, since we had just read a story about a homesick newcomer, the class went on to write about how they felt when they first came to this country or about other memories of their choice.

There are an infinite number of directions this lesson can take. Using an action-oriented, problem-posing approach, one follow-up to the original sentences might be to ask, for example, "What do you do when you feel worried/ afraid /proud about x? The answers to this question can be left as discussion or, depending on the class level, written as sentences. Language Experience Approaches, or individually written stories. The question, "What else can you do?" can be used to develop critical thinking and group support for making change. Or, we can simply write the full stories that were called to mind when we wrote our brief sentences or heard the memories of others.

The unit on feelings is a no-lose endeavor. It involves a lot of language work while stimulating rich content from the student. We can all participate on any level of intimacy and still be fully involved. Best of all, it enables the class to get to know one another and to start to become a supportive, connected group.

Handout 26

Immigrant Experiences
Happy Families? Using the Language Experience Approach ••• by Loren McGrail

The following is an account of how I used pictures of families to generate language and develop literacy skills in my students. I used the Language Experience Approach (LEA) along with more structured grammar exercises to accomplish this. This cycle of activities has proven over time to be a very effective way to get students to generate language at a deeper, more thoughtful level than their skills in English might first allow. The use of the pictures provided a backdrop for us to discuss such important issues as: What is happiness? What is wealth? Are these things different in different cultures? Is having money equivalent to being happy? Are people really richer here in the United States? Is it better to be rich or happy?

Here are two photos similar to those used in the LEA exercises described in this chapter:

I have used these pictures over and over again in a variety of ways with a variety of students. However, I have used them primarily with low-level students at the end of my unit on "Family" as a way for them to pull together all the vocabulary items they have learned and use them in a context that is new and in which they feel they have something meaningful to say. In a sense/ the LEA became a kind of evaluative tool for me to see how much the class had taken in, where they still needed work (on grammatical structures), and where they wanted to go (what structures or issues they wanted to pursue).

In choosing the pictures, I felt it was important not to have stereotypical pictures of poor and destitute people from this country or the students' home countries. Instead, I purposely looked for two pictures that showed people smiling but from very different cultures. The pictures were going to be used as a kind of code so they had to be open for interpretation.

I purposely did not design a set of problem-posing questions to go with the pictures because I wanted to see how the students would read the images without my guidance.
I wanted to give them the option of staying in a more labeling or describing mode or to go into a more critical one. I wanted to know if a code could

stand by itself without probing questions. What I discovered was that the pictures could indeed stand alone and whether students chose to go deeper and interpret them critically depended on the makeup of the class. It also depended on the level of English, since this was not a bilingual class. The following are two LEA writing samples that show what I am talking about.

These LEA exercises were dictated by the class and transcribed by the teacher.

There are nine people in the family.

There are eleven turkeys.

There are five children.

The father is happy.

He is tall and a little fat.

He is smiling because he is together with his family.

It is warm.

They are from Central America.

The children are students.

The father is a farmer.

They are poor.

Happiness

Both families are happy. The family from South America is happy because they are together and the sun is shining. Also they have some turkeys. They are poor but happy. The family from the U.S. is happy because they have money. They are middle class. Maybe the father has a good job. Maybe he is a teacher or a foreman in a company. His wife is happy because he has a good job. Both families are happy but for different reasons.

The stories, though different in terms of content and level of English, show the importance of the relationship between being happy and being together. In both classes, after the students answered some questions about the texts, I asked them to answer the question, ""What makes you happy?" Some of their answers follow:

I am happy because my wife is working.

I am happy when it rains.

I am happy when my daughter laughs.

I am happy when my son has a vacation.

The class that wrote '"Happiness" was the class that had a debate about whether or not the farmer was rich or poor. The class was divided on this. Some of my Central American students tried to explain to the Puerto Rican students that having turkeys made him a rich peasant. The Puerto Ricans countered, however, that he was still a peasant. They also disagreed about whether or not the "gringo family" was wealthy. Some said that because the father was wearing a sweater he probably wasn't a doctor or lawyer but maybe just a teacher or a foreman. Hence, the family was middle class, though probably they would be considered upper class in the students' countries. There are two important points I would like to make about how this discussion went and how it got transcribed. The first is that a lot of discussion happened in Spanish and that I did ask some clarifying questions as the students talked before I wrote. In both classes, I let them talk for a little while before I began to transcribe sentences. Because I know some Spanish, and because I allowed people to translate their ideas from Spanish into English and supplied vocabulary when needed, like "middle class," the transcriptions are both a reflection of what the students wanted to say and how they said it. We did go back over the sentences together and they corrected most of their errors. I made up questions and fill-in-the-blank exercises to follow the story, to develop their literacy skills, and to work on some grammatical structures, but for me, and I think for most of the students, the real learning was in listening to each other and learning how to express different views in English.

Handout 27

No Green Card, No Good Pay

Building Curriculum Around Immigration Problems •••
by Madeline Rhum

There are very few good materials for low-level classes. I'm constantly looking through books, both traditional ESL texts and nontraditional materials/ for stories or exercises to use with my class. The most effective materials, however, are those that the students and I make together.

One such collaboration is our weekly newspaper. On Monday night, our first activity is to write the students' "news" on pieces of newsprint. The topics vary; sometimes they talk about their week-ends, other times they talk about the political situation in their countries. We read the newsprint together and make changes if necessary. I type up the things we have written for our next class on Wednesday night. Sometimes I include exercises at the end, such as a cloze exercise or questions based on the text.

One Monday, I came into class and people were talking about money and the high cost of living in Boston. They were speaking in Creole, as they always are before class starts. I listened for a while and interjected some comments in English. I was trying in an indirect way to steer the discussion into English. The discussion continued in Creole, and why not? Money is a serious concern and these students could communicate best with each other in Creole. Our class newspaper, however, brought together the important issue of financial survival and communication in English. In other words, it provided a vehicle for joining meaningful content with practice of English literacy skills. I put up the news¬ print and wrote "MONEY" at the top of the page. I wrote down the discussion that was taking place primarily between two women.

That Wednesday, I gave everyone a copy of the newspaper to which I had added four discussion questions:

Before, how much rent did you pay when you came to Boston?

Now, how much rent do you pay?

Before, how much money did you get paid?

Now, how much money do you get paid?

We made two charts on the blackboard showing everyone's rent and wages. Most of the rents showed increases between '"before" and "now." Although most of the current wages made by class members were roughly equivalent, two people's wages were outstandingly low. We questioned them about that. It turned out that they both worked in the same hotel about an hour north of the city. They complained about their low pay, and said that the hotel they worked for had a branch in Cambridge that paid quite well. We questioned them about continuing at their current jobs: didn't they want to find new jobs or at least transfer to the Cambridge location? We found out then that these two people didn't have green cards. They felt safe staying at their current jobs, but trapped, unable to make any moves for the future. With this information, we entered a new stage of trust and openness. These two students shared a fear and frustration that they carried with them from morning to night. I wanted them to know that I was aware that they had shared with me, a non-Haitian, in English, a very important part of their lives. After the class had some discussion in two languages, I wrote a story on the newsprint about their predicament. We read the story, and everyone agreed that it was a very important story and one that must be told.

I typed up the story for the following class session. I also made a scrambled words game with sentences from the story. I wrote one word per card and the students had to put the cards in the right order. I gave them a worksheet with the same scrambled sentences exercise and another one with a cloze exercise.

What made this series of classes so special to me was that both parties involved (the students and the teacher) shared real life concerns. I felt good that my students could talk to me about an issue that is deeply personal and that they   know I will never have to address in my own life. They know that I listened to them and that their words are important to someone who is, in fundamental ways, on the outside of their lives. The language activities reinforced the importance of their experiences, and the sharing of stories reaffirmed the strength of bonds across the boundaries of culture.

Here is a weekly newspaper typed up by the teacher:

GOOD NEWS NEWSPAPER MARCH 22,1989

gggggg$$gggggggMONEYgggggggggggg$

MARIE-ANNETTE SAID,

"EVERYTHING IN AMERICA IS EXPENSIVE NOW."

"IN 1981, HOUSE IS CHEAPER."

BEFORE, SHE LIVED IN CENTRAL SQUARE ON WESTERN AVE.

SHE HAD 2 I/2 BEDROOMS AND A BIG KITCHEN.

SHE PAID $140.

BOSTON APARTMENTS ARE THE MOST EXPENSIVE IN THE USA.

MARIE-JEAN SAID,

"BOSTON IS EXPENSIVE BECAUSE IT GOT WORK."

MARIE-ANNETTE SAID,

"HOUSE EXPENSIVE. EVERYTHING EXPENSIVE,

BUT JOBS DONT PAY WELL."

MARIE-JEAN SAID,

"JOBS PAY WELL: $7, $8, $9."

MARIE-ANNETTE SAID,

"HOUSE GOES UP. EVERYTHING GOES UP.

JOBS GO UP. BUT NOT ENOUGH."

$(^$(?$(^$(?$(^$(^$(^$(^$(^$(^$(^$(^$(^$(^$(^^$(^$(^$(^$(^$(?$(^$(^$^$(^$^$(^$(^$^

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT MONEY?

BEFORE, HOW MUCH RENT DID YOU PAY WHEN YOU CAME TO BOSTON?

NOW, HOW MUCH RENT DO YOU PAY?

BEFORE, HOW MUCH MONEY DID YOU GET PAID?

NOW, HOW MUCH MONEY DO YOU GET PAID?

Here are two worksheets - a cloze exercise and scrambled sentences:

NO GREEN CARD - NO GOOD PAY

1. SOME PEOPLE IN OUR CLASS DON'T HAVE GREEN CARDS.

2. TWO PEOPLE_____ AT THE BURLINGTON MARRIOTT.

3. THE _____ IS VERY LOW.

4. PEOPLE ^ IS VERY LOW. __ $5.50 OR $5.85 AN HOUR AT THE BURLINGTON MARRIOTT.

5. PEOPLE DON'T _____ TO WORK THERE.

6. THEY WANT TO CHANGE _____.

7. THE MARRIOTT IN KENDALL SQUARE PAYS

8. _____ GET $7.00 AN HOUR TO START. MONEY.

9. ONE PERSON IN OUR CLASS TO TRANSFER TO KENDALL,

10. BUT THE SUPERVISOR WON'T SIGN THE _____.

11. THE _____ SAID THE WORKER IS VERY GOOD.

12. HE DOESN'T WANT HER TO _____ TO KENDALL.

13. THE _____ WANTS TO TRANSFER, BUT SHE CAN'T.

14. SHE DOESN'T _____ A GREEN CARD.

15._____ CAN'T QUIT HER JOB.

16. SHE CAN'T CHANGE HER _____.

17. _____ IS STUCK.

18. MANY PEOPLE DON'T HAVE

19. MANY _____ ARE STUCK. CARDS.

All mixed up

People green don't some cards have

works Marriott Myrtha the Hotel at

is pay low The very

an $5.50 People hour get

change her to job she wants

transfer to wants she

Handout 28

Traffic Tickets

Literacy in the Real World

By Madeline Rhum

In a participatory classroom, it's important to establish an atmosphere of openness and sharing. People in the class have to feel that others value their issues, concerns, and ideas in the class before they will be willing to talk about them. Depending on the individuals in the class, it can take anywhere from a couple of weeks to a couple of months to build this trust among members of the class. I will generally spend the first fifteen minutes or so of each class just chatting with people about what's going on in their lives or about current events. Through these informal conversations, I often get ideas for topics that we can later explore with a reading, or learn about an issue that calls for immediate attention.

An example of using a students concern as the content for a literacy lesson occurred when a student brought a traffic ticket that he did not understand to class. He told the class about the tickets he had gotten recently. One of them was a parking ticket; the other, a moving violation. It was the latter of the two that confused him. He brought the ticket to class because he wanted to pay it but did not know how to do so. I looked at the ticket and was not sure either. The extremely small print on the back of the ticket that is intended to explain the process for payment was written in legalese and was of no help. Other members of the class asked him about the circumstances in which he got the ticket. As it turned out, he was not sure what he had done wrong and when he asked the police officer to explain the problem to him, he was ignored. We looked at the ticket, and the reason for issuing the ticket was not at all clear. As people asked more questions, he supplied more details about the incident, and about what he thought the reasons were for his receiving the ticket. Other students talked about the times they or their friends had gotten tickets. Several important issues emerged from this discussion: 1) racial discrimination; 2) illiteracy; 3) the difficulties of having limited English ability; and 4) quotas for ticketing.

For the following class, 1 wrote up the traffic ticket discussion as a reading. This generated further discussion about problems people had in dealing with the police. After several minutes, I suggested to the class that we could write a letter to the police commissioner or to the newspapers about these problems. Everyone thought this was a good idea. We talked about who to send it to and the students decided that the newspaper would be best because many people would read it and gain some understanding of the problems facing immigrants. We spent part of the class writing a language experience story in order to generate ideas about why we wanted to write this letter and what we wanted to say.

The next day, two members of the class who had been absent earlier in the week returned and objected to the letter writing. They felt that the letter accused the police of discrimination and that such a thing didn't exist except with a very few ignorant individuals. Some of the others felt strongly that there were problems of discrimination, particularly in Boston. After a rather heated discussion/ everyone agreed to participate in the writing of the letter. The dissenters' decision to join the group may have been an indication of their desire to support their classmate rather than an acknowledgement of the existence of discrimination on a societal level.

We reviewed the LEA from the previous day, then continued writing down people's ideas. This time I tried to direct their comments by asking leading questions, such as: "What was wrong with the way the police officer was with Gebre?" and "What do you think the police should do in situations like this?"

Because the LEAs from the two days were not in any kind of logical order, the next step was to organize them. I wanted to be very careful at this point to help the students write a strong letter without imposing my idea of form and structure onto their work. For the next class, I wrote each sentence on a separate strip of newsprint. I introduced three categories into which the students were to put the sentences: I) This is the problem; 2) Why we have this problem; and 3) Change (fix) the problem. The students read each sentence and decided together whether it belonged in category one, two, or three. After all the sentences were placed, we reread them and edited out the repetitions, and added an introduction and a closing.

It was very exciting for me to see the students collaborating on this critical thinking and editorial process. The better readers could read the sentences, and everyone, reader and non-reader alike, could participate in making the decisions about where each sentence sounded best and made the most sense. After they finished the editing process, I numbered each strip so I could remember the order and type up the letter.

I brought the typed letter to the class the next day. Everyone was proud of their work. Some people, however, were afraid to sign the letter because of feared recriminations. We talked about their fears and about the different ways police behave in different countries. In the end, people were reassured about the safety of publicly voicing this kind of complaint, and everyone signed the letter.

Handout 29

Barbara and Ana

Literacy and Critical Thinking

---by Andrea Nash

The writings about Barbara and Ana grew out of a spontaneous class discussion about Spanish-speakers being told in public, by Americans, not to use their native Spanish. We had been learning the vocabulary used to describe feelings, and students were practicing that vocabulary by describing how they felt when they spoke English. (Their list included nervous, proud, anxious, afraid, worried, and happy.) The story that later became the "At the Store" story began as a whispered side conversation between two students during the activity. When I asked them to share their conversation with everyone, they proceeded to tell a story of Anglo arrogance and racism. Everyone wanted to hear and understand the details, so we listened to their story in Spanish and talked for a while about racism and some Angles' fear of immigrants.

The next class I brought in the story, written in English, as a dialogue between an American woman and a Latina woman. In this way,1 built English language practice into the exploration of a theme that could only have emerged in Spanish. We read it in pairs and made sure everyone understood the language. The last line of the dialogue was left blank to give students the opportunity to have the last word in this confrontation.

AT THE STORE

Ana: Marcos, dejalo, No lo toques.

Barbara: Excuse me. We only speak English here.

Ana: I'm sorry. I no speak English.

Barbara: This is America. You should speak English if you want to live here.

Ana: Que cosa? I don't understand.

Barbara: Why are you here if you don't understand?

Ana:_____

The responses the students wrote ranged from angry demands to conciliatory appeals for forgiveness.

"I'm here because I need a job. I trying to leam English."

"You are discriminating me."

"Don't discriminate my language and culture."

"I'm here because I have problems in my country. I'm sorry I no speak English."

They wrote these sentences on large newsprint and we reviewed them, alternating between correcting grammar and discussing content. When I asked them about the emotions they were each trying to express, it became clear that people had different understandings of the relationship between the two characters. What I thought had been clear (that Barbara was a store employee and Ana the customer) was not. One person thought that they were roommates.

Obviously, many students did not make the connection between this dialogue and the similar story we had heard a few days earlier. I realized we had to back up a bit and build a better context for this scene. So I asked the group about the characters: who they were; where they were from; whether they were young or old; comfortable or poor; and who they were as family members. As they created the characters, the dialogue began to come to life. When they read it again, they read with animation and interest.

Now that we had a greater consensus about just who these characters were, I asked again about how Ana would feel at the end of the dialogue. People felt that their initial responses were still appropriate and that it made sense that Ana would experience several conflicting emotions. They agreed that she would feel anger, fear, and embarrassment. I reflected these emotions in the composite response I created for Ana out of their writings. The completed dialogue became a cloze exercise for the next day.

    Ana: Marcos, dejalo, No lo toques.

    Barbara: Excuse me. We ___ speak English here.

    Ana: I'm sorry. I ___ speak English.

    Barbara: This is America. You ___ speak English if you want ___ live here.

    Ana: Que cosa? I don't ___.

    Barbara: Why ___ you here if you don't understand?

    Ana: I'm here because I want to live and work in America. I am trying to learn English. It is not easy to live here. I need your help. Please don't discriminate against me. English is important, but my language and culture are important, too.

I realized, at this point, that these characters could play an ongoing role in our class-that we could use them, like puppets, to discuss the daily drama of our lives. But we first needed to flesh them out and get to know them better. So the next class, the students discussed the characters and their relationship again as they worked on a true or false exercise and then broke into two groups to write LEAs about each of the characters. I typed the stories and returned them to the students for language correction and grammar practice, which we worked on together as a class.

Unfortunately, our school schedule prevented us from taking Barbara and Ana through further trials and tribulations. Our class ended too soon for us to take advantage of the life the characters had taken on. I hope that such characters join our classes in the future. If I were to do this again, I would take time to select the "scenes" (characters, place, time, etc.) more carefully before jumping into situations and plots without adequate context. Role plays would work well to develop characters and improvise scenes. As long as student interest fuels it, the possibilities are endless.

ANA

Ana is from Colombia. She <u>have</u> 25 years She is married and she is_____mother. She _ one son. She <u>have</u> a job cleaning in a store, but she is poor.

She only <u>speak</u> Spanish. She says, "The life in America is hard for me because _____ don't speak English. She is afraid and she is angry because in the store _____ discriminate _____ her language.

PLEASE COMPLETE THE SENTENCES ABOUT ANA.

1. She _____ speak English.

2. She _____ in a store.

3. She's _____ American.

4. She _____ a child.

5. Her life _____ hard.

TRUE OR FALSE?

1. ____ Ana and Barbara are friends.

2. ____ Ana has a lot of money.

3. ____ Ana wants to understand English.

4. ____ Barbara likes Latinos.

5. ____ Ana feels angry.

6. ____ Barbara feels angry.

7. ____ Barbara should learn Spanish.

8. ____ Ana should learn English.

Handout 30

Everything Happened for the Best
Parents Talk about Problems at School

• • • by Madeline Rhum

This year all the people in my class are mothers. Their children's ages range from infant to adult. Almost everyone has at least one child in either school or daycare. Although all of them are concerned about their children's education and well being, it is not immediately apparent what specific childcare issues they share. That is to say, while the mother of a two year old may be struggling with how to discipline her toddler, the mother of a seventeen year old may be worrying about teenage pregnancy. '"Where is the ground of common con¬ cern?" I asked myself.

In the United States, parents frequently take an active role in their children's education. Parents asking questions about and advocating for their children's education can make a significant difference in how both the teacher works and the student learns. But asking questions and advocating for change can be difficult for our students, who come from cultures where schools have a great deal of authority, and who might feel intimidated by American schools and teachers. I decided, therefore, that introducing the topic of their rights as parents would be of interest to everyone. I chose to focus on this area with my class.

The first part of this unit consisted of the students filling in a big chart with information about their kids:

NAME	# of KIDS	KIDS' NAMES	KIDS AGES	KIDS SCHOOLS or DAYCARE	KIDS TEACHER
Kiros	1	Axumawit	2 years	kids are people	Nancy
Hilda	2	Kissie Albert	11 17	Fitzgerald __ . not in school	Ms. Thompson
Rosalia	2	Samuel Anna	3 years 3 month	babysitter at home	my mother
Lorda	2	Liza Lily	3 years 5 years	Mattapan School	?

The students then wrote sentences about each other's children using information from the chart:

> Kiros has one kid. Her name is Axumawit.

> Hilda has one daughter. She goes to Fitzgerald school.

Next, I asked if the students had ever visited their kids' schools. One woman had had a lot of experience with her children's schools. She was quite a resource for all of us throughout this unit. She explained the differences among the conferences and meetings parents were asked to attend. I wrote some of the key words on the board as the students talked. I then presented some vocabulary and idioms in preparation for the story we were going to read. The story came from a journal of student writing published by a literacy program in Toronto, Canada (Hargrove, 1984). It was written by a mother who was dissatisfied with her son's teacher, and who was effective in getting him transferred to a more appropriate class.

We read the story several times and worked on vocabulary. After everyone fully understood the story, I placed a set of cards, some blue, some white, in the middle of the table. The blue cards asked questions about the story; the white cards asked questions about the students' lives. Each person took a card and asked the others a question. This led to many days of interesting and far-reaching discussion. I participated in the discussion whenever some clarification was needed, but most of the time I was taking notes about what the students were saying. During those same days, we also worked on the past tense for part of each class. After the students had gone through all of the cards, I gave them

Everything Happened for the Best

My son, Harry, was a student at Spruce Court School. He was eight years old and still in the first grade.

I asked Harry if the teacher had been helping him. He said no. She gave him the paper and pencil and book and told him to go sit down. He couldn't do it by himself. I went to the school and talked to her and asked her why my son was behind. She told me there were too many kids and she could not give him the attention. A lot of kids in her class didn't pass.

I went to Mr. Donahue the principal, and told him I wanted to get to the bottom of this, why she kept my son back like that. He said he would set up a meeting and let me know.

At the meeting, I said, "I don't want that woman to be my son's teacher." He said, "Mrs. Hargrove, I can help you." I said, "I want my son in another classroom or another school."

He made a lot of phone calls. He was very nice to me. I thought he was going to be mad at me, but he said, "I understand. I am a father, I'm with you. I'm not mad. Go for it, and good luck."

He took me to see another school. He said the classes were small there, just six or seven kids in each class.

Now Harry goes to this school. Now he can read, and he can spell. He's a little slow in his writing, but not bad. He could improve more.

by Lee Hargrove from The Writer's Voice, reprinted by permission of Toronto East End Literacy Press

a worksheet that included the initial vocabulary words, past tense review, and all the questions from the cards for them to answer in writing.

The discussion that had been generated by the card-questions lasted for two weeks. People spoke very frankly about their concerns and experiences with their children. They talked about behavior and discipline; about learning problems and discrimination. In other words, they talked about things that really affected their lives. Nonetheless, they seemed sort of restless toward the end of the second week. It seemed to be a case of not doing enough "school" work. I decided that it would be helpful for them to get some literacy reinforce¬ ment, so I wrote up a kind of report from the discussion. I used my notes to pick out points to highlight and to raise some questions for them to consider further. The class notes were a much lengthier reading selection than anything they had

previously received. Although the students were at first a bit intimidated by the length of the reading, it was accessible because all the material was based on their own words. It took a couple of days to read through the whole thing. This reading also generated more discussion on issues of immediate concern to the students and, in fact, our next topic-lead paint poisoning.

Class notes are a good way for students to take stock of what they are learning both in the traditional school sense as well as in terms of sharing information   with each other-participating in the shaping of curriculum and thinking more critically about the problems that they face. I think that the next time I do this kind of write up, I will include some writing exercises throughout the text to make it more interactive. Also, I would like to get to the point with my students where they participate in the production of the class notes. It could be very time consuming, but I think it would be good for all of us to take some time to reflect on the way we spend our time together.

Below are questions that go with the stony on the previous page.

```
ANSWER THE QUESTIONS.

1. How old is Harry? _____

2. What grade is he in? _____

3. Was the teacher helping Harry?_____

4. What did the teacher tell Harry to do?_____

_____

5. Why didn't the teacher help Harry?_____

6. Who did Harry's mom talk to?_____

7. What did Harry's mom tell the principal?_____

8. Why did Harry's mom think the principal would be mad at her?

_____

9. Did the prinicpal help her? _____

10. What is different in Harry's new school?_____

_____

11. How is Harry doing in school now?_____

12. How old are your children?_____

13. Did your kids ever have a problem at school or daycare?
What happened?_____

_____

14. Did you ever disagree with your kids' teacher or
babysitter? What did you do?_____

_____

15. What makes a good teacher or babysitter?_____

_____
```

Handout 31

Learning Pictures

Exploring Student and Teacher Roles

•••by Loren McGrail

In order for learners to become activists in their own learning processes, they need to change their fundamental conception of education. It is important to make this the content for dialogue and literacy work. One way I've tried to do this with my students is through pictures. I present to them a series of pictures that depict different learning situations: parents teaching children, children teaching parents, teacher-fronted classrooms, people learning in groups, people learning from peers. The pictures prompt discussion on how people feel about learning in different situations. The pictures provide a good catalyst for writing.

In my endless quest for the perfect assessment tool, I thought that I might be able to use these pictures at the beginning of a cycle as a stimulus to get some writing samples. In the past, I had put together an eclectic collection of pictures around the theme of family. I had asked students to select a picture and then write about it. I dutifully collected these writing samples, put them in writing folders, then at the end of the cycle gave the students back their pictures and asked them to write again. I then carefully photocopied both sets of writings and put them side-by-side. I gave each student a copy of their pre- and post- writings and asked them if they saw any improvement.

What I learned from this experiment was that while doing a sampling of student writing was an effective way to measure growth over a specified period of time, it wasn't nearly as informative as the discussion of learning it evoked. Students used this occasion to discuss in great detail what they had learned in the course and how their learning strategies had changed.

This discussion of their learning experiences gave me an idea of how I might try to elicit students' own personal histories about their past learning experiences from them at the beginning of the semester and use them to develop reading samples with which to assess the reading skills of future students.

I reasoned that if I had writings that went with pictures that all dealt with a similar theme, I could use these writings as texts for students at all levels of literacy. The idea was that I would let the students choose which writing they wanted to read and then ask them questions about that writing. The pictures would serve as a visual pre-reading prompt just as they had earlier served as a pre-writing prompt. This was the intent. What follows is a summary of what happened in two intermediate-level classrooms as I attempted to get students to write and then turn that writing into a reading text for others.

I began by taping pictures of learning situations up on the blackboard in a random way. I asked the students to look at the pictures and tell me what they saw. First, they talked about each picture, then about all of them as a group. Some recounted personal stories the images evoked while others stayed with describing exactly what they saw. I tried to be neutral by not judging their responses. This initial discussion was a very important piece because it allowed everyone to get in the mood to write and it especially allowed the non-writers (not literate in their native language or semi-literate in English) to share their thoughts orally. I remember vividly the emotions that a Mexican migrant worker expressed about the picture of a Hispanic boy saying the "Pledge of Allegiance"; yet the man's writing was barely readable in either Spanish or English.

After about a ten-minute pre-writing warm-up, I told the students to write about the pictures, to write about anything at all that these pictures or our discussion had stimulated them to think about. I gave them ten minutes to write. During their writing time, I jotted down notes about our discussion and about which students spoke up. I also wrote about some of their writing behaviors, such as who was concentrating, or who was looking for a dictionary. At the end of ten minutes, the class asked for more time to write. By limiting the   time at first, and then changing it at the request of the students I tried to make the writing atmosphere secure for all levels of writers.

I did this same activity with both my intermediate level classes. I then skimmed through all the writings from each class to see how they compared with each other. In both classes, I found that many students wrote about the same particular picture—the one with the strict-looking teacher at the board with a nervous-looking student.

by Erich Lessing from The Family of Man.
reprinted by permission of Magnum Photos

I chose one writing from each class to be developed into a reading text. I chose writings that were very different from each other in tone but that communicated their ideas clearly. Here is one:

MY EXPERIENCE IN SCHOOL

When I went to school for the first few years I remember when the teacher sent me to the board. I felt nervous, and if I made a mistake the other students sometimes laughed at me. Many times I fought the school (students) who laughed at me many times I felt along becauase I was shy but I didn't care about no-(any)thing. I wanted to learn and I did. Aida

"My Experience in School" came from a student in my level II intermediate class. The class members decided that if this writing were going to be used as a reading, the grammar needed to be corrected. To illustrate the point, that not all problems are grammatical, we looked at the sentence "Many times I fought the school. We talked about what we thought it meant. The author, who had been anonymous at this point, told us she meant it was the students she had fought and not the school. She wanted to change it. This was a collaborative editing process but the final decision remained with the author.

After the students edited and reread the writing, I told them I wanted them to become teachers and think of some good questions that could go along with this reading. I put them into groups of three and asked each group to come up with our questions. I told them that teachers often give a range of questions from easy to difficult. After ten minutes, I asked each group to put their questions on the board. From these, we selected the four they liked best.

1. Why did she feel nervous?
2. How often did she feel alone?
3. Did she learn?
4. Why did she fight the other students?

The process brought up a lot more questions. For example, question #3, we decided, was hard to answer; we didn't know if she had learned or not. If she had learned, why would she be taking an ESL class today? More discussion followed.

The same process was followed with my other class, my family literacy class. One of the students wrote the following:

> When I was a teenager, I went to school. I liked everything because my group shared very well.
>
> It's funny. I remember one teacher because she didn't like our group. She said, "This group is intelligent but you don't like to take class with me. You sit outside under a tree." I was sad but felt love for all teachers. They were good with us. When I had to leave, I missed my school and partners too.
>
> Now in this country, there are some classmates. Sometimes they visit me. feel good. --Angela

Questions developed by the class:
1. Did she like her teacher?
2. Why did she miss her school?
3. Why does she feel good?
4. What do you want to ask Angela?

One of the questions the class came up with, '"What do you want to ask Angela?" showed me they had understood how reading is an interactive process between the text and reader.

The two classes exchanged their writings and questions. Students worked on answering the questions in small groups. Their answers were then brought back to the class where the questions had originated. The students who had developed the questions now checked the answers from the other class. In addition to making the students feel powerful, the activities brought out a lot of feelings and opinions about the role of teachers. Many of the students acted out what they thought teachers did or should do. There was also much discussion about what constituted a right answer to the questions they'd developed. What if in the answer, the idea was right but the grammar was wrong or vice versa?

The result of this activity was that I now had interesting writings complete with questions, ready to be used with future students as reading texts. But even more important, I had initiated a process of thought and reflection about learning and teaching.

If I were to do this again, I would elaborate and spend more time on some of the activities. For example, I think the students and I should collectively choose the texts to turn into readings. I also would include a discussion following the initial writing that would investigate how people felt while writing and why they wrote about what they did. Discussion could also focus on why or how it is important to understand our past educational histories.

Handout 32

Session Six Discussion Questions

PART A

1. Give examples of effective literacy practices.

2. What common characteristics do these successful literacy practices share?

PART B

1. What stands out for you in terms of usefulness of these practices in supporting your ESL students in their language and literacy development?

2. What appeals to you about these practices? What concerns you?

3. How can you modify these practices to teach literacy to different types of literacy learners identified in Session One?

4. In what way could you adapt these practices to fit your own teaching practice?

PART C

1. How can ESL literacy teachers provide effective instruction to improve the English language and literacy skills of ESL literacy students?

PART D

1. How do these tips compare to your lists?

2. Did any of these tips surprise you? How so?

3. Which tips did you find most useful? Least useful?

Handout 33

TIPS FOR ESL LITERACY TEACHERS

How can teachers provide a rich literacy experience for their students? The following suggestions, based on the educational principles that shape rich language and literacy development, may provide some guidance.   These guidelines are not meant as "teacher-proof" solutions to ESL literacy; rather they are meant as a basis for reflection and discussion.

- Strive for genuine communication between yourself and your students.

Design activities that tell you who your students are, what their experiences have been what they care about, and what literacy means to them. Share information about yourself, your joys, and your sorrows, and invite your students to talk about themselves. Treat your student as you would any intelligent adult and do not spend a great deal of time asking questions to which you already know the I answer. After you have just written the date on the board, saying "Su Ma, could I you please read the date on the board?" is more respectful than asking "What's the date today?"

- Make your classroom into a community of learners where everyone feels welcome and all views are respected.

Provide opportunities for different groups to work together, share information, and be a resource for each other. Ask learners to read as a group, share their ideas about a piece they have read, and write collaboratively. Invite contributions that do not depend on language and literacy, such as illustrating a story the group has written. Provide opportunities for sharing experiences across cultures by asking learners to talk about their lives back home and share significant cultural customs (e.g., weddings, funerals, or births) and family traditions. Discuss differences in literacy practices as well as commonalities. Learn to be a facilitator who guides the group, instead of a general who controls all interactions.

- Link literacy with visual information.

Provide information in the forms of visuals and realia (objects such as phones, staplers, machines, food, and signs) to get a point across. Choose photographs, posters, slides, and videos whose message can be understood without language (e.g., Charlie Chaplin's "The Immigrant," the grape stomping scene from Love Lucy"). Use these visuals to create an atmosphere, illustrate a point, demonstrate a task, elicit a feeling, or pose a problem. Encourage learners to respond in many different ways, allowing them to smell, touch, and manipulate realia and to respond to visuals in both verbal and non-verbal ways (classifying 11 signs or developing strip stories by moving pictures around). Provide opportunities for learners to illustrate their writings with illustrations and photographs and give them a chance to interact without having to depend on language and literacy (e.g., sharing food, organizing a potluck, dancing at (end-of-cycle parties).

- Publish your students' work.

Make room for your students' writing on your walls and in the hallways. Involve them in making signs, labels, and posters. Write their ideas down on large newsprint, tape papers on the wall, and refer to them often. Involve the school in publishing end-of-semester yearbooks, autobiographies, and collections student writings. Use hallways or places where students congregate as a gallery for displaying student work, photos, poems, etc. Encourage learners to invite family and friends to visit and admire their work.

- Don't let learners get "mired in words."

Instead, provide opportunities to get the "big picture." Ask learners to bring in literacy materials they find puzzling, have them explain the context, and enlist the group in guessing what the materials might say. Highlight key words and ask learners to fill in the rest using what they know about the real world. Watch an interesting video with the sound off and have learners create their own stories or (predict what the actors might be saying. Turn on the sound and ask learners to & repeat the phrases they catch. Talk about the way adults learn to listen and read in a second language by linking what they already know about the world with H what they hear and see written.

- Make literacy-learning fun and focus on things that matter.

Students learn best when they have something to say and a reason for paying attention to others. Present a variety of options and then let learners choose what interests them, so they will enjoy their work. Give them opportunities to respond in a variety of ways in class, such as quiet listening, group recitations, non-verbal reactions, and written responses. Encourage and support your students, but challenge them as well.

- Focus on meaning while helping learners see how language works.

Recognize that ESL students need opportunities to use language and literacy for their own purposes. Sometimes, that purpose includes understanding unusual phrases, idiosyncratic pronunciation, or simple grammar rules. At other times, students may wonder what language is appropriate in certain situations, such as what kind of note to write if a teacher's mother has died. Make room in your class for a language awareness session in which you answer questions about structure or assist learners in the editing process. Don't interrupt the flow of communication or authentic reading and writing with explanations about form, structure, or phonics. Keep your explanations simple and don't let the "grammar freaks" trap you into lengthy explanations, especially if you are not certain about the answers. Point curious students toward books or make an appointment for after class. Keep in mind that students learn to read by reading and that they learn to write by writing.

- Trust the learners (and yourself).

Even learners who don't talk or write much can tell you many things about themselves. They do so through the pictures and movies they like, the books they choose to look through, and the smiles they give you when they enjoy an activity. Several strategies can help you find out more about what learners want and need

- Ask them. If you don't share a common language, find someone who does and ask that person to work with you in setting up periodic group discussions (two or three weeks into the session may be a good time to start).

- Provide choices. Present many different kinds of learning opportunities and watch what happens in your classroom.

- Celebrate learning (even small steps count) and encourage literacy experiments.

- Invite your students to assess their own progress and tell you about the challenges they face and the successes they have.

- Use the feedback you receive to make the class work for everyone.

- Invite the community into your classroom.

Bring in guests from the community and from social service agencies and encourage them to interact with your students. Choose speakers who have something important to say and brief them ahead of time. Ask them to bring in pictures, videos, pamphlets, and realia and to keep the literacy demands low. Develop activities that allow your students to understand key concepts and become familiar with key words before the speaker arrives. Ask groups of students to write down the topics that concern them and the questions they want to have answered. Let them predict what the speaker might say. Help your students make connections between what they know, what they are curious about, and the information they expect to receive. Ask your students to respond to the session and evaluate the speaker (e.g., what they liked and didn't like, understood and didn't understand, their favorite new words, etc.).

- Connect literacy to life.

Ask students to tell their stories, share their pictures, and recite their favorite poems or sayings. Give them the opportunity to observe literacy use in a variety of contexts and ask them to listen for interesting language wherever they go. Turn your students into researchers who ask family members, friends, and acquaintances about their experiences with schooling and learning. Ask them to find out about other people's views on language and culture and compare them to their own. Encourage learners to examine the role of literacy in their life and in their communities and help them see how literacy can be used to shape and alter the world.

- Assess success.

As you observe your learners, ask yourself "what is really going on here?" Find ways of recording "literacy incidents," events that show you whether your students are fully engaged in a particular activity or are just "going through the motions." Share your notes. Collaborate with others in your program (coordinators, teachers, and learners) and decide, "what really counts." Define what you mean by success in language, literacy, and learning for the program and develop strategies for capturing small successes along the way. Categorize, analyze, and summarize until a rich picture of your literacy class emerges. Congratulate your students on their achievements. Share your success.

Handout 34

Final Thoughts

Please provide your comments about the study circle as a whole. Answer the questions below and e-mail them to the facilitator.

1. What have you found most valuable?

2. How will the knowledge you have gained in this study circle help you to improve your own teaching practice?

3. Finally, feel free to make any other comments about the study circle.

Appendix A

Sample Letter

Dear Participant:

My name is John Smith and I will be your facilitator for the study circle entitled Teaching Adult ESL Literacy. The first meeting will be on (date) at the (location). Please download directions to this location from e-campus. If this is not possible, feel free to give me a call at (...), or email me at (...), and I will be happy to help you with directions.

For our first meeting, you will need to read Burt, M., Kreeft-Peyton, J., and Adams, R., (2003). Factors Influencing Adult Literacy Development in English. Reading and Adult English Language Learners: A Review of the Research (pp. 7-16). Washington, D.C: Center for Applied Linguistics. Many of the activities of our first session revolve around this article, so it is essential that you read it. Make sure you bring a copy of the book to the first session.

The Study Circle will be about 28hours. There will be five reading assignments, a short oral presentation, and a learning journal that you will keep. If you will not be available for all the sessions, or are in any way unable to commit to our work, please let me know at the first meeting.

I'm very excited about sharing all this information with you, and look forward to our first meeting.
Sincerely,

John Smith

Appendix B

Glossary of selected terms

Alphabetic writing systems

systems in which generally one symbol represents one sound, either a consonant or a vowel

Decoding skills

the skills necessary to analyze and interpret correctly the spoken language and graphic symbols of a familiar language

Frames

onsets, rimes, morphemes, or syllables that show consistent spelling patterns over a number of words

Graph

a real-life written mark on a piece of paper or other surface; a concrete instance of a grapheme

Grapheme

an abstract mental symbol of writing which corresponds to a phoneme in a spoken language

LEA
(Language Experience Approach)

an approach based on activities and stories developed from personal experiences of the learner; the stories about personal experience are written down by a teacher and read together until the learner associates the written form of the word with the spoken

Logographic writing systems

systems in which one symbol represents the concept or meaning of an individual word or part of a word

Morpheme

a unit that signals meaning, such as past tense marking

Morphophonemic relationships

connections between morphemes and letters

Non-alphabet literate

learners fully literate in a language written in a non alphabetic script, such as Chinese

Non-Roman alphabet literate

learners literate in a language written in a non-Roman alphabet, such as Arabic, Greek, Russian

Nonliterate learners who have not had sufficient access to literacy instruction

Onset the first consonant or consonant sequence in a one-syllable word, for example b in <u>b</u>at, c in <u>c</u>at, ch in <u>ch</u>at

Opaque (alphabetic) writing systems, such as those of English and French, in which the correlation between letter and sound is not consistent

Phoneme a basic, theoretical unit of sound that can change the meaning of a word, for example

<u>p</u>in becomes <u>b</u>in

c<u>o</u>t becomes c<u>u</u>t

Phonemic awareness awareness of individual speech sounds or phonemes and the ways they are represented in print

Phonemic relationships connections between sounds and the letters that represent them

Phonological awareness awareness of the way that language is represented in print that includes phonemes, words, syllables, and word breaks

Phonological processing the act of interpreting graphemes as sounds and combing letter strings correctly into pronounceable syllables and words; it includes phonemic awareness and phonological awareness

Preliterate learners whose native language in not written, has only recently been written, or is being developed

Probabilistic reasoning probabilities that certain graphemes will represent certain phonemes, for example

ch = /0/ in fuchsia	less than .5%
ch = /k/ before l, n, r, and in words of Latin or Greek origin	8%
ch = /ʃ/ in words of French origin	less than 1%
ch = /tʃ/ elsewhere	90%

Reasoning by analogy   using contextual information in a form of frames

Rime   the vowel and final consonant or consonants, for example _at as in at, bat, cat, chat

Roman alphabet literate   learners fully literate in a language written in a Roman alphabetic script, such as French, Croatian, Spanish; they know how to read from left to right and recognize letter shape

Semiliterate   learners who have had limited access to literacy instruction

Syllabic writing systems   systems in which one symbol represents a consonant-vowel sequence or a consonant-vowel-consonant sequence of sounds

Syntactic processing   involves using word order (e.g., subject followed by verb) and morphological cues (e.g., past tense and passive voice marking) to understand the meaning of a phrase or sentence as a whole

Schema   background knowledge that a reader has of the world

Schema activating   filling in what is not stated explicitly in the text, using schema

Transparent   (alphabetic) writing system, such as those of German and Spanish, in which the correlation between letter and sound is fairly regular