



## *First-Level Learners*

### **Community Building for Persistence and Achievement in the First-Level ESL Classroom**

*by Elizabeth Harling and Dr. Barbara Berthold*

*Picture an elementary school in Richardson, Texas on a Tuesday morning in May. Fifteen women are gathered in the resource library at their childrens' school. They are part of a beginning-level ESL class, that has met twice a week in this small room for the past several months.*

*Today the room looks different, almost like a sidewalk café. The women are enjoying treats they brought for an end-of-semester party. They are laughing and chatting in English — most of the time. Listening closer, it becomes clear: They are talking about the dishes they prepared for the party. One of the ingredients is powdered sugar. After a side discussion in Urdu about powdered sugar and another consultation in Spanish, a discussion ensues in English about the baking aisle of the grocery store. The teacher is consulted to confirm the location and the label term “confectioner’s sugar.”*

What is noteworthy about this scene from the last class before the summer break? The women in this class come from eleven different cultures with at least five different first languages. Some of them are only partially literate in their native language. They know just enough English to function in most routine survival situations, such as going shopping for fresh produce and meat. They speak slowly, with difficulty, and demonstrate little control over grammar, but they have made great strides in their ability and willingness to communicate in an English-speaking culture.

The curriculum was designed to help them reach a goal they all share: to participate more fully in their children’s education. Their English lessons have focused on developing vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation as well as on creating an understanding of appropriate language use in different social settings, especially in a school environment. Additionally,

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### *Community Building, continued from page 1*

they have focused on life skills necessary to function effectively in two cultures. They maintain their language spoken at home, their inherited customs and cultural approaches – and then are able to enter the English-speaking environment and American culture that their children live in at school each day. At the end of the semester they are able to celebrate their achievements together and transfer their acquired knowledge into a social gathering.

#### **What makes this kind of learning possible?**

Typical of most programs that are attended by first-level adult English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, the women have been taught functional English, words and sentence structures that relate to their lives and that they can apply immediately. Their shared goal – participation in their children's education – has helped focus the class makeup as well as the vocabulary and activities of each session (Larrota, 2009; Comings et al., 1999).

Moreover, the classroom environment encourages the use of language to converse. The women know they are safe; they speak freely and communicate their thoughts and their knowledge without worrying about grammar or pronunciation. They communicate in a social context. To them, it's not a classroom anymore. They are mothers and friends talking about their children's American education. Each lesson provides just the right amount of resources to help them climb the next step on the ladder to succeed (Collins et al., 1989).

Community-building techniques have created an atmosphere for consistent and unconstrained participation (Larrota & Brooks, 2009; Roberts, 2006); they have supported each others' learning, encouraged attendance and created friendships (Kerka, 2005). Students were encouraged to learn about one another from the beginning – finding commonalities like children's ages and activities. Students were introduced to aspects of American culture and encouraged to talk about similarities and differences with their own culture.

Students were taught about American holidays and then asked to tell about their own holidays and customs. Students were asked to work in pairs and in small groups, as well as to work cooperatively as a whole class. Sometimes small groups allowed shared language groups to work together and sometimes the students were paired across first language groups. In all instances, respect for home cultures was expected and modeled, and curiosity about other traditions encouraged.

The satisfaction and social utility of a good first-level ESL class lies in meeting the functional literacy needs of the students, regardless of their first language. Another benefit to these cultur-

ally-diverse classes, is that students can become an English-speaking community of friends within their larger immigrant communities. In the class described above, the learners can use all of their language skills and their culturally-rich backgrounds combined, accessing a wealth of resources to support their children's learning and success in school. In the moment, though, they are just a group of friends sharing a recipe with one another.

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#### **About the Authors**

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## FAREWELLS AND WELCOMES

We hope this issue's articles and resources will be helpful to teachers and programs serving learners at the first levels of Adult Basic Education or in the early stages of learning English as a Second Language.

Just as literacy programs serve a constantly changing and diverse adult learner at all levels, change and diversity of backgrounds is also reflected in the leadership of local programs and state leadership activities. It's exciting when dynamic new leaders join the field, bringing with them new perspectives and creative energy. At the same time, we're always sad to see old friends and valued colleagues ride off into the sunset of retirement, even as we envy their exotic travels and abundant free time!

Here at TCALL, we recently bid farewell to our webmaster for the past 15 years, Melaney Moore Dodson. Melaney's dedication to the field of adult and family literacy was recognized in the form of a special service award from Texas Association for Literacy and Adult Education at TALAE's 2011 conference in February. While we miss Melaney as a beloved coworker and her storehouse of knowledge about TCALL and the field, at the same time, we're delighted to welcome Jorge Goyco to our staff in the webmaster role. Jorge and his family came to Bryan-College Station from the San Antonio area five years ago because of its central location between family members located in east and south central Texas. A graduate of Texas State University-San Marcos (when it was still called Southwest Texas State University) with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Visual Communications, Jorge worked as a designer/production artist for other organizations before starting his own web and print design and production business ten years ago. The fact that Jorge is a fluent Spanish speaker is an unexpected bonus, since TCALL's Literacy Hotline regularly receives callers from Spanish speakers seeking referral to literacy programs around the state.

Along with many of you throughout Texas, we at TCALL will miss another long-time colleague who plans to retire later this year. Stan Ashlock is Director of the Central Region GREAT Center housed in the Education Institute at Texas State University-San Marcos. Stan has worked in the field of adult education for the past 23 years and has provided leadership and vision for sustained quality professional development in the state. The Association of Adult Literacy Professional Developers (AALPD) recently announced that Stan will be awarded their 2011 Partner in Excellence Award. His unassuming and pleasant demeanor, can-do attitude, and knowledge of professional development issues and technology have made Stan a reliable behind-the-scenes leader for many statewide meetings and professional conferences in Texas and around the nation. AALPD will honor Stan at the Annual Awards Luncheon at the COABE (Commission on Adult Basic Education) national conference in San Francisco on April 18, 2011. Congratulations, Stan! We will miss your guitar-picking as well!



Stan Ashlock

Happy Reading,  
Harriet Vardiman Smith

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# Instructional Intensity & Program Performance - More than Just Hours of Contact

by Duren Thompson

I've heard a lot about **instructional intensity** in recent state and national discussions. In particular, the need for increased instructional intensity in order to improve program performance – students achieving goals, making educational gains, etc. While many of these conversations are quite passionate, I am not sure we are at all clear on what it is we really want to change about adult education instruction.

Does instructional intensity simply mean 'total number of hours attended in a single period'? Do we simply need students to attend longer or more frequent classes? Hmm . . . I think we might all agree that a student who studies two hours/day, five days/week is likely to retain more than a (mythically similar) student studying the same material two hours/week for five weeks. Both have ten hours, but because of the "intensity" of the study (lack of downtime between instructional/study times), the material is more likely to take hold.

But "intensity" is more than that, I think. It is also very much dependent on instruction – not only **HOW** we teach, but also **WHAT**. Consider the following scenarios:

**Student A:** Sara enters Program A, takes a standardized assessment, and is placed in a class based on her "lowest functioning level subject area" – which is math at "3.5 grade- level equivalent." The instructor reviews Sara's assessment results and sets her to studying independently in workbooks – for reading in one designed for the 9th-grade level, language arts - 7th-grade level, and math - 3rd-grade level. The instructor points Sara to what he thinks is the "right starting place" in each book, and tells her to "See me with any questions, or when you have completed these three pages." The instructor juggles one-on-one assistance for 12-15 students each day with occasional whole-class lessons on topics he thinks are challenging many of his students. Sara studies all three subject areas simultaneously and is retested according to state policy guidelines.

**Student B:** Mary enters Program B, and during orientation takes a standardized assessment (scoring the same as Sara). Mary then meets with the orientation instructor individually to review her assessment – addressing questions like: "Where do you think you had trouble?", "How did you feel about the math? Fractions seem to be confusing for you, can you show me your process?" etc.) Based on

interview notes, goals, and assessment results, an individualized plan of study is devised for Mary. She is then placed in an appropriate class to study **ONLY math**, in **only specific targeted topics**, until the appropriate retest point is reached per state policy. Her instructor (with a solid base from quality-focused professional development) combines large group, small group, and independent instruction – including peer tutoring/study – to provide scaffolded math support to all his students, including Mary. Only after she gains a level in math will a new learning plan be drafted, adding focused instruction in language arts (reading would not be addressed until both math and language arts are improved another level).

Which student do you think is more likely to show a level gain in 40 hours of instruction? Which student is more likely to see success and keep coming to class for 40 total hours? Which one had greater **intensity of instructional technique** and a **focused curriculum**? (And yet, which example seems more familiar to you?)

I would say **ONE** major factor in retention, progress, and outcomes for Adult Literacy/General Educational Development and English for Speakers of Other Languages learners is the **type** and **quality** of instruction. I know that when I was shown to my first adult education class, I was handed a roster, a pile of folders with applications and assessment score summaries in them, and the textbooks for my "level" of students. On my own time, *I* had to go find a copy of the actual test and read it. *I* had to track down copies of the actual score sheets to see exactly which test items my students missed and then deduce why. *I* had to find and administer informal assessments to figure out where my students were **really** having difficulty and what they **REALLY** needed/wanted to know, and then devise an individualized plan for instruction - with **NO** experience or background in andragogy. If I hadn't done those things, I would have been **JUST** like the teacher in example A. I had a good heart and decent instincts, but I was undirected - winging it. Most of my students liked me, and made decent progress. But **OH**, with what I know now, I could have made much better use of our time and energy.

And I was lucky – my program gave me some good support for my instruction. We had a solid "How do you learn?" orientation program that included the application process, test preparation, assessment, and individual student test discussions (Ford, Knight, and McDonald-Littleton, 2001). I only got new students on

Mondays, after I had gotten the orientation instructors' impressions of each student, and had some time to plan. I cannot imagine what it would be like to have new students drop in any time, and have to handle applications **AND** assessment **AND** on-the-fly-orientation **AS WELL AS** plan **AND** conduct instruction.

Yet I find this last situation is what many instructors **STILL** face today – poor staff communication; inappropriate program structure, inadequate instructor orientation/professional development, and, of course, lack of funding. Luckily, some instructors have good support in perhaps one or more of these areas, and still others are fortunate enough to have support in **ALL** of them – and these programs tend to see greater success. Thus, I'd say that to increase program performance, we need to implement practices that lead to instructors and students **using limited time wisely**

**and effectively** – not just using more time.

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## About the Author

Duren Thompson is a Program Coordinator for Professional Development at the University of Tennessee Center for Literacy Studies in Knoxville. An educator since 1989, Duren has applied innovative research-based educational techniques, particularly technological solutions, to local, state, and national adult education issues for over 15 years.

# Teaching Diverse First-Level Learners with Empathy

by Vishal Arghode and Dr. Debbie Lechuga

## Today's classroom environment

Texas' first-level learners' classrooms are increasingly diverse, particularly with the increase of immigrant and refugee students. As a result of the multiculturalism in classrooms, TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) and ESL (English as a Second Language) instructors working with first-level learners face peculiar challenges which at times are not adequately supported by teacher trainings (Bowen, 2009). Nevertheless, if instructors are mindful about their student needs and backgrounds, students will be encouraged to learn.

One of the starting steps for becoming culturally sensitive is to be aware of our own values and beliefs as adult educators. Teachers also need to recognize their affiliation with "culture, beliefs, biases, and assumptions" (Weinstein, Curran, & Tomlinson-Clarke, 2003, p. 270). There are benefits to this. Culturally-responsive teaching promotes a healthy classroom environment which enhances learning. Therefore adult educators should use different strategies to facilitate cultural sensitivity. One such strategy is teaching with empathy.

## Why empathy?

A study by McAllister and Irvine (2002) found empathy to be an essential trait in teaching diverse learners. Pang (2001) highlighted the strategy of connecting emotionally with students to make teaching culturally relevant. By creating a strong feeling of attachment with students, teachers can create a bond which nurtures cohesiveness. Connecting students with their culture using analogies, metaphors, and examples in a classroom helps in creating a caring and supportive environment for the students. The friendly environment also helps students to interact with and learn from each other through discussions.

Empathy skills also help instructors to connect well with students, which helps nurture the teacher-student relationship. Connecting with students on a personal level breeds confidence amongst students and encourages them to participate, without hesitations, in classrooms. A supportive, friendly environment motivates students to learn and understand the material better. Respecting students' cultural and traditional values and personally connecting with them also help instructors to better understand students' situation. However, there can be disadvantages to connecting too closely with students. Some students might try to connect with the instructors beyond the level of a teacher-student relationship. In such a situation, an instructor may face difficulties in maintaining a healthy teacher-student relationship. This is the most critical and the most difficult part of empathizing with students.

Learning the norms of another culture is challenging for first level learners who are from different backgrounds and requires patience on the part of both teacher and student. However, it nurtures personal connections. Viewing things from students' perspectives has many advantages. It helps teachers to recognize the learning difficulties faced by their students. When students connect with their teachers, they feel more confident and motivated to learn.

## Recommendations for teaching

Fogg (2007) offers some suggestions for teaching with empathy:

1. Instructors should remember at least one desirable quality in each student. This nurtures better teacher-student relationship.
2. Keeping a log of how one does in class especially noting the successes, challenges, and difficulties faced help the instructors to be culturally more sensitive.
3. Receiving feedback from the students which is anonymous can help to formulate strategies to better connect with students.
4. Paraphrasing the statements expressed by the students ensures clarity. This can help to understand things from students' perspectives and reduce ambiguity.
5. If a teacher makes efforts to understand the culture of the students, it inspires students to connect effectively with the teacher.
6. Adult educators should also be patient and considerate of the difficulties faced by the learners in comprehension and application of the learned concepts.

Every student brings a unique combination of values, culture, background, knowledge, and skills to the classroom. This is especially true of first-level learners who are immigrants or refugees. It is a teacher's responsibility to nurture the talent of each student in the classroom by employing strategies that foster learning, diversity, and innovation. We hope that with the suggestions provided in this article, adult educators will be better equipped to address the needs of diverse learners.

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## About the Authors

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# Integrating Technology in the Literacy Level ESL Classroom

by Dr. Glenda L. Rose

A literacy-level English as a Second Language class is never homogenous. Some students have never been to school at all while others have advanced degrees. Even their level of English, while classified as “literacy” varies greatly. Managing these challenges well is what distinguishes an okay literacy class from a dynamic one and teachers gifted for this level love the challenge.

Another challenge that arises in this digital age is introducing technology in the literacy level class. Here are some suggestions for integrating technology at the lowest levels.

- 1) Start with a technology project that does NOT require a computer: cell phones! Even the basic cell phones nowadays have a camera. Send them out in small groups to take pictures of items that pertain to your unit of study. For example, in the first weeks, literacy classes usually cover school and class vocabulary. Make it a scavenger hunt! Create a list of places, people, or items for students to find in the school and a time limit. Or, ask students to take pictures of things they want to know how to say around the school that are not in the unit. Most units do not include items such as “water fountain” or “snack machine,” for example.
- 2) If your classroom only has access to one or two computers, create small groups to work on projects. One project that has been very successful in the past is the creation of photo stories. Photo Story 3 is a free and easy program that you can download from Microsoft®. Arrange your groups with at least one proficient computer user. Help them identify a story that they want to create (hometowns, favorites, hobbies, etc.). Then the members of the group can contribute the pictures. The group expert can be the keyboard person while others give ideas and feedback on how to arrange the story.
- 3) For classes with few or no experts, begin with basics. One of the best exercises in the classroom is to open an old, bulky computer and identify the basic parts. Have the students practice hooking up the hardware: mouse, keyboard, printer, speakers, microphone, etc. It helps to point out the color coding on most of the connections. Talk about the different kinds of connections. You can repeat this exercise for a few minutes at the start of every class and pretty soon students will show less anxiety about making a connection error.
- 4) Once the mystery of the computer has been addressed, help novice users overcome the fear of actually using the computer. Begin with something as turning it on and shutting it down. Then add how to use the mouse and an overview of the keyboard. (One site for mouse practice is [www.seniornet.org/howto/mouseexercises/mousepractice.html](http://www.seniornet.org/howto/mouseexercises/mousepractice.html).) Typing games are also a favorite among literacy level students. Typing Tutor is one simple program that students have used successfully. If your text has an internet or computer component, utilize it. At the literacy level, these programs are generally “point and click” exercises which students can learn to master quickly.
- 5) Have students create an email. Almost every practice site or resource on the Web asks for an email, so help students create an account. You may want to create a standard email format for your class and keep a log of their “class” email and password (*MariaR\_Dr.Rose@gmail.com*, for example). Novice computer users frequently lose their password and since they don’t have another email account, they lose access to the account they created.
- 6) Be sure to include information about computer safety. In a family literacy program, you can cover this in parenting, but in any program it is important to stress how to protect your computer and your identity. As a group activity, create scenarios and have students determine how to respond. You can take actual emails out of your SPAM to use as examples.
- 7) Use webquests to help students learn to use search engines effectively. If you have limited computer or internet use, talk with other organizations, such as a public library, school, or Workforce Center, to see if your class can schedule a day and time to use the computers there. If not, assign it as an out-of-class assignment for small groups, and most students will find some way to complete it.
- 8) Introduce social media. It’s likely that some students know someone using Facebook or Twitter. While these networks are blocked by most school districts, students find ways to use them, even if they don’t have a computer at home. Create a class group page and encourage students to interact with you and each other by sharing photos, videos, notes and so on.
- 9) Begin to introduce Office products. (OpenOffice is a free alternative to Microsoft® if funds are an issue.) Word is the easiest at first and students can produce beautiful

reports using templates from Microsoft® without really having to know how to do much more than type. PowerPoint can be used to create fairly sophisticated presentations with very little difficulty. Publisher would be the next product to consider followed by Excel and Access, depending on your class interest and level.

For more ideas and information, check with your GREAT center

for professional development opportunities on integrating technology into the classroom.

### About the Author

Dr. Rose is an EL Civics and Distance Learning teacher at the Austin Learning Academy. She also consults for the Central GREAT Center.

## In a Nutshell: Teaching Tips for New Teachers of Low-Level ESL Learners

by Bronwyn Bowen

Unfortunately, not all ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers have had the benefit of formal training in the field. Teachers new to teaching Beginning or Beginning Literacy levels can be overwhelmed with creating lesson plans that include necessary thematic units and that meet the state's standards and benchmarks in speaking, listening, reading and writing activities. New teachers feel particularly challenged when they can't speak French, Swahili or Chinese and their students have little or no English.

Based on my experience of teaching low-level beginners from many different countries, here is a simple list of teaching techniques that may seem obvious to long-time teachers, but these guidelines are very practical for new teachers of very low levels.

1. **Learn your students' names and try to pronounce them correctly.** Names are important to people. Learning their names and pronouncing them correctly are signs of respect.
2. **Know something about their countries and/or culture.** Know where they are on the map; know how to pronounce them.
3. **Have them teach you something in their language.** Being willing to learn their language shows that you respect their language and their culture. "Hello," "thank you," or "goodbye" are good phrases to learn.
4. **Go slowly.** Move through the material slowly. Let your students guide you on when to move on to something new. If you can, talk a little more slowly than you normally might.
5. **Units are theme-based.** Themes are practical (food, clothing, health, etc.) and vocabulary is easier to remember if the words relate to each other. Context is the key.
6. **Instruction is activity-based.** In my experience, the more you talk, the less they understand. The more they do something other than just listen, the more they understand.
7. **Try to find lots of supporting activities.** It is very helpful to teach the same point in several different ways, since these learners probably will not get it at first.
8. **Repetition is welcomed by most students.** This builds their confidence and makes the material begin to feel familiar, which leads to a feeling of mastery.
9. **The more concrete, the better.** Abstract ideas do not work well at this level. Pictures and real items ("realia") are visual. If you are teaching food, for example, use pictures, or even better, use plastic or real food. If you are teaching clothing, use the clothes people are wearing in class. If you are teaching health, bring in thermometers, band-aids, and prescription bottles.
10. **Use dictionaries.** Picture dictionaries should be a staple in every low-level classroom because a picture really is worth a thousand words. Since magazines are also a great source of real-life pictures, use them to build a picture file. English/foreign language dictionaries are very helpful for words you just cannot act out or draw. If learners are literate in their own languages, you can find the word in English and show them the word in their language, even if you cannot read or pronounce it.
11. **Revisit topics frequently.** Beginners usually do not get it the first, second or even the third time. Go back and review important points often.
12. **Working in pairs and small groups is better than individual effort.** Students help each other and if you can pair people with different languages, they will have to communicate in English. It also prevents learners who cannot work on their own from becoming discouraged. Pair people in different ways – by language, by ability, or randomly for some activity every day.

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*In a Nutshell..., continued from page 7*

13. **Games reinforce learning.** Any form of Bingo, Concentration or another game is fun and students are often competitive. Games are also a break from the students' often very difficult and stressful lives.
14. **These learners need a lot of individual attention.** This is where volunteers and smaller classes are very helpful. If you have neither, plan smaller segments of material and build in work time when you can check students' progress.
15. **Be patient.** Both with your students and with yourself. It is frustrating when they do not learn the material you have worked really hard on. Remind yourself that a new language is difficult. Since students have unrealistic expectations about learning English in a very short time, they may get frustrated at their slow pace. Be patient.
16. **Don't let them call you "Teacher."** This is a matter of debate among teachers but I feel strongly that, while "Teacher" is a respectful title in most of their countries, it prevents them from seeing you as a person rather than a position. Their

children use the standard form of address of using names in public school. By insisting my students call me by a name ("BB"), I have gotten a significantly better response in class. Teach them that in the U.S., it is respectful to use a person's name.

17. **These students are not children.** Although they have limited or no English and may seem to know as little about our language and culture as children, these students have a multitude of life experiences. Do not treat them like kids.
18. **Have fun!** If you have fun, they will have fun. And if the class is enjoyable and relaxed, they will keep coming. And if they keep coming, they will learn.

#### **About the Author**

Bronwyn Bowen, ESL Coordinator of the Abilene Adult Education Program, has taught ESL at all levels, with several years teaching very low-level, nonliterate refugees. She earned her ESOL certification at the New School University in New York.

## **The Reading Challenge for Beginning-Level English Language Learners**

*by Joyce Bogdan*

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers, encounter two distinct problems with the concept of teaching reading to beginning-level English Language Learners (ELLs). On one hand, some ESOL students are fluent readers in their first language (L1) but are at the beginner level of learning the English language. On the other hand, some students in L1 need to learn the most basic literacy skills while acquiring basic survival English vocabulary.

The ESOL student who is a fluent reader in L1 has an easier job learning to read in the new language. Their focus is learning new vocabulary and listening to other English speakers. When I teach my adult beginners, I use a basic picture dictionary which is organized in units of study with a manageable amount of vocabulary. I introduce the new vocabulary, have students repeat the new words for practice in pronunciation, and allow students to ask for repetition on difficult words. They can translate the words into L1, draw a picture to represent the word or write a key word. They can also write the pronunciation in their first language.

I use workbook pages for practice. By using the vocabulary the students have an opportunity to learn the new words in context. They also learn directions in order to complete the work. I write the correct answers on the board so that the students can write in

and check their responses. After the unit of study is introduced, I add other materials such as conversations and short stories. We create stories about a picture. The students begin with, "I see. . ." and use the new words. I write the corrected English sentences on a word web and everyone adds ideas.

In contrast, the ESOL student lacking basic literacy skills in L1 adds another challenge to the process of learning another language. Many of these students had limited access to schooling in their native country. Therefore, they had a lack of opportunity to gain an education, not a lack of the ability to learn. The student needs to be shown the correct way to follow information and be prepared with the correct materials. I usually stand in front of the students, help them find the page and point to the words as I say them to the class. I encourage them to repeat the words after me. I write the responses on a paper and try to have them copy my answers onto their papers. They need time to learn this new skill of writing and the practice will build up the muscles in their hand and arm. This is when they can begin to read the words that they have written.

If we are going to practice reading a passage, I read it first at a normal native speaking pace so that all of the students can hear the correct intonation and inflection in the language. Then I slow



down and have the students' repeat short phrases after me. I ask for volunteers read the piece out loud. Then I call on the stronger readers first and help with the words that are difficult. As each student reads, everyone gets to listen to the piece again and again. For the students who cannot read, I point to the word, say it while the student repeats after me. I call it miming. I have to start with one word at a time and as the semester continues I can increase to two or three word phrases as the students learn to read.

The ESOL student who has had a better education learns the new language more quickly. In order for students to move to the advanced level, the student needs to be able to listen, speak, read and write at the intermediate level. Some students who have studied English before coming to the U.S. learn the new language sooner, pass the test, and go to the next level. Those who lack basic literacy skills in L1 will be at the beginning-level class for a longer time. During the time that they are in my class, I send home worksheets to help to teach needed skills. They could be preprimary skills, primary skills as well as, the English sound system. I enlist the help of the student's sponsor family for additional

support.

Some students have been enrolled in my beginner class for a couple of years. It is a pleasure when they learn how to write answers taken from the board. It is also exciting to watch them when they begin to read their first words and later learn the needed skills to take a test. Teaching ESOL is a challenge. Adult beginners run the gamut from no education in their own country to doctorate-level degrees. I have found that all students want to learn and that by creating a nurturing environment the students will help each other as they take part in their education.

#### About the Author

Joyce Bogdan has been an educator for many years and her background includes a master's degree. She is certified for elementary education in K-8 and Bilingual/Bicultural, ESOL K-12, and adults. She has taught students at all levels and from around the world. She presently teaches middle school, adult beginners and a distance learning course 'Teaching English Language Learners (ELLs)' at Chapman University; Orange, CA.

## Resources for Writing Instruction at the Beginning Levels

by Ken Appelt, TCALL Program Manager

When I agreed to write an article on evidenced-based writing instructional practices for beginning literacy-level adult students, I had no idea how difficult it would be to actually find research on writing that studied this population. From Australia and New Zealand to Canada and the United Kingdom, research on writing instruction follows far behind research on reading instruction. Most of the writing research that is available is focused on mid-level students or on preparing students for General Education Development testing and transition to postsecondary education.

But evidence-based practice is not entirely based on research; it is also based on *professional wisdom*. Practitioners in the classroom discover what works well *through experience*. Professional wisdom also includes principles and practices that are "widely agreed upon by experienced and knowledgeable practitioners in the field." So to offer some suggestions for writing instruction with first-level learners, I will rely for the most part on these *consensus views* and wisdom from experienced practitioners. (Find more on Evidence-based Practice in my article from the April 2009 issue of this publication or online at [www-tcall.tamu.edu/newsletr/apr09/apr09f.html](http://www-tcall.tamu.edu/newsletr/apr09/apr09f.html).)

However, it is worth mentioning one recent research study of adult writing by the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NDRC) in the United Kingdom.

NRDC, a consortium of partners led by the Institute of Education at University of London, conducted a series of five studies from 2003 to 2007 called the Effective Practice Studies. *Effective Teaching and Learning: Writing* (Grief, 2007) observed classroom instructional practices in writing to identify the most promising practices. The following effective teaching practices would apply to all levels, even though not specifically about beginning-level learners.

#### Teachers' practice

- Learners spend time on the composition of texts of different kinds.
- Meaningful contexts are provided for writing activities.
- Time is given for discussion about writing and the writing task.
- Individual feedback and support are provided as learners engage in composition.

#### Teaching and learning relationships

- A flexible approach to teaching and responsiveness to learners' concerns as *they arise* has a positive impact on progress in writing.
- Practice that makes a *strong link with the real world beyond the class* may help learners to feel more confident,

*continued on page 10*

particularly in the everyday writing tasks they undertake at home.

**Consensus views** on writing for beginning-level students may be best represented in our own *Texas Adult Education Content Standards and Benchmarks for ABE/ASE and ESL Learners*. This document identifies the skills and knowledge that students should gain at each level. The Texas standards and benchmarks were written by practitioners from across the state; they are practices that are “widely agreed upon by experienced and knowledgeable practitioners in the field.” Within the benchmarks for both ESL and ABE students for the content standard **Convey Ideas in Writing**, you will find examples of writing activities and assignments that are appropriate to each of the levels. The *Examples of Proficient Performance* also give examples of the kinds of writing learners should be able to produce at the completion of that level.

I also asked my colleagues in professional development at the GREAT Centers for their suggestions of materials useful for teaching writing with lower-level students. My thanks go to Stan Ashlock, Dr. Emily Miller Paine, Tina Washco, Maria J. Cesnik, and Dr. Heide Spruck Wrigley; here are some of their suggestions based on years of teaching experience:

#### Actions and Activities:

The *Language Experience Approach* has been used successfully with beginning-level learners and low-literacy refugees for a long time.

- Connect oral language and written language (listen, retell, write)
- Use visual organizers for pre-writing – especially with beginning levels
- Use guided writing, including using sentence frames
- Use writing models that students will see in their lives (letter, school notes, forms)
- Structure collaborative writing groups – discuss, plan, draft, get feedback as a group
- Use sentence combining to help students see logical relationships between ideas
- Deconstruct and study the organization of different types of writing
- Use “write-alouds” to model writing and writer’s thought process
- Use project-based learning and presentation of the findings to the class
- Use maps and charts as information sources for writing
- Teach summarizing skills and give regular practice
- Conference with students on their writing
- Use dialogue journals
- Use high quality pictures as writing prompts
- Use mini-lessons to teach mechanics issues observed in student writing

#### Professional Development Training:

“Overcoming the Challenges: Basic Communication Skills for Beginning Literacy ESL Learners.” (BLES) A Texas statewide training initiative developed in 2009 by Alex Baez & Carol Speigl with the GREAT Centers and Texas CAELA working group.

#### Teacher Books and Teaching Materials:

\* These titles are available in the TCALL library

*Writing: Research, Theory, and Applications* by Stephen Krashen (December 1991) Laredo Publishing Company.

\* *Learners’ Lives as Curriculum: Six Journeys to Immigrant Literacy* by

Gail Weinstein, Editor (1999). McHenry, IL: Delta Systems and the Center for Applied Linguistics.

*Stories to Tell Our Children* by Gail Weinstein (1992). Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle Publishers, Inc.

\* *Our Lives: Authentic Student Stories for Developing Reading and Writing Skills* by Myron Berkman (1990). Palatine, IL: Linmore Publishing.

*Research in basic writing: A bibliographic sourcebook* by M. G. Moran & M.J. Jacobi (1990). New York: Greenwood Press.

*Reading/writing connections: Learning from research* by J.W. Irwin & M.A. Doyle (Eds.) (1992). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

*Rethinking basic writing: Exploring identity, politics, and community in interaction* by Laura Gray-Rosendale (2000). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum & Associates.

\* *Elementary Composition Practice: Book 2* by Linda Lonon Blanton (1979). Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers, Inc.

*Composition Practice, Books 1 through 4: A Text for English Language Learners (Third Edition)* by Linda Lonon Blanton (2001). Boston, MA: Heinle ELT

A new national professional development and technical assistance initiative, the Teaching Excellence in Adult Literacy (TEAL) Project, is focused on ABE writing instruction. TEAL is assisting several states including Texas as they put into practice the research in writing instruction for ABE learners. Teachers selected for the project are implementing practices in their classroom instruction and will provide feedback to TEAL on their problems and successes, working together to refine both materials and approaches. This three-year project is being implemented by the American Institutes for Research.

#### Resources

Bello, T. (1997). *Improving ESL learners’ writing skills*. ERIC Digest. Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education. (ED No. 409 746) Retrieved from [www.cal.org/caela/esl\\_resources/digests/Writing.html](http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/digests/Writing.html)

Condelli, L., Wrigley, H. S., Yoon, K., Seburn, M. & Cronen, S. (2003). *What works study for adult ESL literacy students*. Washington, DC: US Department of Education.

Graham, S., & Perin, D. (2007). *Writing next: Effective strategies to improve writing of adolescents in middle and high schools –A report to Carnegie Corporation of New York*. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education. Retrieved from [www.all4ed.org/files/WritingNext.pdf](http://www.all4ed.org/files/WritingNext.pdf)

Grief, S., Meyer, B., and Burgess, A. (2007). *Effective teaching and learning: Writing*. London: NRDC. This study and related effective practice materials can be downloaded from the NRDC Website at [www.nrdc.org.uk](http://www.nrdc.org.uk)

Grief, S., (2007). *Collaborative Writing*. London: NRDC. This development report which explains procedures and materials needed for implementation of this effective classroom practice can be downloaded from the NRDC Website at [www.nrdc.org.uk](http://www.nrdc.org.uk)

Kelly, S., Soundranayagam, L. and Grief, S. (2004). *Teaching and Learning Writing: a review of research and practice*. London: National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy.

Peyton, J.K. (1993). *Dialogue journals: Interactive writing to develop language and literacy*. ERIC Digest. Washington, DC: National Center for ESL Literacy Education. (EDRS No. ED 354 789) Retrieved from [www.cal.org/caela/esl\\_resources/digests/Dialogue\\_Journals.html](http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/digests/Dialogue_Journals.html)

# Book Review: Understanding Adult Functional Literacy

*by Dr. Debbie Lechuga, TCALL Research Associate*

White, S. (2011). *Understanding Adult Functional Literacy: Connecting text features, task demands, and respondent skills*. New York: Routledge.

One of the latest books released on adult literacy offers a new theory of functional literacy. *Understanding Adult Functional Literacy: Connecting Text Features, Task Demands, and Respondent Skills* is written by Dr. Sheida White, Director of the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) and Technical Director of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Writing Assessment. In this book, Dr. White presents the text-task-respondent (TTR) theory, which expands upon prior frameworks of adult literacy. She believes that the ability to do everyday literacy tasks is a working combination of the text, cognitive and linguistic tasks, and the reader.

Although the book is intended primarily for assessment developers and educational measurement researchers, it contains many practical and concrete ideas useful to teachers. The book is divided into six chapters. Chapter One is an introduction to the book and gives the history of how Dr. White developed the TTR theory. The emphasis of the theory is on the *integration* of three components required for literacy. This is unlike frameworks that merely describe factors that may or may not interact with each other. According to Dr. White the TTR theory explains how an adult’s ability to be functionally literate is the combination of:

- **Text features** or characteristics of prose, document, and quantitative tasks;
- Seven cognitive and linguistic processes called **task demands**;
- Seven corresponding sets of skills (called **respondent skills**) that learners need in order perform the task demands.

Chapter Two focuses on the seven cognitive and linguistic **task demands** that adults must be able to do in order to be functionally literate. These seven tasks are: 1.) Read words; 2.) Comprehend sentences; 3.) Search text; 4.) Identify computations; 5.) Perform computations; 6.) Infer meaning; and 7.) Apply information.

The seven tasks expand on the basic model that Reading Comprehension is the result of Decoding and Language Comprehension (Gough, 1996). Decoding and Comprehension are still included in the seven task demands; decoding is the same as task number 1 (*read words*) and language comprehension is the same as task number 2 (*comprehend sentences*). Task 3 (*search text*) is the process of searching the texts as a purpose-driven or strategic task in order to find specific information. Task 4 (*identify computations*) includes figuring out which numbers and which arithmetic operations (such as addition or multiplication) must be used. Task 5 is *perform computations*, which is the ability for the person to carry out the addition or multiplication that is necessary. Task 6 (*infer meaning*) is the ability make inferences while reading the text. Finally, Task 7, *apply information*, is making use of the information gathered from completing the prior six tasks. Some examples of this task are making comparisons, making predictions, evaluating, or setting goals.

Chapter Three covers the seven **respondent skills** needed to perform each of the seven **task demands** mentioned in Chapter Two. Each task demand is paired with its corresponding respondent skill:

<b>Task Demand</b>	<b>Respondent Skill</b>
Read words	➤ Basic reading skills
Comprehend sentences	➤ Language comprehension skills
Search text	➤ Text search skills
Identify computations	➤ Computation identification skills
Perform computations	➤ Computation performance skills
Infer meaning	➤ Inferential skills
Apply information	➤ Application skills

In Chapter Four, Dr. White discusses which **text features** make **task demands** easier or more difficult for adults to perform each task. “Facilitators” is what Dr. White calls text features that make tasks easier; “Inhibitors” are text features that make tasks more difficult. The chapter also identifies 34 text features that are either facilitators, inhibitors, or both.

*continued on page 12*

### Book Review, continued from page 11

Chapter Five describes the text-task-respondent theory in great theoretical depth. In addition, the chapter presents the assumptions behind the theory. Chapter Six discusses the limitations of the theory and directions for future research and practitioners. One noted limitation is the absence of computer literacy, writing, and online literacy tasks. There is also a question of whether the theory adequately describes the 3% of adults who are at the lowest literacy levels and the 3% of adults with learning disabilities.

Despite its limitations, the theory has several practical implications for teachers. For example, the pairing of individual task demands with a corresponding skill helps teachers focus their instruction depending on the area of need. The theory can help teachers determine the literacy strengths and weaknesses of literacy and English language learners. The list of 34 text features that are identified as either task facilitators or inhibitors is a helpful tool for teachers to adjust their instruction, with concrete ideas on how to adjust to the level of the learner.

The book is highly theoretical and technical at times, but it provides very concrete ideas useful to teachers. Most notably, the TTR theory is derived from the National Assessment of Adult Literacy and National Assessment of Educational Progress data. Readers can be assured that the theory is grounded in adult literacy research.

To borrow a copy of the book, please contact our library at [tcall@tamu.edu](mailto:tcall@tamu.edu).

## TALAE Announces New ESL Student Persistence Award

Each year, Texas Association for Literacy & Adult Education (TALAE) sets aside membership dues to provide scholarships for TALAE student members who have earned their General Educational Development credential (GED) and want to pursue higher education. This year, TALAE has added a new award to recognize adult English as a Second Language (ESL) students who have shown exceptional determination through their effort, persistence, leadership, and community involvement. Winning is an honor for the student, the teacher, and the program.

One ESL Student Persistence Award will be given for each of the eight adult education service regions in Texas, and each program is encouraged to make a nomination. Only teachers who are TALAE members may nominate a student. The student, teacher, and program director must all be active members of TALAE at the time the nomination is made.

**The amount of the ESL Student Persistence Award is \$500. August 25, 2011 is the deadline to nominate students for the 2010-2011 Award.**

### Eligibility

- Nominee must be at least eighteen years old.
- Nominee must have significant adult responsibilities such as employment or family.
- Nominee must have been an adult education student within nine months prior to the nomination date.
- Nominee must have completed 120 adult education contact hours.
- Nominee must be a student member of TALAE at the time the nomination is made.

### Criteria for Selection

- Has visibly improved the life situation of self/others as a result of their adult education experience
- Has demonstrated leadership within/without the learning environment
- Has maintained family, civic, or employment responsibilities at a high level while pursuing educational goals
- Has exhibited a supportive, cooperative spirit toward fellow students while engaged in adult learning
- Has indicated continued commitment to pursuing further education, either through adult education classes or higher education

### Nomination Procedure

A teacher who is a TALAE member must nominate the student using the current ESL Student Persistence Award nomination form. Using as much details as necessary, describe the effects of adult education on the life of the student that you are nominating. Include information about each of the following:

- The educational level of the student prior to pursuing adult education opportunities.
- The circumstances of life surrounding the student prior to pursuing adult education.
- The specific education program(s) which the student has used to pursue adult education opportunities. Identify the program(s), length of time enrolled, hours per week in class, and the total number of hours spent in adult education to date of nomination.
- Describe any awards, achievements, or recognitions that the student has earned within, or outside the educational organization.
- Summarize how the nominee meets the selection criteria.
- Nominee's Statement that answers the following questions:
  - Why, as an adult, did you decide to continue your education?
  - Who are the special people who may have influenced you to pursue adult education, or who supported you to persist in spite of circumstances?
  - How has the adult education classes changed you?
  - What are your future plans?

The nomination form can be downloaded on the Scholarships page of TALAE's website, which can be found under the "Organizations" menu button on TCALL's home page ([www-tcall.tamu.edu](http://www-tcall.tamu.edu)).

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## RESOURCES FOR AND ABOUT TEACHING FIRST-LEVEL LEARNERS

### ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

***Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction.*** Beck, Isabel L. and McKeown, Margaret G. and Kucan, Linda (2002). New York, NY: The Guilford Press. Exciting and engaging vocabulary instruction can set students on the path to a lifelong fascination with words. This book provides a research-based framework and practical strategies for vocabulary development with children from the earliest grades through high school. The authors emphasize instruction that offers information about words and their uses and enhances students' language comprehension and production. Teachers are guided in selecting words for instruction; developing student-friendly explanations of new words; creating meaningful learning activities; and getting students involved in thinking about, using, and noticing new words both within and outside the classroom. The book contains many concrete examples, sample classroom dialogues, and exercises for teachers. Appendices include suggestions for trade books that help children enlarge their vocabulary and/or have fun with different aspects of words.

***Conquering Math Phobia: A Painless Primer.*** Clawson, Calvin C. (1991). New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc. This book is aimed at people who suffer from math phobia, teaching basic calculating skills, one easy step at a time. Clear examples of how math applies to everyday living are included, as well as illustrations to help the reader grasp concepts. Cultural myths that block the average person from becoming math literate are explored as well.

***Enriching Our Lives: Poetry Lessons for Adult Literacy Teachers and Tutors.*** Kazemek, Francis E. and Rigg, Pat (1995). Newark, DE: International Reading Association. This ready-to-use handbook provides nine complete, detailed lessons using poetry that will help teachers and tutors of adult new readers and writers. Each lesson focuses on a different type of poetry and is written in a clear, step-by-step format. Chapters deal with skills such as spelling, punctuation, and grammar; ways to incorporate computers; ways to initiate student publishing; and additional resources for teachers and tutors.

***Exploring What Counts: Mathematics Instruction in Adult Basic Education.*** Mullinex, Bonnie (1994). Boston, MA: World Education. This is a report on the Research into Adult Basic Education Mathematics (RABEM) Project. This study explored five key aspects of the mathematics instructional context: the program context, the instructional environment, the ABE math instructor, the adult learner, and the content, curriculum and support materials used in math instruction.

***Graphic Novels Series.*** Various Authors, 2007-2008. Edina, MN: ABDO Publishing. In an article for the June 2006 *English Journal*, Gretchen Schwarz says about graphic novels: "In an increasingly visual culture,

literacy educators can profit from the use of graphic novels in the classroom, especially for young adults. The term graphic novel includes fiction as well as nonfiction text with pictures—'comics' in book format." Each set of Graphics Novels described below is loaned separately. Each novel is 22-30 pages long.

#### ***Graphic Novels: Biographies***

This set of 8 biographies is written on a 3.9 to 4.4 reading level. It contains the biography of Abraham Lincoln, Anne Frank, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, Jackie Robinson, Lewis and Clark, Patrick Henry, and the Wright Brothers.

#### ***Graphic Novels: Classics***

This set of 6 classics is written on a 2.2 to 3.5 reading level. It contains the titles: *Around the World in 80 Days*, *Moby Dick*, *Peter Pan*, *Robin Hood*, *The Time Machine*, and *White Fang*.

#### ***Graphic Novels: Fantastic Four***

This set of 4 comics is written on a 2.4 to 2.9 reading level. The 4 books follow the adventures of the Fantastic Four in *Come Out and Fight Like a (Molecule) Man*; *Doom, Where's My Car?!*; *Law of the Jungle*; and *The Master of Sound*.

#### ***Graphic Novels: Comics: GI Joe Sigma 6***

This set of 6 comics is written on a 2.0 to 2.7 reading level. The 6 books follow the adventures of G.I. Joe Sigma 6 in *Big Time*, *Depth*, *High Fashion*, *Homecoming*, *Kumite*, and *Widgets*.

#### ***Graphic Novels: Comics: Spider-Man***

This set of 4 comics is written on a 2.8 to 3.6 reading level. The 4 books follow the adventures of Spider-Man in *Breaking Up is Venomous to Do*, *Dust-Up in Aisle Seven!*, *Fashion Victims!*, and *World War G*.

#### ***Graphic Novels: Comics: The Avengers***

This set of 4 comics is written on a 3.0 to 3.6 reading level. The 4 books follow the adventures of The Avengers in *Finding Zemo*, *The Leader Has a Big Head*, *The Masters of Evil*, and *The Replacements*.

#### ***Graphic Novels: Comics: X-Men First Class***

This set of 4 comics is written on a 2.5 to 3.2 reading level. The 4 books follow the adventures of X-Men First Class in *The Bird, The Beast, and the Lizard*; *A Life of the Mind*; *Seeing Red*; and *X-Men 101*.

#### ***Graphic Novels: History***

This set of 8 histories is written on a 3.7 to 5.7 reading level. It contains the titles: *The Battle of the Alamo*, *The Bombing of Pearl Harbor*, *The Boston Tea Party*, *The California Gold Rush*, *Miracle on Ice (1980 U. S.*

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Books and other resources described in the Library section may be requested for a 30-day loan. We will mail each borrower up to five loan items at a time (just two for first-time borrowers), and even include a postage-paid return address sticker for mailing them back to us! Borrowers must be affiliated with a non-profit program providing adult or family literacy services. Annotated bibliographies of our entire library of resources are available in hard copy by request, and the library can also be searched in 'real time' on our website ([www-tcall.tamu.edu](http://www-tcall.tamu.edu)). Call 800-441-7323 or email [tcall@tamu.edu](mailto:tcall@tamu.edu) to check out materials described here or to request hard copy listings of even more resources.

Olympic hockey team), Moon Landing (1969 landing), The Titanic, and The Underground Railroad.

#### **Graphic Novels: Horror**

This set of 6 horror stories is written on a 2.4 to 5.1 reading level. It contains the titles: The Creature from the Depths, Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde, Frankenstein, The Legend of Sleepy Hollow, Mummy, and Werewolf.

*Ask the TCALL Library staff about other high-interest reading series and individual books for adult new readers.  
Call 800-441-READ or email [tcall@tamu.edu](mailto:tcall@tamu.edu).*

**KET Math Basics Series.** Monroe, Eula Ewing (1993). Lexington, KY: Kentucky Educational Television. Designed for adults who have had difficulty understanding basic math, this video series aims to help them develop "number sense," or an understanding of what math is all about and to develop confidence in problem solving. It can also be used to help students prepare to begin GED study. Available only in VHS tape format, the Teacher Guide, Preview Video, and 15 video programs cover basic topics in math including measurement and estimation. Videos are loaned individually by the Clearinghouse Library to Texas educators ONLY. Email the library staff for more information about the series components ([tcall@tamu.edu](mailto:tcall@tamu.edu)).

**The Literacy Kit.** Grimminck, Robert (2000). Ontario, Canada: Folker Press Publishing. Designed for youth, adult, and ESL learners, the kit includes four progressive readers that progress from single words paired with pictures through paragraph-length stories. "User Friendly English" book uses color-coded visuals to instruct students in grammar and writing. CD provides "follow and read" audio component and "Word Log" software, enabling learners to construct a personal vocabulary log. Once a functionally illiterate adult, the author learned to read and write in a Canadian literacy program. Loan set includes six books, CD-ROM and pamphlet and is available for checkout to Texas Educators ONLY.

**My Dear Friend: A Basic Writing Program for Adults.** Gerstner-Horvarth, Marilyn (1992). Largo, FL: Longmuir/Jones Publishing, Inc. This book incorporates a creative way to teach writing skills. A new writing skill, such as how to be clear in your writing, is addressed. Then the author writes a letter to the student, and the student is asked to respond by writing a letter back. This resource is intended for use with students who are not accustomed to writing.

**The Spelling Toolbox.** Kita-Bradley, Linda (2002). Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: Grass Roots Press. Most spelling workbooks emphasize the mastery of new words, rather than the mastery of spelling strategies. This workbook (readability: grades 3 - 4) teaches adult students a repertoire of spelling strategies or "tools," that can be used to spell any word. Workbook provides an introductory lesson that describes the spelling "tools", and 20 thematically organized units on the topics of home, com-

munity, work, health, and writing. In each unit, the student learns how to spell 15 words by using phonics, syllabication, word families, mnemonics, and common spelling rules. In order to create interest, the origins of words are presented throughout the workbook. Teacher's notes are included. Series includes Workbooks 1, 2, and 3, each loaned separately.

**Strategic Spelling: Moving Beyond Word Memorization in the Middle Grades.** Wheatley, Jonathan P. (November 2005). Newark, DE: International Reading Association. Strategic Spelling provides a powerful alternative to traditional word-memorization spelling programs. The classroom-tested, research-based methodology is built on four core principles to help teachers better match classroom instruction with how students access real-world spelling.

**Teaching Adults: A Literacy Resource Book.** Laubach Literacy Action (1994). Syracuse, NY: New Readers Press. For both new and experienced adult literacy tutors or teachers, this handbook pulls together many of the "best practice" ideas in the field; includes basic information needed to begin assessment, goal setting, and lesson planning; discusses the special needs and characteristics of adult learners; and emphasizes the importance of adapting instruction to fit individual learner needs. Resources include 69 easy-to-use activities, such as creating language experience stories, working with dialog journals, and developing story maps; and appendices listing reference material.

**Think, Write, Share: Process Writing for Adult ESL and Basic Education Students.** Scane, Joyce; Guy, Anne Marie, and Wenstrom, Lauren (1994). San Diego, CA: Dominie Press, Inc. This book offers insight from research on the writing process. Also includes suggestions for techniques and activities to use in teaching the writing process, including using computers in process writing.

**TV 411 Video Series.** Adult Literacy Media Alliance (2003). New York: Education Development Center, Inc. TV411 is a made up of a television series, accompanying print workbooks and an interactive website. The 30-minute video programs, print materials and web site can be used together or independently, and are designed to provide the opportunity for accessible, self-paced learning. They can be used by individual learners from their homes or in classroom and community settings, and are designed for adults at the pre-GED level who are in need of improving their reading, writing and mathematics skills. The magazine format combines situation comedy, documentary, sports entertainment, and talk show, with a rigorous instructional focus based on real-life skills enhancement. Episodes #1-30 are available on loan individually to Texas educators ONLY, in either DVD or VHS format. Print materials are also available from TCALL on CD-ROM.

**Writing Out Loud, Second Edition.** Morgan, Deborah (2002). Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: Grass Roots Press. Collection of exercises and ideas is designed to help teachers of ABE and ESL encourage even the

most reluctant writer to put words on paper. Manual provides detailed steps for each writing activity, samples of student writing, and ways to adapt the activities for students at different literacy levels.

**More Writing Out Loud.** Morgan, Deborah (2002). Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: Grass Roots Press. Opening chapters of this manual discuss the importance of and strategies for creating a safe environment so that reluctant writers feel ready to overcome their fears and take a risk. The remaining chapters contain dozens of writing exercises and ideas collected from adult literacy educators. The final chapter stresses the importance of celebrating students' writing through publishing and public readings.

## ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

**Chalk Talks.** Shapiro, Norma and Genser, Carol (1994). Berkeley, CA: Command Performance Language Institute. This book shows language teachers how to create quickly and easily a variety of lessons using symbols on the chalkboard or overhead projector. The authors show how to develop fluency by using the students' own lives, regardless of age or learning level, as the basis for lessons -- their stories, their ideas, their real-life concerns. Included are: a teacher's guide on how to conduct spontaneous lessons using symbols as language cues; over 100 ideas for lesson topics; 32 annotated reproducible sample lessons; a practical guide on how to make a symbol for any concept; and a dictionary of over 500 easy-to-copy symbols organized by content area with both an English and Spanish index.

**Cuing In: Activities on Blackline Masters for Beginning Writers of English.** Rucinski, Claudia J. (1990). Glenview, IL: Lifelong Learning Books; Scott, Foresman and Company. This book contains reading and writing activities designed to aid adult ESL students in attaining literacy in English. It may be used as an independent text and is suitable for use in a whole group setting, in a multilevel classroom, or in one-on-one tutoring.

**Drawing on Experience: The Fundamentals of Good Writing.** Domicich, John and Root, Christine (1996). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, Inc. This ESL textbook incorporates student drawing into the writing process. Each chapter has a theme or topic that is used to encourage students to brainstorm, then draw, and then write about their drawings. The text can be used at all levels of language proficiency, and the drawing activities are designed for ease of execution and enhancement of student receptiveness.

**English Grammar: Step by Step.** Weal, Elizabeth (2008). Palo Alto, CA: Tenaya Press. English Grammar: Step-by-Step is a simple, step-by-step grammar and writing book for Spanish speakers who are literate in Spanish but have had minimal schooling and know very little about grammar in Spanish or English. Each lesson is followed by exercises that provide practice. Answers to the exercises are in an appendix; a dictionary of all the words used in the book is included in the back of the book. The set consists of one book only in English. The other book is written in English and in Spanish.

**The Great Big BINGO Book: BINGO Games for ESL Learners.** Ito, Nina and Berry, Anne (2001). Brattleboro, VT: Pro Lingua Associates. Reproducible collection includes everything needed for 44 games ap-

propriate for all ages, including the BINGO cards and chips, as well as instructions to the teacher. Games focus on five areas: vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, writing, and cultural topics.

**Index Card Games for ESL.** Clark, Raymond C. (2006). Brattleboro, VT: Pro Lingua Associates. The publisher has developed activities for ESL students using index cards. Some of the topics are spelling, sounds, sentence structure, and who's who. Instructions are simple and activities are included for all levels. Companion to More Index Card Games.

**Ingles Ya!** Sam Powers, Series Creator (2009). Napa, CA: English Right Now! This multimedia ESOL independent learning program for low-beginning Spanish speakers was developed to meet the needs of beginning-level adult and young adult learners who are unable to attend ESOL classes but want to begin studying English independently. It uses a telenovela to set the context for 20 competency-based English language lessons that feature high-interest vignettes on vocabulary, grammar, life skills, and U.S. culture. The audio program and set of workbooks that accompany the DVD give students the extensive practice they need to begin communicating in English. Loan set includes five workbooks, Teacher's Guide, 20 DVDs, and 20 Audio CDs and is available for loan to Texas Educators ONLY.

**New Ways in Using Authentic Materials in the Classroom.** Larimer, Ruth E. and Schleicher, Leigh, Editors (1999). Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. Contributors to this book demonstrate how a wide variety of authentic materials can be adapted into interesting lessons for English language learners. Each activity centers around an audio, visual, or written text from an English language environment, such as television, books, magazines, cards, recipes, schedules, and brochures. Activities focus on all the language skills, including reading, writing, grammar, listening, and conversation, and are adaptable to all levels.

**PACE Yourself: A Handbook for ESL Tutors.** Dalle, Teresa S. and Young, Laurel L. (2003). Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. This handbook for inexperienced or volunteer tutors of ESL does not aim to make overnight experts of novices. Rather, the authors provide an easy-to-follow guide for people who want to tutor small groups of nonnative speakers of English but do not know how. PACE is an acronym for four steps in the tutoring process: prepare, assess, construct, and evaluate. Some chapter titles include: How should I structure my tutoring session? How do I know what to teach? How do I use assessment to help me teach? How do I construct lessons for people whose language I do not speak? How do I document students' progress and evaluate their success?

**Practical Resources for Adult ESL: A Selection Guide for Materials for Adult ESL and ESL/ESOL Literacy.** Silliman, Anna and Tom, Abigail (2000). Burlingame, CA: Alta Book Center Publishers. For teachers, tutors, trainers, and those who order materials for ESL programs, this book reviews hundreds of texts for adult ESL instruction. Publisher and distributor information is also provided.

**Preparing for Success: A Guide for Teaching Adult English Language Learners.** Marshall, Brigitte (2002). Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics. How can instructors working with adult English language learners respond to these demands and integrate employment

participation skills into instruction? How can instruction be informed by initiatives such as the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) and Equipped for the Future (EFF)? This resource text, designed for teachers of adult English language learners at all levels, addresses these issues. It includes classroom activities and instructional resources that help to ensure that all students will have the language skills necessary to thrive in employment.

**Pronunciation Contrasts in English.** Nilsen, Don L. F. and Nilsen, Alleen Pace (2002). Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc. Designed to aid teachers of English to speakers of other languages in dealing with pronunciation difficulties, this text consists of three sections: (1) vowel contrasts, (2) consonant contrasts, and (3) vowel and consonant cluster contrasts. The prefatory section provides charts indicating vowel and consonant articulation, and the pages on which these sounds appear in the text; an explanation of the phonemic alphabet and the profile diagrams used for illustration; and suggestions to the teacher together with several sample exercises. A glossary of linguistic terms and a listing of the languages cited (47), with page indexing for reference to those areas of difficulty for each language, appear at the end of the volume. Each sound contrast appears with a simple analysis of its production, together with facial diagrams, sentences with contextual clues, and minimal sentences and pairs.

**Teaching Basic Literacy to ESOL Learners.** Spiegel, Marina and Sunderland, Helen (June 2006). London, England: London South Bank University. The book is a practical guide to teaching learners who have just begun to read and write in English and are not yet familiar with the Latin script. The book's 11 chapters include where to start, models of reading and writing acquisition, approaches to teaching basic reading and writing, assessment and planning, learning styles, dyslexia, materials, and differentiation. Aimed at both practicing ESOL teachers and trainee teachers, this book integrates theory with lots of practical suggestions for teaching.

**Think, Write, Share: Process Writing for Adult ESL and Basic Education Students.** Scane, Joyce; Guy, Anne Marie, and Wenstrom, Lauren (1994). San Diego, CA: Dominic Press, Inc. This book offers insight from research on the writing process. It also includes suggestions for techniques and activities to use in teaching the writing process, including using computers in process writing.

**Writing It Down: Writing Skills for Everyday Life.** Women's Program Lutheran Settlement House (1989). Syracuse, NY: New Readers Press. This book focuses on the transition from spoken dialectal English to formal written English. It provides practice in forms that adults use in everyday life, ranging from personal and informal to formal and business-like, taking the learner in incremental steps from practice in printing and cursive script forms of writing to formulating complete sentences to writing paragraphs.

#### FAMILY LITERACY

**ABC, 123: A Family Literacy Handbook.** Paul, Marianne (1992). Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: Grass Roots Press. Handbook contains ten sequential family literacy sessions for preschoolers and their parents. The first part of each session features discussions and activities for parents, while the second part describes literacy play-activities for parents

and children. Activities include making an "All About Us" book, creating hand puppets, telling stories, saying rhymes, and singing songs.

**BEST Parents Curriculum: Basic Education and Skills Training for Parents.** Zimmermann, Linda, et al (1990). San Antonio, TX: North East Independent School District. This parenting curriculum consists of five major modules: The Role of the Parent; Ages and Stages of Child Development; Stress Management; Behavior Management; and Home and School with Parents as Partners in Learning.

**Fathers and Early Childhood Programs.** Fagan, Jay and Palm, Glen (2004). Clifton Park, NY: Thomson Delmar Learning. This book will serve the needs of students and future professionals who want to achieve positive results by involving fathers in early childhood programs. Detailed strategies are laid out and many case examples, as well as sample fun and educational activities, demonstrate the many successes that can be achieved and how to achieve them. The authors of Fathers and Early Childhood Programs also present the results of 33 in-depth interviews in which qualitative data was collected on this subject. Historical and theoretical perspectives complement the practical suggestions about working with fathers, early childhood programs staff and the community to facilitate increased father and family involvement.

**Spending Time Together: A Family Anthology by New Writers.** New Writers' Voices (1993). New York, NY: Readers House, Literacy Volunteers of New York City, Inc. Named one of the "Top Titles for Adult New Readers" by the Public Library Association, the book is written at Fry Reading Level 1-5. Essays on family life are the backbone of this collection written by mothers, fathers, and children involved in literacy programs across the country. Parents write about the joys and struggles of raising children and creating strong bonds of love and pride within the family.

## SAVE THE DATE!

### ProLiteracy's Inaugural U.S. Conference on Adult Literacy™ (USCAL) National Conference

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USCAL will provide a unique opportunity to forge new partnerships among national organizations concerned with adult literacy and basic education; workforce development; citizenship preparation; adult learner leadership development; and financial, health, and information literacy. For more information as details are announced, subscribe to one of TCALL's email discussion lists (email [tcall@tamu.edu](mailto:tcall@tamu.edu)) or visit ProLiteracy's web page ([www.proliteracy.org](http://www.proliteracy.org)).





*"I am very grateful for the hard work and dedication of all the folks at TCALL."*

Ron Forger  
ESL Instructor  
Houston Independent School District

## Free Things to Send For . . .

### RESOURCES FOR AND ABOUT TEACHING FIRST-LEVEL LEARNERS

#### ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

***Changing the Way We Teach Math: A Manual for Teaching Basic Math to Adults.*** Nonesuch, Kate (December 2006). Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada: National Adult Literacy Database. This manual was written for adult basic education (ABE) math instructors who are interested in changing their teaching practice to bring it more in line with recommendations from the research literature on teaching numeracy to adults. Written after consulting over 100 practitioners in British Columbia, the manual sets out some "best practices" from the literature, then outlines some difficulties instructors may face in implementing them, and makes suggestions for overcoming the difficulties. Finally, the manual includes many pages of activities ready for immediate classroom implementation of the "best practices." Clearinghouse Library provides free copies to Texas educators only; manual is also available on Canada's National Adult Literacy Database website ([www.nald.ca/library/learning/mathman/mathman.pdf](http://www.nald.ca/library/learning/mathman/mathman.pdf)).

***Teaching Adults to Read.*** Curtis, Mary E. and Kruidenier, John R. (Fall 2005). Washington, DC: The Partnership for Reading, National Institute for Literacy. The emerging principles and trends explicated in "Research-Based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction" (see separate Clearinghouse Library title) are here distilled into a short booklet. This booklet addresses each component of reading -- alphabets, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension -- from the teacher's perspective, defining each term, highlighting its importance, describing how it is assessed, and exploring its implications for teachers.

***Teaching Reading with Adults.*** Sticht, Thomas G. (January 2002). Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada: National Adult Literacy Database, Inc. This paper discusses literacy as the mastery of graphics technology. Topics include The Power of Permanent Thought, Information Processing in Space, and The Guiding Light. Each topic is developed to show how the basic elements of the graphic medium - its relative permanence, its ability to be arrayed in space, and its use of the properties of light - work together to permit literates to generate and access massive collections of knowledge; to analyze and synthesize discrete information into coherent bodies of knowledge; and to perform complex procedures with accuracy and efficiency.

***Using Adult Learning Principles in Adult Basic and Literacy Education.*** Imel, Susan (1998). Columbus, OH: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education. Adult basic and literacy education (ABLE) is a complex undertaking that serves diverse learners with a variety of needs, and many individual ABLE programs successfully attract and retain students. A number of reasons exist for the non-participation and high attrition rates, including the complicated nature of

the lives of many adults. Structuring programs around adult education principles can be one solution to developing programs that are more appealing to ABLE learners. This ERIC Practice Application Brief describes how adult education principles can be used in ABLE programs. Following a discussion of adult education principles, it provides recommendations for practices, based on the principles and literature related to adult basic and literacy education.

#### ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

***Applying Research Findings to Instruction for Adult English Language Students.*** Smith, Cristine and Harris, Kathryn and Reder, Stephen (September 2005). Washington, DC: Center for Adult English Language Acquisition. This brief is written for the practitioners -- teachers, teacher trainers, curriculum writers, and program administrators -- who work with adult English language students in ESL classes or in mixed ABE classes (with native English speakers and English language learners). If educators are not experienced with using research findings to guide instruction, they need to know more about how research can be accessed, understood, evaluated, and used. This brief describes why research is important to instruction, defines scientifically based research and evidence-based instruction, explains what we know about how to help teachers use research, gives an example of teachers using research to improve their practice, and lists places where research-based resources can be accessed.

***A Chance to Earn, a Chance to Learn: Linking Employment and English Training for Immigrants and Refugees New to English.*** Wrigley, Heide Spruck and Strawn, Julie (2001). Chicago, IL: Illinois State Board of Education. Among the millions of immigrants and refugees who have come to the US since 1990, the most disadvantaged are adults with minimal formal education -- those who are new to both English and to literacy. These individuals need proper training and job development in order to obtain work at a living wage and help meet the workforce needs of the new economy. Wrigley and Strawn provide an overview of educational patterns among immigrants and discuss the relationship between ESL, literacy, and employment. Gaps in the research are described, as well as recommendations about what works and doesn't work in existing efforts to serve this population.

***Creating a Successful ESL to ABE Transition Class.*** Borden, David and Talavera, Debbie (April 2007). College Station, TX: Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy and Learning. At Austin Community College, the authors found that English as a Second Language (ESL) students who transitioned into Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes struggled to keep up with their native English speaking classmates. Thus, they developed a transition course for students who "topped out" on the BEST Plus, but are not quite ready for ABE. Student progress is measured on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), but class

instruction is structured more like an ESL class than an ABE class. In this article for TCALL's quarterly publication, the authors outline the design of the class and its rationale.

***English as a Second Language in Volunteer-Based Programs.***

Schlusberg, Paula and Mueller, Tom (July 1995). Washington, DC: National Center for ESL Literacy Education. ESL programs for adults often use volunteers either as auxiliary or primary providers of instruction. When volunteers are auxiliary, they function as bilingual aides, as tutors to provide individualized attention, or as group leaders. Volunteer-based programs, on the other hand, provide all instruction through volunteer tutoring. This ERIC Digest focuses on volunteer-based ESL instruction, looking at who offers this instruction, what is taught, how instructors are trained, what the benefits and challenges are, and what the future looks like.

***How Should Adult ESL Reading Instruction Differ from ABE Reading Instruction?***

Burt, Miriam and Peyton, Joy Kreeft and Van Duzer, Carol (March 2005). Washington, DC: Center for Adult English Language Acquisition. This brief summarizes the research base on adult English speakers learning to read and the suggestions for instructions from these studies. Then, using findings from a synthesis of research on adult English language learners learning to read, it describes how these learners differ from native English speakers, and how these differences should affect instruction.

***Improving Adult ESL Learners' Pronunciation Skills.*** Florez MaryAnn Cunningham (December 1998). Washington, DC: National Center for ESL Literacy Education. This ERIC Digest reviews the current status of pronunciation instruction in adult ESL classes. It provides an overview of the factors that influence pronunciation mastery and suggests ways to plan and implement pronunciation instruction.

***Improving Adult ESL Learners' Speaking Skills.*** Florez MaryAnn Cunningham (June 1999). Washington, DC: National Center for ESL Literacy Education. This ERIC Digest describes what speaking involves and what good speakers do in the process of expressing themselves. It also presents an outline for creating an effective speaking lesson and for assessing learners' speaking skills.

***Improving ESL Learners' Listening Skills: At the Workplace and Beyond.*** Van Duzer, Carol (February 1997). Washington, DC: National Center for ESL Literacy Education. Listening is a critical element in the competent language performance of adult second language learners, whether they are communicating at school, at work, or in the community. As language teaching has moved toward comprehension-based approaches, listening to learn has become an important element in the adult ESL classroom. This ERIC Q&A summarizes what is known about the listening process as it relates to adult second language learners.

***Improving ESL Learners' Writing Skills.*** Bello, Tom (June 1997). Washington, DC: National Center for ESL Literacy Education. Writing is a continuing process of discovering how to find the most effective language for communicating one's thoughts and feelings. It can be challenging, whether writing in one's native language or in a second language. Writing also enhances language acquisition as learners experiment with words, sentences, and larger chunks of writing to communicate their ideas effectively and to reinforce the grammar and

vocabulary they are learning in class. This ERIC Digest suggests general approaches to writing and specific activities that can make writing easier and more enjoyable for both learners and teachers.

***The Language Experience Approach and Adult Learners.*** Taylor, Marcia (June 1992). Washington, DC: National Center for ESL Literacy Education. 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. This ERIC Digest reviews the features of LEA, its application with ESL learners, and two variations on the method.

***Library Literacy Programs for English Language Learners.*** McMurrer, Eileen and Terrill, Lynda (September 2001). Washington, DC: National Center for ESL Literacy Education. Public libraries have been historically active in their support for literacy, including resources and programs to meet the literacy needs of immigrant adults and their families. This ERIC Digest summarizes the history of public libraries and library literacy programs; describes current delivery models; and discusses initiatives in library literacy, profiling one successful public library program serving adult English language learners & their families.

***Picture Stories for Adult ESL Health Literacy.*** Singleton, Kate (2001). Washington, DC: National Center for ESL Literacy Education. Instructional materials include four reproducible picture stories designed to help ESOL instructors address topics that affect the health and well-being of their beginner and low-literacy students. Newcomers to the U.S. and adults with lower literacy tend to have the least awareness of and access to health care services, thereby running the risk of more serious and chronic health outcomes. The stories are designed to be safe, impersonal prompts to allow students to discuss difficult topics, ask questions, and obtain information. As the stories are about cartoon characters, the students should not feel pressure to disclose their own experiences on the topic if they don't want to.

***Promoting Learner Engagement When Working with Adult English Language Learners.*** Miller, Susan Finn (July 2010). Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics. This brief describes specific instructional strategies and program structures to promote the engagement of adults learning English. It provides an overview of theory and research on learner engagement in language-learning settings and makes recommendations for further research.

***Reading and Adult English Language Learners: The Role of the First Language.*** Burt, Miriam and Peyton, Joy Kreeft (February 2003). Washington, DC: National Center for ESL Literacy Education. Adult English language learners come from diverse backgrounds and have widely differing experiences with literacy in their first languages. A number of factors influence the ways that adults' English literacy develops and the progress that different learners will make in learning to read English. They include level of literacy in the first language and in English, oral language proficiency in English, educational background, personal goals for learning English, and the structure and writing system of the first language. This ERIC Q&A describes how one of these factors,

literacy in the first language-can affect the acquisition of reading skills in English and the ways that instruction should be delivered.

**Things to Do in the ESL Classroom Series on CD-ROM.** UTSA ESL Professional Development Center (2002). College Station, TX: Texas Center for Adult Literacy and Learning. Book 1 includes a variety of activities for grouping, "getting to know you," and team building. Book 2 describes over a dozen activities that address reading, writing, and numeracy skill development in the context of language learning, rather than as isolated tasks. Book 3 offers advice on using classroom games, recommends commercial and Internet games, and includes four reproducible games developed by the ESL Professional Development Center at UT - San Antonio. The three books are available for loan as separate titles. All three books are included on this free CD-ROM.

**Using Multicultural Children's Literature in Adult ESL Classes.** Smallwood, Betty Ansin (December 1998). Washington, DC: ERIC National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education. Because high quality children's literature is characterized by economy of words, stunning illustrations, captivating but quickly moving plots, and universal themes, carefully chosen books can offer educational benefits for adult English language learners as well as for children. In addition, multicultural books honor diversity among writers and artists, give literary voice to underrepresented groups, and stimulate cross-cultural appreciation. This ERIC Digest provides book selection criteria, literature-based teaching strategies, and an annotated book list for five English proficiency levels.

## FAMILY LITERACY

**The Importance of Social Interaction and Support for Women Learners: Evidence from Family Literacy Programs.** Prins, Esther and Toso, Blaire Willson and Schafft, Kai (May 2008). University Park, PA: Goodling Institute for Research in Family Literacy, Pennsylvania State University. Utilizing data from two studies of family literacy programs in Pennsylvania, this study examined how family literacy programs provide a supportive social space for women in poverty. The studies found that many learners had limited social support and social ties with people outside their program and few opportunities for recreation. As such, family literacy programs fulfilled important social functions by enabling women to leave the house, enjoy social contact and support, engage in informal counseling, pursue self-discovery and development, and establish supportive relationships with teachers.

**Storytelling Time: Passing on Family Culture.** Duncan, Joan and Pursch, Victoria and Sorensen, Marilyn (Summer 1999). College Station, TX: Texas Center for Adult Literacy & Learning. This proposed lesson for a family literacy program was an assignment for a graduate course in family literacy taught by Don and Anna Seaman, Department of Educational Human Resource Development, Texas A&M University. The purpose is for parents to share with their children some of the heritage and history of their family. The curriculum includes a schedule of activities and lesson plans for adult education, early childhood education, parent education, and PACT activities.

## WRITING RESOURCES

**Elementary Composition Practice: Book 2.** Blanton, Linda Lonon

(1979). Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers, Inc. This classic, step-by-step approach emphasizes the fundamentals of great composition writing. Students develop writing skills to prepare them to make the transition from use of simple prose to more linguistically sophisticated and complex discourse.

**Focus on Basics, December 1999 Vol. 3 Issue D -- Writing Instruction.** NCSALL/World Education (December 1999). Cambridge, MA: National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy. *Focus on Basics* is a quarterly published by National Center for Study of Adult Learning and Literacy. **This entire issue is devoted to Writing Instruction.** This issue's cover article is "The Power of Writing: The Writing of Power: Approaches to Adult ESL Writing Instruction." Other featured articles are "How I Wish I Was Taught to Write"; "The Assumptions We Make: How Learners and Teachers Understand Writing"; and "Focus on Research: Home Literacy Practices." Also available online: [www.ncsall.net](http://www.ncsall.net). Under Publications, see menu link to Focus on Basics

**Improving ESL Learners' Writing Skills: ERIC Digest.** Bello, Tom (June 1997). Washington, DC: National Center for ESL Literacy Education. Writing is a continuing process of discovering how to find the most effective language for communicating one's thoughts and feelings. It can be challenging, whether writing in one's native language or in a second language. Yet, as adult English as a second language (ESL) learners put their thoughts on paper, see their ideas in print, and share them with others, they find they develop a powerful voice in their new culture (Peyton, 1993; Tran, 1997). Writing also enhances language acquisition as learners experiment with words, sentences, and larger chunks of writing to communicate their ideas effectively and to reinforce the grammar and vocabulary they are learning (Bello, 1997). This digest suggests approaches to writing and specific activities that can make writing easier and more enjoyable for both learners and teachers. Also available online: [www.cal.org/caela/esl\\_resources/digests/Writing.html](http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/digests/Writing.html)

**Journal Writing as an Adult Learning Tool: ERIC Practice Application Brief.** Kerka, Sandra (2002). Columbus, OH: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education. A journal is a tool for processing the raw material of experience in order to integrate it with existing knowledge and create new meaning, and can be used in many ways to foster reflection and adult learning. This Brief reviews the research and practice literature and describes issues and methods involved in incorporating journal writing in adult education. Also available online: <http://cete.org/acve/docgen.asp?tbl=pab&ID=112>

**Learners' Lives as Curriculum: Six Journeys to Immigrant Literacy.** Weinstein, Gail, Editor (1999). McHenry, IL: Delta Systems and the Center for Applied Linguistics. Developed out of the Bay Area (California) Immigrant Literacy Initiative (BAILI), this resource provides a framework for developing curricula and materials that speak to issues in the lives of adult immigrant learners. It is based on the belief that ESL and literacy classrooms can and should be settings where adults find opportunities to develop language and literacy skills while reflecting, as individuals and in collaboration with others, on their changing lives. The book and 18-minute video highlight six projects that participated in BAILI, and how they elicited a variety of learner texts as a basis for developing language and literacy materials that spoke to participants' deepest interests and concerns.

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