ESL NEW TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE

LESSON PLANS?

CASAS TESTING?

SCANS?

MODEL STANDARDS?

PRO?

TOPS

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CALPRO

Contents

Additional Materials
(Available through your CALPRO Professional Development Center)

Teacher Training through Video: Lesson Planning. Longman, Inc.

Model Standards for Adult Education Programs: ESL. California Department of Education, 1992.

Handbook for Adult Education Instructors: ESL. California Department of Education, 1995.

Introduction

To a new English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher in an adult education program, the task of teaching English can seem overwhelming. This *ESL New Teacher Resource Guide*, developed by the California Adult Literacy Professional Development Project (CALPRO), is designed to introduce you to the most immediate and important aspects of teaching adult ESL in California.

A teacher new to ESL often asks such questions as, "Who will my new students be?" "What is their English proficiency?" "What materials should I use?" "How do I assess my students and document their progress?" Many local agencies have procedures and practices that address these issues and will provide guidance to new teachers. The California Department of Education (CDE) has specific requirements and also provides certain documents to guide you.

This resource guide presents a brief overview of this information, provides examples of the most important documents you will need, and leads you to resources that will inform your teaching. The guide is available on the CALPRO Web site at http://www.calpro-online.org.

Teaching ESL can be an exciting and fulfilling experience. We hope that this guide will make your experience more manageable and rewarding.

Who are My Students? The Adult ESL Learner

Getting to know your ESL learners should be one of your top priorities. Here are a few characteristics of adult learners to keep in mind.

Adult Learners may:

- *Represent a wide range of educational backgrounds*. They may have from little to no formal education in their native language, to completion of university and advanced degrees in their native languages. In addition, they may or may not have some previous education in English and/or in the United States.

- *Be goal-oriented and highly motivated*. They have come to you for a specific reason. Their goal(s) may be long or short term. They should be involved in sharing and setting their learning goals.

- *Bring different skills, interests, backgrounds, and life experiences to the learning situation.* They have rich life experiences, and the instructor should capitalize on this diversity in the learning environment.

- *Want or need immediate application.* Adult learners need to apply what they are learning. The learning tasks must be practical, have a clear purpose, and directly relate to their everyday lives.

- *Have different learning styles*. Adult learners often relate to their previous educational experiences. Some may learn by doing, others by listening, speaking, reading, or writing. Many students learn better when there are visuals (pictures) or *realia* (real things, such as articles of clothing) to use.

- *Be very busy*. They may work more than one job in addition to going to school and taking care of their families. They may be tired during class and have difficulty staying on task for long periods of time.

- *Have different levels of proficiency*. Student levels may differ in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in both their first and second languages.

- *Have a poor self-concept*. Many people do not see themselves as learners. Some do not think they can learn or that they know how to learn.

Excerpted from the ESOL Starter Kit, Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center. October 2002, p. C-2, http://www.valrc.org.ESOL

Before You Start Teaching:
Questions to Ask About Procedures At Your Site

Many types of agencies provide educational services to ESL students in California. You may be working or volunteering for an adult school run by a local school district, a community college, a library literacy program, a correctional facility, a county office of education, or a community- or faith-based organization.

You will want to find out the answers to the following questions about your teaching assignment before you start.

1. **What do I need to know about my classroom? What about the school site?**
   Where is my classroom? Is it locked? If so, who will open it?
   What are the security procedures?
   What hours and days will the classes be held? Will I work evenings or Saturdays?
   Is there an instructional aide to help out in the classroom?
   Is the room furnished appropriately for adults?
   Who is the agency contact person?
   Where are the restrooms? Are they always open?
   Is there a designated smoking area?
   Where can I park my car?
   Is there another teacher on site?
   Is there access to clerical staff and audio-visual and copier equipment on site?

2. **What routine procedures at my teaching site do I need to know?**
   What's the procedure for getting paid?
   How do I handle student attendance? What forms are required and to whom do I submit them? Is there a minimum and/or maximum number of students required for my class?
   How do I request substitute teachers?
   What is the instructional calendar?
   How do I obtain professional development?

3. **How are students registered and placed in my class?**
   Your agency may have a formal process to register new students. In this case, when students enter your class, they will have completed an intake form and possibly a placement test to determine their level of English proficiency.

Some agencies, however, require that the teacher conduct the registration and placement process with new students. Ask your supervisor about your responsibilities in this area and about the forms, tests, and other resources that are available to you.

4. **What is the level of the class I will be teaching?**
   The California Department of Education publishes the _Model Standards for Adult Education Programs: ESL_. This publication defines seven levels of English language proficiency: Beginning Literacy, Beginning Low, Beginning High, Intermediate Low, Intermediate High, Advanced Low, and Advanced High. If all your students fall into just one of these levels, you will be teaching a single-level class. This occurs most frequently in mid- or large-size programs where there are several different levels of classes. It is common practice in smaller programs to place students of several proficiency levels into one class; this type of class is designated a "multi-level" class.

5. **How do I assess my students' needs?**
   Although it is obvious that your students come to school to learn English, they have individual needs and goals. Your agency may conduct a survey of student needs during the registration process, or you may be expected to administer your own. For a few examples of ESL needs assessments, see Appendix, pages A-2a, b.

6. **What is the core curriculum and what books and materials will be available to my students and me?**
   Your site supervisor or ESL Coordinator most likely will provide you with the core curriculum for the class you will be teaching. In addition, the _Model Standards for Adult Education Programs: ESL_ identifies topics and language objectives that are appropriate for each instructional level. Sample ESL course outlines also are available on the _Outreach and Technical Assistance Network_ (OTAN) website at http://www.otan.us. Click on _OTAN for Teachers_ to access materials for classroom use. Your site supervisor will provide textbooks and other supplemental materials useful in teaching ESL. These may include visuals, real-life objects, video programs, audio-visual equipment, computers, etc. For a list of instructional materials appropriate for certain topics and levels, see the _Quick Search Materials_. Click on "Curriculum and Resources" on the _California Adult Student Assessment System_ (CASAS) Web site at http://www.casas.org.

When You Start Teaching: Six-Stage ESL Lesson Plan

How do I plan and organize my lessons?

The lesson plan format below often is used for effective instruction in adult education classes, especially for ESL learners.

A. BEFORE YOU BEGIN . . .

Set Objective	Instructor determines what learners will be able to do upon completion of this lesson.

B. NOW PLAN THE LESSON . . .

Lesson Stage	Definition
1. Warm-up and/or Review	Instructor provides an activity to focus learner attention on the lesson objective and/or an activity that encourages learners to use previously taught skills/vocabulary that tie into the lesson.
2. Introduce	Instructor establishes the purpose of the lesson by stating the objective and relating it to the learner's own life. "After this lesson, you will be able to . . ."
3. Present	Instructor presents new information and checks for comprehension.
4. Practice	Learners are provided opportunities to practice the new knowledge that has been presented.
5. Evaluate	Instructor provides an activity that assesses individual learners on their attainment of the lesson objective.
6. Apply	Learners use the language/information/material/ in a new situation.

California Model Program Standards For ESL

The CDE publication, <u>California Model Program Standards: ESL</u>, provides programmatic, instructional, and assessment standards for adult ESL programs. As a teacher, you will be most interested in the instructional and assessment standards. Below are lists of the instructional standards and selected assessment standards. These provide general guidelines for teaching ESL and for evaluating your students.

Instructional Standards

1. Instructional activities integrate the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) to emphasize the holistic nature of language.

2. Language tasks in the classroom consist of meaningful interchanges that enhance students' communicative competence.

3. Instructional activities focus on the acquisition of communication skills necessary for students to function in real-life situations.

4. Instruction focuses on the development of the receptive skills (listening and reading) before the development of the productive skills (speaking and writing).

5. A variety of grouping strategies (whole-group, small-group, pair work, individual work) are used in the classroom to facilitate student-centered instruction.

6. Instructional activities are varied in order to address the different learning styles (aural, oral, visual, kinesthetic) of the students.

7. Instructional activities integrate language and culture so that students learn about the U.S. culture in terms of significant and subtle characteristics that compare and contrast with those of their own cultures.

8. Learning activities develop the language necessary for students to access higher level thought processes (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation).

9. Instructional activities require students to take active roles in the learning process, transferring critical thinking to real problem-solving situations in their everyday lives.

Excerpted from Model Standards for Adult Education Programs: ESL, California Department of Education, 1992.

Selected Standards for Learner Assessment

1. Students' placements in ESL courses are determined by a variety of assessments.

2. Instructors monitor students' progress on a continuing basis, assessing students on attainment of objectives identified in the course outline through use of a variety of informal tests (applied performance procedures, observation, simulations) paper and pencil exams, and standardized tests.

3. Assessments for moving from one level to another measure both general language proficiency and master of specific instructional content.

Excerpts from Model Standards for Adult Education Programs: ESL, California Department of Education, 1992.

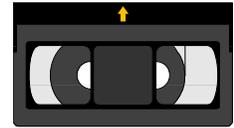# ESL Instructional Techniques: *Teacher Training Through Video*

An efficient way to familiarize yourself with instructional strategies appropriate for the ESL class is to work with the *Teacher Training Through Video* series, published by Longman, Inc. You can work on these videos with an experienced teacher in your agency, or you can ask your supervisor to schedule these workshops locally (see fact sheet http://calpro-online.org/news.asp#fact.) Below is a list of the techniques covered in the video series, with a brief description of each. A User's Guide, appropriate for the professional development of ESL teachers, accompanies each video.

Beginning Literacy shows teachers how to group pre-literate, non-literate, semiliterate, and literate students in the same classroom to teach reading and writing skills. Various grouping strategies and instructional approaches based on students' backgrounds, goals, interests, and learning styles are presented as important aspects of literacy instruction.

Dialogue Drill is an outgrowth of the audio-lingual method. It is used to develop speaking skills and pronunciation accuracy. The Dialogue places language structures in a context. The Drills emphasize the teacher as a model that students mimic in order to practice grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary.

Early Production comes from the Natural Approach, which focuses on meaningful communication rather than on the form of the language. Early Production emphasizes comprehensible input and is characterized by activities that require one- or two-word responses from students in the early stages of language learning.

Focused Listening presents listening skills as strategies to bridge the gap between classroom English and the English encountered outside the classroom.

Information Gap instructs the teacher in how to develop activities that encourage students to communicate with each other in order to close a "gap" in the information they possess. The technique emphasizes the importance of real communication in the learning process.

Language Experience is designed for preliterate, non-literate, and semiliterate students to learn to read what they can already say. The technique emphasizes the concept that print represents spoken words. In this technique, students learn to recognize their own words before approaching other kinds of reading.

Lesson Planning demonstrates how to plan an effective ESL lesson. It focuses attention on identifying the language skills that are the primary objective of the lesson. It also demonstrates and provides practice in developing the six stages for an effective lesson plan: Warm-up/Review, Introduction, Presentation, Practice, Application, and Evaluation.

Life Skills Reading provides practice in extracting information that will assist the reader in performing crucial tasks in the workplace or in daily life, using items such as ads, bus schedules, and employee handbooks.

Narrative Reading addresses reading in paragraph form, as in stories, textbooks or newspapers. The technique focuses on global understanding and on the development of reading skills.

Problem Solving helps develop communicative competence and critical thinking skills. It uses students' concerns and problems as a subject for discussion. Students practice language skills by making informed decisions based on a variety of solutions and their consequences.

Role Play provides students with the opportunity to deal with the unpredictable nature of language. The technique develops students' skills choosing verbal and non-verbal communication strategies in various contexts.

Total Physical Response (TPR) demonstrates how to conduct a lesson based on the principle that listening naturally precedes speaking. During TPR activities, students listen silently to commands and respond non-verbally.

Co-operative Learning is a series of four videos that instruct the teacher in how to set up language learning activities that provide opportunities for students to interact with each other in groups in order to build teams and promote individual accountability and positive interdependence.

Assessment and Accountability

1. **What are TOPSpro forms and am I required to complete them?**
   The California Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) is responsible for collecting certain demographic information for the California Department of Education (CDE) via a data-collection system known as TOPSpro. Every adult education student in every program must complete a TOPSpro form upon entering and exiting a class. This process must continue for the entire year. You will need to find out your agency's procedures for obtaining, completing, and returning these forms. More information about this data collection system is available on the CASAS Web site at http://www.casas.org.

2. **How do I track students' goals and outcomes?**
   The TOPSpro form also is used to record each student's goals on entering a class (via the TOPSpro Entry Record), as well as their educational outcomes (via the TOPSpro Update Record). Your supervisor will tell you how to complete these forms and will provide information about other required follow-up procedures.

3. **What other measures can I use to assess my students?**
   Assessment is an ongoing process in adult education, and multiple assessment measures should be used. Assessment may be formal (e.g., a written test), or informal (e.g., teacher observation of student performance through a checklist of competencies mastered). The assessment should reflect instructional objectives. Your agency may provide exit tests for each level, or it may use commercially available tests, or you may be required to create your own. CASAS also provides exit tests for various instructional levels. Visit the CASAS Web site, http://www.casas.org, and click on *CASAS Catalog* to obtain information about these tests.

4. **What is CASAS testing and what are my responsibilities?**
   CASAS provides CDE with an electronic system for collecting data on student learning gains via a series of pre- and post-tests. Certain funding streams require that these tests be administered regularly to document student progress. Ask your supervisor if your class needs to be "CASAS-tested" and what the agency's testing procedures are. The TOPSpro system allows you to generate reports from the results of your class's tests to assist you in identifying areas in which your class has strengths or weaknesses. The TOPSpro Reports Manual available through CASAS details each of the reports.

Implications for Adult Educators of the "SCANS" Report

What Work Requires of Schools—The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills
U.S. Department of Labor, June 1991

Seeking employment or better employment is a major motivation of California's adult learners. The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) examined the demands of the workplace and whether adult students are capable of meeting those demands. The following three foundation skills and five competencies were identified as a result of discussions and meetings among business owners, public employers, unions, and workers in shops, plants, and stores.

The Commission ascertained that half of the people entering the workplace lack the knowledge and foundation required to find and hold a good job. The eight requirements listed below (foundation skills and competencies) lie at the heart of successful job performance and should be incorporated into a sound adult education instructional program.

Three-Part Foundation Skills	Five Competencies
1. Basic Skills ▪ reading ▪ writing ▪ arithmetic/mathematics ▪ listening ▪ speaking **2. Thinking Skills** ▪ creative thinking (creates new ideas) ▪ decision making (chooses best alternative, based on facts) ▪ problem solving (recognizes problem; creates and completes a plan of action) ▪ reasoning (uses logic to draw conclusions) ▪ knowing how to learn (uses efficient learning techniques) ▪ seeing things in the mind's eye (understands charts, symbols, pictures, etc.) **3. Personal Qualities** ▪ responsibility (works hard to attain a goal) ▪ self esteem (believes in own self-worth) ▪ sociability (gets along well with people) ▪ self-management (self-planning and control) ▪ integrity and honesty (chooses the right thing to do)	**1. Resources (uses each wisely)** ▪ time ▪ materials and facilities ▪ personnel **2. Interpersonal Skills** ▪ works well with others ▪ teaches others new skills ▪ serves clients or customers ▪ works with people of diverse backgrounds ▪ acts as leader **3. Uses Information** ▪ acquires and evaluates information ▪ organizes and maintains information ▪ analyzes and communicates information ▪ uses computers to do above steps **4. Works With Systems** ▪ understands how systems work (organizational, technological, social) ▪ works within the system ▪ improves and designs systems **5. Technology** ▪ selects the right technology for the task ▪ uses technology to complete tasks ▪ maintains and trouble shoots technology

10 Easy Things You Can Do To Integrate Workplace Basics (SCANS Competencies) Into Your Classroom

The following list suggests ways to incorporate SCANS skills into your daily instruction. The bold-faced type indicates the classroom strategy, and the list below indicates the SCANS skill to which it corresponds.

1. **Start each class with an agenda on the board.**
    SCANS: *Information*: organizing
                    Resources: allocating time
                    Interpersonal: negotiating

2. **Put students in teams and assign teams classroom maintenance jobs.**
    SCANS: *Interpersonal*: working in teams, taking individual responsibility
                    Personal Qualities: demonstrating sociability
                    Systems: developing system to improve performance

3. **Conclude every lesson by calling attention to the workplace relevance of the lesson and the classroom activities.**
    SCANS: *Systems*: monitoring performance

4. **Teach students how to organize their classroom materials.**
    SCANS: *Interpersonal*: teaching others
                    Systems: monitoring performance

5. **Monitor students' progress with checklists and weekly tests.**
    SCANS: *Interpersonal*: organizing and maintaining information
                    Systems: monitoring/correcting performance

6. **Pay attention to classroom incidents and conflicts. Develop lessons that teach students how to deal with these issues appropriately.**
    SCANS: *Interpersonal*: working in teams, negotiating
                    Thinking skills: solving problems, making decisions
                    Personal qualities: demonstrating sociability

7. **Model appropriate workplace behavior: arrive on time, come with an organized plan, dress appropriately, and maintain a positive attitude.**
    SCANS: *Personal* qualities: taking responsibility, managing self
                    Systems: understanding systems

8. **Encourage students to use, fix, or make minor adjustments in equipment, such as hole punch, pencil sharpener, overhead projector, etc.**
    SCANS: *Technology*: maintaining & troubleshooting equipment and applying technology to task

9. **Designate student trainers, tutors or experts who can train new students and assist classmates as needed.**
    SCANS: *Interpersonal*: teaching others
                    Systems: improving or designing systems

10. **Encourage self and peer revision whenever possible. Teach the appropriate language to make revisions.**
    SCANS: *Systems*: monitoring/correcting performance
                    Interpersonal: taking individual responsibility
                    Personal qualities: assessing/managing self

General Strategies for Managing a Multi-level ESL Class

Many adult ESL classes, especially those located off the main campus site (for example, in churches or community centers), serve the entire local community and, hence, may have students of widely differing English proficiencies. This situation can provide challenges to the instructor. The following three pages offer some general strategies for addressing a "multi-level" class, as well as two models for managing the multi-level class. Contact your CALPRO PDC Manager for additional materials or workshops on *Managing the Multi-level ESL Class*.

- First, administer a Needs Assessment to determine the number and level of groups you will need in your class (see Appendix A-2a, b for sample Needs Assessment forms).

- Focus your instruction. Provide a self-contained lesson, one that can be completed within the time frame of your class on any given day.

- Plan for all groups to work on the same general topic (although each group may have a different lesson objective).

- Begin and end your lesson with the whole group together to create a sense of class community.

- Use a variety of teacher/student and student/student groupings (whole group, small group, pairs, individual) to allow for adequate practice of the lesson objective.

For more information on managing the multi-level class, visit the <u>*ESOL Starter Kit*</u>*, Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center "Teaching Multilevel Adult ESL Classes."* http://www.aelweb.vcu.edu/publications/ESLKit/ESLKit_2002.pdf.
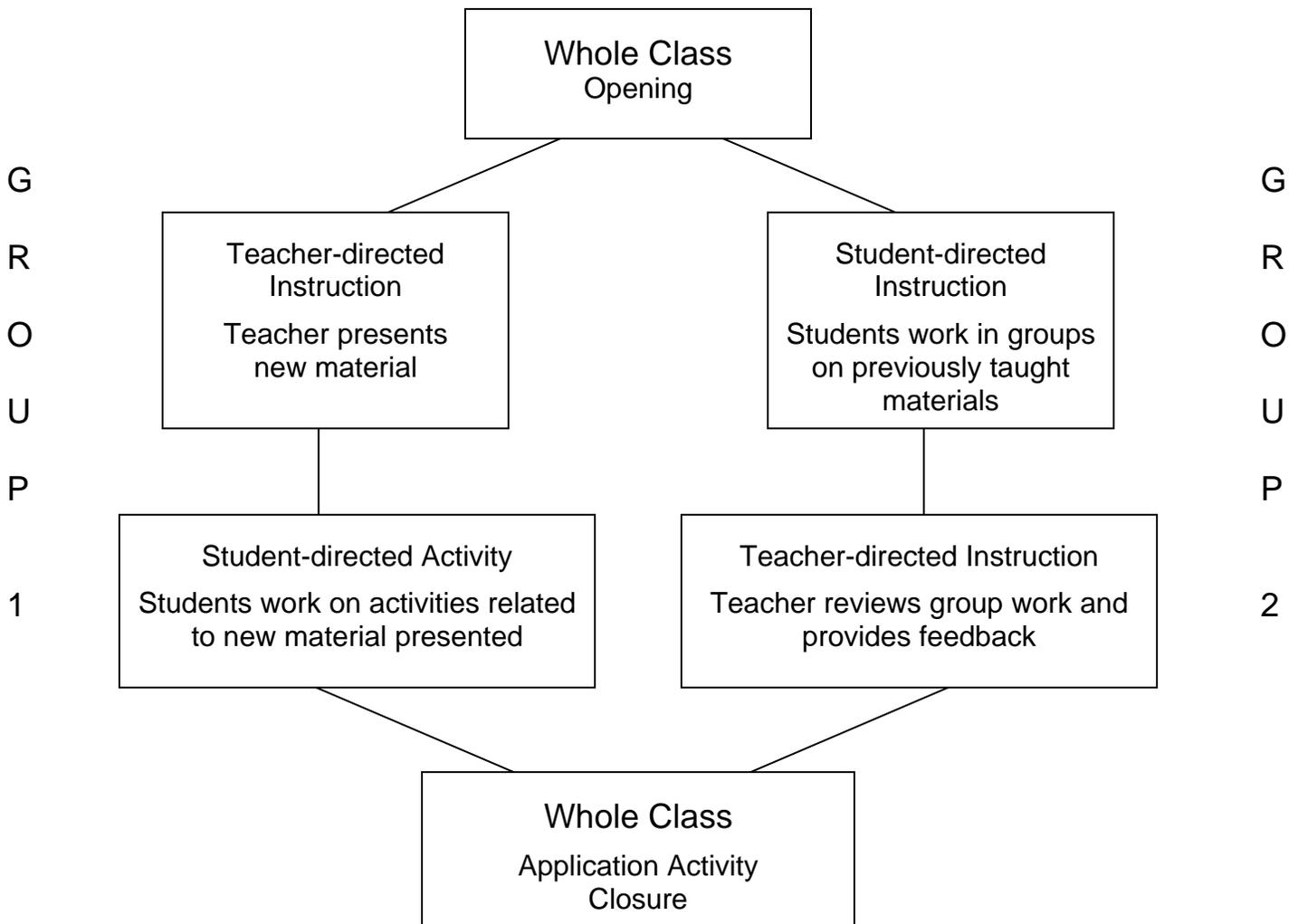
ESL Multi-Level Model 1

This model is used for a traditional classroom setting and delivery mode. The teacher may be working with a textbook or using materials s/he has created. Groups are determined by their English proficiency level. The lesson topic for both groups is the same, but the individual objectives for each group are appropriate to its level. For example,

Lesson Topic: Buying Food in a Supermarket

Lesson Objective:
- Beginning Level   Students will be able to name five items they buy at the supermarket and match the words with pictures.

- Intermediate Level   Students will be able to describe the location of seven items in the supermarket and ask the prices.

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                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │  Whole Class    │
                    │    Opening      │
                    └─────────────────┘
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G   G

R   Teacher-directed Instruction   Student-directed Instruction   R

O   Teacher presents new material   Students work in groups on   O
                                                previously taught materials
U   U

P   P

         Student-directed Activity   Teacher-directed Instruction
1   Students work on activities related   Teacher reviews group work and   2
         to new material presented   provides feedback

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                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │  Whole Class    │
                    │ Application     │
                    │ Activity        │
                    │ Closure         │
                    └─────────────────┘
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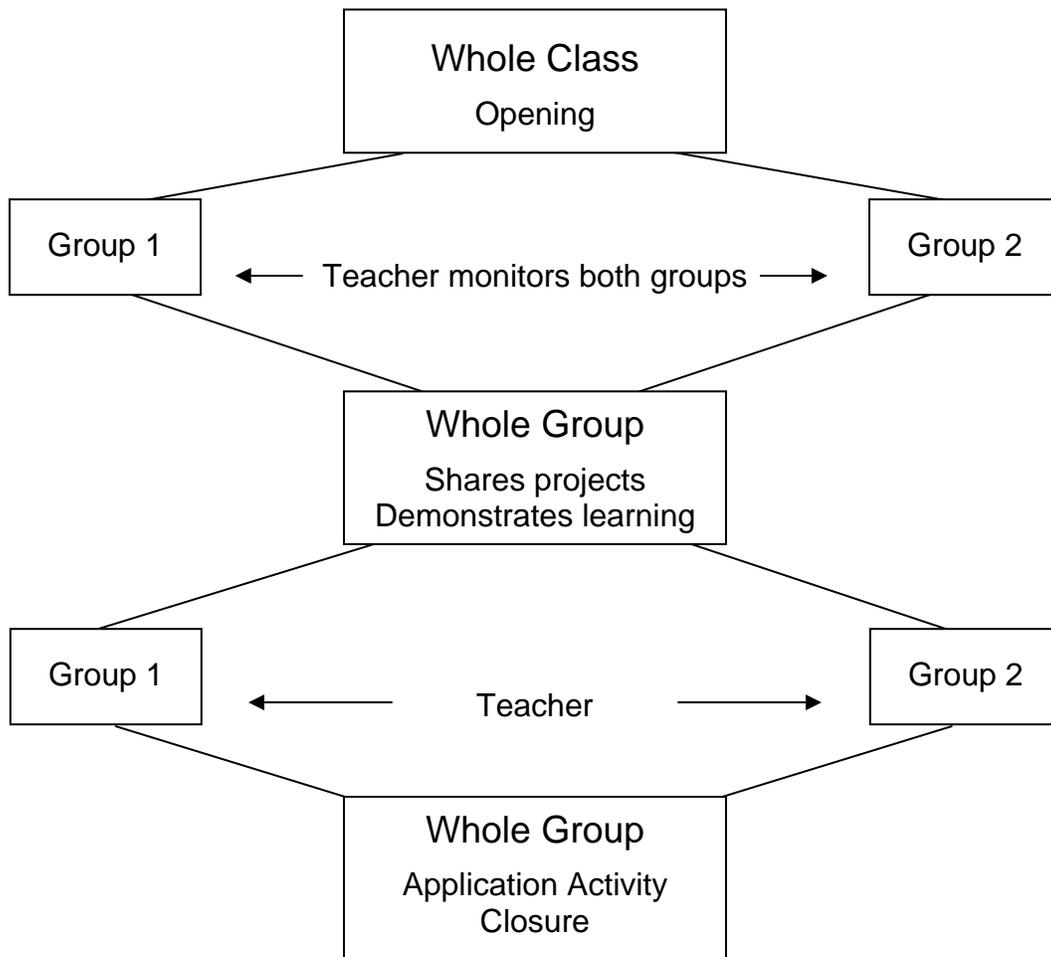
ESL Multi-Level Model 2

This model is used in a non-traditional project-based classroom. Each group works on its own project, and there may be several groups working simultaneously. Groups may be determined by their English proficiency levels, and also by their interest in specific projects, by their learning goals, or by other appropriate criteria. The topic of the project is the same for all groups, although each group project may have a different focus. For example,

General Topic:
1. Buying Food in a Supermarket

Sample Group Topics:
1. Compare pricing and nutritional information of items to be purchased in the supermarket
2. Create a budget for weekly purchases at the supermarket

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                    ┌──────────────────────┐
                    │     Whole Class      │
                    │       Opening        │
                    └──────────────────────┘
    ┌──────────┐                              ┌──────────┐
    │ Group 1  │  ◄── Teacher monitors ──►    │ Group 2  │
    └──────────┘        both groups           └──────────┘
                    ┌──────────────────────┐
                    │     Whole Group      │
                    │   Shares projects    │
                    │ Demonstrates learning│
                    └──────────────────────┘
    ┌──────────┐                              ┌──────────┐
    │ Group 1  │  ◄──── Teacher ────►         │ Group 2  │
    └──────────┘                              └──────────┘
                    ┌──────────────────────┐
                    │     Whole Group      │
                    │ Application Activity │
                    │       Closure        │
                    └──────────────────────┘
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Resources for Adult Educators

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1. Professional Development   http://www.calpro-online.org/

Check on the CALPRO website and click on event calendar to view upcoming activities.

To download catalog of CALPRO Professional Development Resources, visit http://www.calproonline.org/documents/CALPROResourceCatalog.pdf

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2. Online Adult Education Information   http://www.otan.us

OTAN—Outreach & Technical Assistance Network—houses the largest database of adult education materials in the world. Registration is required, but it's free. Click on *OTAN for Teachers* to access a variety of materials and other resources for classroom use.

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3. Data Collection for Adult Learners   http://www.casas.org

CASAS—The Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System provides the California Department of Education with a standardized, electronic system for collecting student demographic data and student learning gains.

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4. California Distance Learning Project http://www.cdlponline.org

CDLP - The goal of the California Distance Learning Project is to expand learner access to adult basic education services in California through distance learning.

5. Professional Associations for Adult Educators

ACSA—Association of California School Administrators http://www.acsa.org

CAEAA—California Adult Education Administrators' Association
http://www.caeaa.org

CATESOL—California Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages http://www.catesol.org

CCAE—California Council of Adult Educators http://www.ccaestate.org

TESOL—Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages
http://www.tesol.org

6. Internet Resources

ESOL Starter Kit, Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center, October 2002 http://www.aelweb.vcu.edu/publications/ESLKit/ESLKit_2002.pdf

**Frequently Asked Questions in Adult ESL Literacy, NCLE,
October 2003 http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/faqs.html**

NCSALL http://ncsall.net
The National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy offers numerous publications and teacher training materials, include Study Circle guides on a variety of topics.

The Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center http://www.valrc.org/
This Resource center offers useful online guides for ESL and ABE teachers.

Cyberstep http://www.cyberstep.org
A partnership of four literacy service innovators addressing the challenge of creating and distributing multimedia learning materials for the hardest-to-serve ABE and ESL adult learners.

The Study Place http://www.thestudyplace.org
Teachers can create lessons using simple forms, find ready-made online lessons, create a class home page using a simple form, and track student progress online. Students can learn English and Math, practice reading, and acquire job skills.

Literacy.org http://www.literacy.org
A gateway to electronic resources and tools for the national and international youth and adult literacy communities. This site is jointly sponsored by the International Literacy Institute (ILI) and the National Center on Adult Literacy (NCAL) at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education.

LINCS http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/
The literacy community's gateway to the world of adult education and literacy resources on the Internet. The goal of LINCS is to bring adult literacy-related resources and expertise to a single point of access for users throughout the world.

APPENDICES

FAQs

One of the purposes of the Center for Adult English Language Acquisition (CAELA) is to provide useful information for states, programs, and practitioners who work with adult immigrants learning English as a second language (ESL). The following set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) was developed to respond to questions and concerns about adult English language learners and adult ESL education. (Last updated 08/04/06)

What instructional practices best meet the needs of literacy-level adult English language learners? **(FAQ#19) is the newest FAQ.**

1. What is English as a second language (ESL)?
2. How many adults in the United States are studying English?
3. How many more adults would like to enroll in ESL programs?
4. From what countries do immigrants come?
5. Where do adult English language learners live?
6. What languages do adult immigrants speak?
7. What are the characteristics of adults learning English in the United States?
8. How do adult English language learners differ from adult basic education (ABE) learners?
9. What instructional practices best meet the needs of adult English language learners?
10. What types of ESL programs are available for adults?
11. How long does it take to an adult to learn English?
12. How can I find out more about teaching English as a second language?
13. How can I find out what ESL programs are in my geographic area?
14. What does the research say about how to teach reading to adults learning English as a second language?
15. How can I incorporate technology in my instructional practice?
16. How can I identify adult English language learners who might have learning disabilities?
17. How can I integrate language skill development with civics content in the adult ESL classroom?
18. What do beginning adult ESL teachers, tutors, and volunteers need to know?
19. What instructional practices best meet the needs of literacy-level adult English language learners? **NEW**

For more FAQs on adult English language learners and adult ESL instruction, see the Frequently Asked Questions in the *Practitioner Toolkit: Working with Adult English Language Learners.*

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1. What is English as a second language (ESL)?

Adult ESL, or English as a second language, is the term used to describe English language instruction for adults who are nonnative speakers of English. (Adult English for speakers of other languages, or adult ESOL, is alternately used in various parts of the United States.)

Adult ESL is used to describe various types of instructional services for adults who do not speak English. See question ten below for some examples.

One way of looking at adult ESL is through some of the related definitions set forward in Title II Adult and Family Literacy Act, section 203 of the Workforce Investment Act (1998). With these, we can see some of the criteria (for adult education, limited English proficient individuals, and English literacy programs) that guide definition of federally funded adult ESL services and the individuals eligible for them.

According to the act:

The term "adult education" means services or instruction below the postsecondary level for individuals who have attained 16 years of age;

i) lack sufficient mastery of basic education skills to enable them to function effectively in society;

ii) do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and have not achieved an equivalent level of education; or

iii) are unable to speak, read, or write the English language.

The term "individual of limited English proficiency" means an adult or out-of-school youth who has limited ability in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language, and- whose native language is a language other than English, or who lives in a family or community environment where a language other than English is the dominant language.

The term "English literacy program" indicates a program of instruction designed to help individuals of limited English proficiency achieve competence in the English language.

Unlike general adult education, adult ESL instruction targets English language and literacy proficiency needs rather than broader educational needs. Instruction may be offered to highly educated, credentialed learners, those who are not who are not educated or literate in their native languages, and to all English language learners who fall between the two.

2. How many adults are studying English in the US?

Almost half of the adults in federally funded adult education programs are learning English. In 2002-2003, 1,175,531 adults were enrolled in adult education programs that received funding through the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) Enrollment and Participation in the State-Administered Adult Education Program. Of these, 43% were enrolled in ESL programs, 39% in ABE (adult basic education) programs, and 17% in ASE programs (adult secondary education for 16- to 20-year-olds no longer in the K-12 school system). University and college students, as well as the many adults served in programs not receiving federal funding, are not included in this number. For more information about the learners in federally funded adult education programs, see Enrollment and

on the OVAE Web site.

3. How many more adults would like to enroll in ESL programs?

Waiting lists for class space attest to the overwhelming demand for ESL instruction. Some immigrants who want to learn English may have to wait for months or years to get into ESL classes. In large cities across the country, ESL programs frequently have waiting lists for classroom space. Some rural areas have no available classes. The exact number of adults on waiting lists is hard to establish, because no national system exists for keeping track. Some programs have even stopped keeping such lists, because the wait has become so long.

To download a copy of the report, *Waiting Times for Adult ESL Classes and the Impact on English Learners* (June 2006) by Dr. James Thomas Tucker, National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Education Fund, go to http://renewthevra.civilrights.org/resources/remote-page.jsp?itemID=28322830.

For an article from *NCLEnotes* about ESL waiting lists go to http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/waiting.html.

A June 1997 statistical brief published by the National Center for Education Statistics about the 1995 National Household Education Survey, reports that nearly 3 million adults expressed interest in ESL classes but were not participating for a variety of reasons.

References

- National Center for ESL Literacy Education. (1995.) [The Waiting Game](#). *NCLE Notes, Vol. 6,* No. 1, 1-2.
- National Center for Education Statistics. *Participation of Adults in English as a Second Language Classes:1994-95.* (1997). Washington, DC: Author.
- Tucker, J. T. *Waiting Times for Adult ESL Classes and the Impact on English Learners* available at http://renewthevra.civilrights.org/resources/remote-page.jsp?itemID=28322830.

4. From what countries do adult immigrants come?

The foreign-born population in the United States comes from all over the world. The largest group of immigrants comes from Mexico and other Latin American countries.In 2000, more than one-quarter of the foreign-born population came from Mexico, and over half from Latin American generally. The next largest group comes from countries in Asia. The third largest group comes from Africa. Others come from Europe.

For more information on immigration to the United States, see *The New Neighbors: A User's Guide to Data on Immigrants in U.S. Communities* published in 2003 by Randolph Capps, Jeffrey S. Passel, Dan Perez-Lopez, and Michael E. Fix.

5. Where do adult English language learners live?

Most foreign-born residents live in six states -- California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Texas -- states that have experience establishing and

maintaining programs for adult English language learners. Other states have experienced recent and rapid growth in their immigrant populations. The following states had an increase of more than 125% of foreign-born residents from 1990 to 2000:

- North Carolina 274%
- Georgia 233%
- Nevada 202%
- Arkansas 196%
- Utah 171%
- Tennessee 169%
- Nebraska 165%
- Colorado 160%
- Arizona 136%
- Kentucky 135%

For more information about immigration trends, see "Adult Non-Native English Speakers in the United States" in the *Practitioner Toolkit: Working with Adult English Language Learners* and [The Dispersal of Immigrants in the 1990s. Immigrant Families and Workers: Facts and Perspectives Series, Brief No. 2](#) by Randolph Capps, Michael E. Fix, Jeffrey S. Passel.

6. What languages do adult immigrants speak?

The majority of individuals who speak a language other than English at home speak Spanish (60%). The number of Spanish speakers is more than 10 times the number of individuals who speak the second most prevalent language, Chinese. The remaining eight of the top 10 languages spoken are (in this order) French, German, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Italian, Korean, Russian, and Polish.

For more information see "Adult Non-Native English Speakers in the United States" in the *Practitioner Toolkit: Working with Adult English Language Learners*

7. What are the characteristics of adult learning English in the United States?

The population of adult English language learners is diverse, and characteristics of learners vary from location to location and program to program. These adults may range in age from 16-year-olds who are not attending high school to adults in their 90s. English language learners also differ in terms of their educational background, length of time in the United States, the native language they speak, their personal experiences in their home country and in the United States, and their socioeconomic status. Learners may be permanent residents, naturalized citizens, legal immigrants, refugees and asylees, or undocumented immigrants. One program or class may include members with such diverse backgrounds as the following:

- Learners whose native language does not yet have a writing system (e.g., Somali Bantu refugees)
- Learners who have had limited access to education and literacy in their native countries because of political, social, economic, ethnic, and religious strife

- Well-educated people with secondary, post-secondary, and graduate degrees, who have enrolled in adult education because they need to learn English. These

- might include lawyers, doctors, engineers, scientists, college professors, artists, and musicians.

Like native English speakers in adult education programs, English language learners often have a strong desire to work hard; learn more; and meet goals that serve themselves, their families, and their communities. For more information about learner characteristics, see "Adult English Speakers in the United States" in the *Practitioner Toolkit: Working with Adult English Language Learners*.
For information about specific learner groups within the larger adult English language learner population, see the following digests:

- *ESL Instruction and Adults with Learning Disabilities* (2000)
- *Mental Health and the Adult Refugee: The Role of the ESL Teacher* (1999)
- *Refugees as English Language Learners: Issues and Concerns* (1999)

To learn about research questions in this area that still need to be explored, see "Adult ESL Learners" in *A Research Agenda for Adult ESL* (1998).

8. How do adult English language learners differ from adult basic education (ABE) learners?

Like adult native English speakers, adults learning English enroll in programs for a number of different reasons, including the following:

- Improve their English language skills
- Address personal, family, and social needs
- Meet work demands and pursue better employment
- Pursue further education opportunities

At the same time, English language learners differ from ABE learners in a number of ways that affect instruction, as shown in the chart below.

Adult Basic Education Learners	Adult English Language Learners
typically have strong speaking and listening skills	**often need to concentrate on speaking and listening skills, especially in beginning level classes**
understand one or more varieties of spoken English including non-standard, elliptical forms, (e.g., *paper or plastic*?) idioms, (e.g.,	**may be familiar with Standard English or a variety of English spoken in homeland, but not be familiar with elliptical forms, idioms, or U.S.**

give me a break) and patterns used in U.S. culture (e.g., Americans say *ma'am,* but not *madam*)	cultural patterns
may have a vocabulary in English of 10,000-100,000 words (Hadley, 1993)	may have a vocabulary in English of 2,000-7,000 when beginning academic studies
may feel comfortable when books, Web sites, and class materials are written in language similar to spoken language	may need to learn informal spoken English to understand some written material(e.g.,*...like soccer*? rather than *Do you like to play*...)
most likely did not finish secondary level education	level of education varies widely from no formal education to graduate or professional degrees
may focus on obtaining GED (General Educational Development) credential or transitioning to higher education (although learners have many other goals as well)	may focus on learning basic conversational English first before working to obtain the GED credential or going on to or continuing higher education. Some may also focus on passing the U.S. citizenship test)

Reference: Hadley, A.O. (1993). *Teaching language in context*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

Although adult English language learners share many of the same goals as native English speaking learners (work advancement, family concerns, high school diploma, academic study), their first need is to learn sufficient English to function day to day in U.S. society. Unlike many learners in ABE programs, most adult English language learners may not have the oral English language skills they need to reach their goals. (For more information about the relationship between oral and written skills in English language learners, see *How Should Adult ESL Reading Instruction Differ from ABE Reading Instruction*?

For more information about learner differences that affect instruction, see *How Should Adult ESL Reading Instruction Differ from ABE Reading Instruction?*

9. What instructional practices best meet the needs of adult English language learners?

Teaching English language learners in adult education programs is not the same as teaching native English speakers, who have already participated in the K-12

education system in the United States and, for some reason, still need or want additional education as adults. Teachers, program directors, and state administrators need to know the differences between teaching these two populations, so that they can serve the adults in their programs appropriately.

The following are guidelines for teachers who are new to working with adults learning English.

- Respect the knowledge, skills, and experience of the learners in your program. Adult English language learners come to class to learn English, not because they are deficient in cognitive skills. Making overgeneralizations about learners is disrespectful and counter-productive (e.g., "My students can't understand that because they are from {name of country}" or "because they can't read and write in their own language!").
- Where possible, build on learners' knowledge, skills, and experience in instruction.
- In most cases, adult English language learners do not come to class with negative feelings about past education. They are excited about and committed to learning English.
- Don't be surprised if learners are very proficient with English in some skills and not at all in others. For example, teachers new to adult ESL education may find it unusual to work with a learner who does not exhibit oral communicative proficiency at all (speaking and listening), but who can write excellent paragraphs, read a newspaper like the *Washington Post*, and understand conditional clauses.
- Conducting needs assessments early in the program will help the teacher and other program staff design instruction that addresses learners' expressed, real-life needs. (For more information about needs assessment, see the digest *Needs Assessment for Adult English Language Learners* and "Needs Assessment and Learner Self-Assessment" in the *Practitioner Toolkit: Working with Adult English Language Learners*.)
- Although learners (and the teacher) may be more familiar with traditional teacher-led classes, interactive, communicative activities and classes give learners the opportunity to use the language they need to acquire.
- Grammar instruction has an important place in adult ESL education, but grammar exercises need to be embedded in the content of the class and real-life contexts and not presented in isolation or memorized by learners as rules. For example, if learners are working on how to use prepositions appropriately, they might practice giving directions to someone or describing where different foods can be found in the supermarket (e.g., *the tomatoes are **next to** the onions*) rather than just reading a grammar book, completing exercises, and taking a quiz.
- Depending on learners' native languages and other factors (e.g., amount of time spent in school, exposure to print, experience with focusing on language structures), language components that might seem easy to learn, such as using

the correct personal pronouns, or distinguishing between definite and indefinite articles, may take a long time for learners to use appropriately.

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- Learning English involves four basic skills--reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Speaking and listening are often the most important skills that English language learners need to learn to meet their immediate needs.
- Learners' proficiency in all four skills should be assessed so that the teacher and learners understand their strengths and learning challenges. Many adult English language learners demonstrate proficiency in one or more of the four skills.
- The amount and type of work on pronunciation that is needed depends on the learner's native language and where he or she lives in the United States. Speaking with an accent in English does not necessarily mean that the learner will have difficulty communicating or being understood in English. For example, a Spanish speaker from El Salvador may say "begetable" instead of "vegetable;" for example, "My favorite begetable is lettuce." This deviation from standard pronunciation will not stop listeners from understanding, and it may take several years for the learner to change the /b/ to a /v/ in certain words.
- For more tips on what adult ESL teachers need to know about adult English language learners, see *What Beginning Teachers and Tutors of Adult English Language Learners Need to Know*, one of CAELA's online resource collections, and *Beginning to Work with Adult English Language Learners: Some Considerations*.

For more information about working with adult English language learners see the following documents:

- *Practitioner Toolkit: Working with Adult English Language Learners* (2004)
- *Adult English Language Instruction in the 21st Century* (2003)

For more information about about instructional options, see the following briefs and digests:

- *Promoting the Success of Multilevel ESL Classes: What Teachers and Administrators Can Do* (2006)
- *Adolescent Learners in Adult ESL Classes* (2005)
- *How Should Adult ESL Reading Instruction Differ from ABE Reading Instruction?* (2005)
- *Dialogue Journals: Interactive Writing to Develop Language and Literacy* (2000)
- *Critical Literacy for Adult English Language Learners* (1999)
- *Multiple Intelligences: Theory and Practice in Adult ESL* (1999)
- *Poetry in the Adult ESL Classroom* (1999)
- *Using Videos with Adult English Language Learners* (1999)
- *Using the World Wide Web with Adult ESL Learners* (1998)

- *Project-based Learning for Adult English Language Learners* (1998)
- *Using Multicultural Children's Literature in Adult ESL Classes* (1998)
- *Using Software in the Adult ESL Classroom* (1998)

- *Adult ESL Learners: Learning from the Australian Perspective* (1998)
- *Philosophies and Approaches in Adult ESL Literacy Instruction* (1995)
- *Teaching Low-Level Adult ESL Learners* (1995)
- *Teaching Multilevel Adult ESL Classes* (1995)

A Research Agenda for Adult ESL (1998) also offers insights into adult ESL instruction.

For information about teaching the four language skills with adult English language learners, see the following digests:

- *How Should Adult ESL Reading Instruction Differ from ABE Reading Instruction?* (2005)
- *Reading and the Adult ESL Learner* (1999)
- *Improving Adult ESL Learners' Speaking Skills* (1999)
- *Improving Adult ESL Learners' Pronunciation Skills* (1998)
- *Improving ESL Learners' Listening Skills* (1997)
- *Improving ESL Learners' Writing Skills* (1997)

10. What types of ESL programs are available for adults?

Adult ESL programs vary in scope and content. Some programs, especially those for recent arrivals including refugees, emphasize survival or life skills in the curriculum and focus on improving listening and speaking abilities (oral proficiency). Others stress vocational or work-related topics, citizenship and civics education, family literacy, or academic or GED preparation. Learners who lack literacy skills in their native language and those who are new to the Roman alphabet may be placed in classes that focus on developing basic literacy skills. Classes are provided by local educational agencies, community colleges, local businesses and unions, community-based organizations, volunteer groups, churches, and for-profit language schools. For related digests about this topic, see:

- *Native Language Literacy Instruction and Adult ESL* (2000)
- *Family and Intergenerational Literacy in Multilingual Communities* (1998)
- *Adult ESL Learners: Learning from the Australian Perspective* (1998)
- *Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating Workplace ESL Programs* (1996)
- *Transitioning Adult ESL Learners to Academic Programs* (1995)
- *ESL in Volunteer-Based Programs* (1995)

Adult ESL professionals at the Center for Applied Linguistics have published books and issue papers on this topic, including:

- *Immigrant Learners and Their Families: Literacy to Connect the Generations*
- *Making Meaning, Making Change: Participatory Curriculum Development for Adult ESL Literacy*

- *Learning to Work in a New Land: A Review and Sourcebook for Vocational and Workplace ESL*

For information about how to purchase these books, see The CALStore
A Research Agenda for Adult ESL (1998) also addresses these issues in a section on program design and instructional content and practices.

11. How long does it take an adult to learn English?

The amount of time it takes an adult to learn English varies from person to person and depends on such factors as the individual's age, educational background, level of literacy in the native language, and opportunities to interact with native English speakers. However, it is generally accepted that it takes from 5-7 years to go from not knowing any English at all to being able to accomplish most communication tasks including academic tasks (Collier, 1989). Research done for the Mainstream English Language Training (MELT) project (1985) indicates that it would take from 500-1000 hours of instruction for an adult who is literate in her native language, but has had no prior English instruction, to reach a level where she can satisfy her basic needs, survive on the job, and have limited social interaction in English.

For more information look at the following digests:

- *Working with Literacy-Level Adult English Language Learners* (2003)
- *ESL Instruction and Adults with Learning Disabilities* (2000)
- *Native Language Literacy and Adult ESL Instruction* (1999)

References

- Collier, V.P. (1989). How Long? A Synthesis of Research on Academic Achievement in a Second language. *TESOL Quarterly, 23*, (3), 509-31.
- *Competency-based Mainstream English Language Training Resource Package*. (1985). Washington, DC: Department of Health and Human Services, Social Security Administration, Office of Refugee Resettlement.

12. How can I find out more about teaching English as a second language (ESL)?

The majority of teaching jobs in adult ESL are part-time. Staff development opportunities vary considerably from program to program. It is a demanding and creative field that is growing as the demand for English language instruction continues. You do not need to speak a language other than English to teach ESL, although it is helpful to have some experience as a language learner and to know something about other cultures.

To find out more about preparing for this profession or to learn about options for furthering your professional development, see the following briefs, bibliographies, and digests:

- *Online Professional Development for Adult ESL Educators* (2005)
- *Online Professional Development Resources for Adult ESL Educators* (2005)
- *Beginning to Work with Adult English Language Learners: Some Considerations* (2002)
- *Current Concepts and Terms in Adult ESL* (1998)
- *Trends in Staff Development for Adult ESL Instructors* (1998)

You may also want to visit the Web site of TESOL -- the international professional organization for teachers of English as a second and foreign language.

13. How can I find out what ESL programs are in my geographic area?

The National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) has created America's Literacy Directory, a searchable, online database of literacy and education programs (including adult ESL programs) across the United States. You can search by program focus, as well as location (zip code and/or city and state).

14. What does the research say about how to teach reading to adults learning English as a second language?

Currently, there is limited research available on how adults learn to read in a second language. Much of what is known about reading comes from first language reading research with children (both native and non-native English speakers) and native English speaking adults. While this information can be very helpful to teachers in conceptualizing reading and the reading process, English as a second language (ESL) teachers need to consider how it may or may not apply to adults learning to read in a second language.

In 2000, adult ESL professionals at the Center for Applied Linguistics compiled an annotated bibliography that can provide a starting point for those interested in research and theory related to adults learning to read in a second language. In 2001, Rebecca Adams and Miriam Burt compiled *Research on Reading Development of Adult English Language Learners: An Annotated Bibliography*, which was developed to present a comprehensive view of the research that has been conducted on reading development among adult English language learners in the United States (and other English speaking countries) in the last 20 years. In 2003, Miriam Burt, Joy Kreeft Peyton, and Rebecca Adams wrote *Reading and Adult English Language Learners: A Review of the Research*. (For information about how to purchase a hard copy of this book, go to The CALStore.)

For suggestions on how to teach reading to adults learning English, see the following briefs, digests and Q & As:

- *How Should Adult ESL Reading Instruction Differ from ABE Reading Instruction?* (2005)
- *Reading and the Adult English Language Learner* (1999)

- *Critical Literacy for Adult English Language Learners* (1999)
- *Poetry in the Adult ESL Classroom* (1999)

Also see *Teaching Reading to Adult English Language Learners: A Reading Instruction Staff Development Program* available online from the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center (VALRC) and CAELA's online resource collection, Reading and Adult English Language Learners.

15. How can I incorporate technology in my instructional practice?

Incorporating technology in adult ESL instruction is no longer just a question of whether or not to do it. As a field, we are quickly moving to the question of "How?" (Gaer, 1998).

Using technology in the classroom can take a variety of forms. It may involve incorporating the viewing of a videocassette or television program in a lesson on intercultural interactions or asking learners to create audio recordings of a dialogue between an employer and an employee discussing a grievance. It may mean having learners work individually or in groups on a software program or participate in project-based activities that utilize sites on the World Wide Web. Technology is involved in all these examples. Choosing among the range of options and integrating the choice effectively becomes the challenge.

It is important to seriously consider your objectives in incorporating technology in your teaching. You may want to bring authenticity or variety to the language and content that you are teaching. You may want to better motivate your learners, tapping into their interest in things like current videos, software programs, or computers in general. You may want to address diverse learning styles by taking advantage of the different modalities of audio, video and text that technology can offer. You may even want to create activities or materials that learners can self-access, either on-site or from home. Various forms of technology can address such goals. As with any instructional tool, you need to decide what your purposes and goals are first, and then which forms of technology will best serve them.

For more detailed information on using specific technologies with adult English language learners, see the following digests:

- *Video-Based Distance Education for Adult English Language Learners* (2003)
- *Using Software in the Adult ESL Classroom* (1998)
- *Using the World Wide Web with Adult ESL Learners* (1998)
- *Using Videos with Adult English Language Learners* (1999)

Using technology such as computers and the Internet can present both benefits and difficulties for adult ESL teachers and learners. You need to consider a variety of points related to your learners, learning objectives, and your teaching situation when you think about incorporating technology of any form. For a more complete

discussion of the benefits and challenges, see *Benefits and Challenges in Using Computers and the Internet with Adult English Learners*. Also of interest may be Evaluating Software Programs, which offers guiding questions for choosing software programs to use with adult English language learners.

16. How can I identify adult English language learners who might have learning disabilities?

Identifying adult language learners who might have learning disabilities is a complex task. Before labeling or testing an adult ESL learner, teachers should look for other reasons for lack of expected progress.

For instance, refugees or other immigrants might have experienced stress or trauma that cause difficulty in concentration or memory. Both *Mental Health and the Adult Refugee: The Role of the ESL Teacher* and *Refugees as English Language Learners: Issues and Concerns* give specific information about particular needs of refugees.

Allene Grognet's article, *Elderly Refugees and Language Learning* (ERIC No. ED416 721, available from the ERIC database www.eric.ed.gov) offers pertinent information about age and acculturation issues that also can play a significant role in an adult's success in an ESL classroom. Such disparate reasons as limited access to education in the native country, different alphabet or educational culture, or heavy work load can contribute to problems an adult ESL learner may have in making progress in learning English.

If, over several months, a learner does not make progress and the teacher or volunteer has been able to rule out other causes, it may be that the learner does have a specific learning disability.

While there is not a great deal of learning disabilities information available specifically targeted for adults learning English, you can find some suggestions by searching our online resource collection on adult ESL and learning disabilities.

Several publications offer practical advice for teachers:

ESL Instruction and Adults with Learning Disabilities (2000)

Learning Disabilities in Adult ESL: Case Studies and Directions (1996)

Hatt, P. & Nichols. E. (1995) *Links in learning.* West Hill, Ontario: MESE Consulting, Ltd.

Shewcraft, D. F. & Witkop, E. (1998). *Do my ESOL students have learning disabilities?* Pittsfield, MA: Western MA YALD Project.

17. How can I integrate language skill development with civics content in the adult ESL classroom?

For years, topics such as U.S. history and government, civic participation, and citizenship test preparation have been included along with English language and literacy development in curriculum and practice in adult immigrant education. Now that designated monies are being provided to states and individual program there is

even more interest in finding techniques, materials, and lesson ideas that will help practitioners combine language skills development and civics content.

Because adult immigrants and refugees often express interest in American culture, government, and history, integrating language skills and content can be easy and natural as well as useful for classroom community-building. While the complexity of the language varies from level to level, and specific language skills might be more applicable at certain levels, significant content can be imparted at all levels at the same time learners are acquiring English.

A wide variety of approaches and methods have proven effective for integrating civics content in English classes. Civics content lends itself to such beginning-level activities as games, songs, alphabetizing, language experience stories, and strip stories. For higher levels, using the library and the World Wide Web and working on contact assignments within the community can provide integrated lessons that address several language skills at once. For all levels and for multilevel classes, small group work, paired activities, and field trips can promote skills and content acquisition. Project-based learning, with its emphasis on integrating speaking, listening, reading, and writing, problem-solving, and using English in authentic contexts, is a particularly promising approach.

For more in depth information, see CAELA's online annotated resource collection on civics education. Included in the collection are separate lists of resources for citizenship and promoting cultural understanding, as well as the following briefs and digests:

- *English Literacy and Civics Education* (2006)
- *Civics Education for Adult English Language Learners* (2000)
- *Citizenship Preparation for Adult ESL Learners* (1997)

For suggestions on classroom activities that combine language skills and civics content, visit CAELA's collection *Activities for Integrating Civics in Adult English Language Learning*. There you will find ideas for using music to integrate language learning and civics, as well as activities for African-American History Month.

18. What do beginning adult ESL teachers, tutors and volunteers need to know?

Although many ESL teachers have studied in undergraduate, graduate, and certificate programs, many others have had little or no training or experience in working with adult English language learners. To effectively teach English to adult language learners, teachers, tutors, and volunteers new to the field need to understand:

- principles of adult learning;
- second language acquisition;
- issues related to culture; and
- instructional approaches that support language development in adults.

Principles of Adult Learning

Educator Malcolm Knowles' ideas of how adults learn are the basis for much learning theory. Knowles said:

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

In short, all adult learners need adult-appropriate content, materials, and activities that speak to their needs and interests and allow them to demonstrate their knowledge and abilities. English language learners may differ from other adult learners to the extent that culture, language, and experience play roles in the learning. For example, many adult learners have been accustomed to teacher-centered classrooms where they were not encouraged to participate. It may take time for learners to become comfortable with the more learner-centered ESL class where their participation is expected and encouraged.

For more information on Knowles' ideas, consult:

Knowles, M. S. (1990) *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species* (4th edition) Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing. "Malcolm Knowles: Apostle of Andragogy" provides a brief biography of the educator and his ideas.

Second Language Acquisition

Although more research needs to be done, evidence shows that learning a second language, especially as an adult, is not the same as learning one's first language. To effectively assist adult English language learners, teachers need to be aware of the complex interactions between cognitive, affective, and linguistic issues that are going on within the learners. *An Annotated Bibliography of Second Language Acquisition in Adult English Language Learners* describes documents related to second language acquisition adult ESL learners. Other useful documents include:

Burt, M., Peyton, J.K., & Adams, R. (2003). *Reading and Adult English Language Learners*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Bygate, M., Skehan, P., & Swain, M. (2001). Introduction. In *Researching Pedagogic Tasks: Second Language Learning, Teaching, and Testing* (pp.1-20). Harlow, England: Pearson.

Florez M. & Burt, M. (2001). *Beginning to Work With Adult English Language Learners: Some Considerations*.

Gass, S. M. (1997). *Input, Interaction, and the Second Language Learner*. Mahwah, N.J. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Krashen, S. (1981). *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. New York: Pergamon Press.

Issues Related to Culture

Language and culture are closely related, so learning English also involves cultural learning. Teachers need to provide pertinent cultural information as well as a safe, comfortable environment where learners feel free to discuss issues related to the community outside the classroom. Some adult learners may be unfamiliar with class situations that involve men and women of diverse cultures, languages, age, and socioeconmic status. However--for both learners and teachers--this complex mix of learners can provide great opportunities for sharing and learning. CAELA's Online Resources for Promoting Cultural Understanding in the Adult ESL Classroom offers links to many resources teachers can consult as they seek to promote cultural understanding, tolerance, and cross-cultural communication in their adult ESL classrooms.

Instructional Approaches That Support Language Development in Adults

The only experience some new teachers have had with language learning is their own experience with high school or college language courses. Adult ESL tends to be communicative, process-oriented, and lifeskills oriented. Foreign language instruction is often grammar or text-based. For background information, the digest, *Philosophies and Approaches in Adult ESL Literacy* may prove helpful.

FAQ # 9 (above)identifies several digests that explain specific instructional approaches and techniques including

- *Poetry in the Adult ESL Classroom* (1999);
- *Project-based Learning for Adult English Language Learners* (1998); and
- *Using Music in the Adult ESL Class* (2001).

There are several general instructional strategies to keep in mind when working with adults:

- Get to know your students and their needs.
- Use visuals to support your instruction.
- Model tasks before asking your learners to do them.
- Foster a safe classroom environment .
- Watch both your teacher talk and your writing.
- Use scaffolding techniques to support tasks
- Bring authentic materials to the classroom.
- Don't overload learners.
- Balance variety and routine in your activities

Other Resources

Novice teachers, tutors, and volunteers can learn from colleagues by signing up for the Adult English Language Learners discussion list or by reading the archives from that list.

To see how an experienced program serves adult English language learners, look at the Arlington Education and Employment Program's (REEP) newest [ESL Curriculum for Adults](#) online.

19. What instructional practices best meet the needs of literacy-level adult English language learners?

Some teachers—especially those new to teaching adult English language learners—express concern about teaching learners who *aren't literate in their native language* or *never went to school*. In many ways, this concern is unwarranted. Having or not having had access to formal education does not correlate to cognitive functioning, interest, and energy. Most literacy-level learners will need explicit instruction in basic literacy skills (e.g., phonological processing, vocabulary development, syntactical processing). However, these learners bring an array of lifeskills knowledge (often including some oral proficiency and knowledge of American culture) problem-solving skills, and enthusiasm to the process.

Some confusion also lies with deciding <u>who</u> the literacy-level learners are. Some educators and texts talk about *low-level literacy students* or use the term *illiterates* when talking about adult immigrants who can not read or write. The first term, while descriptive, has a mildly negative connotation. The second term has an even stronger negative connotation.

So, before examining promising instructional practices, it may be helpful to examine what individuals may attend literacy- or beginning-level adult ESL classes.

Literacy-level learners are generally those with 6 or fewer years of education in their native countries who need focused instruction on learning to read and write English. The population participating in literacy-level classes is diverse: These classes may include men and women with different native languages, ages, length of time in country, life and language learning goals, and access to previous education ([Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2000](#); [Shank & Terrill](#), 1997). Literacy learners also have a wide range of oral skills in English. (For a more detailed description of the varieties of first language literacy and effects on second language literacy, see [Burt, Peyton, & Adams](#), 2003.) The learners are further differentiated by their experiences. Many have experienced trauma related to events in their native countries and to resettlement in the United States, and this trauma may affect the speed and facility with which they learn English [(Adkins, Sample, & Birman](#), 1999). The following learners might attend the same literacy class:

Preliterate (The native language does not yet have a writing system.) Wanankhucha, a Bantu from Somalia, entered the class as a recent refugee. She knows her native Af-Maay only orally, as a written form of the language is just now being developed. Furthermore, as a refugee, Wanankhucha shows evidence of trauma.

Nonliterate (The native language has a written form, but the learner has no literacy.) Trang is a young, single mother from rural Vietnam who grew up without access to education. Here in the United States, she lacks many of the educational and cultural supports earlier Vietnamese refugees enjoyed.

Semiliterate (The learner has minimal literacy in native language.) Roberto attended a rural school in El Salvador for 3 years. Although he wanted to continue, his family needed him to work on the family farm.
Nonalphabet literate (The learner is literate in a language that is not alphabetic.) Xian is a retired minor bureaucrat from China. He is highly literate in the Mandarin script, but he is unfamiliar with any alphabet, including Roman.
Non-Roman alphabet literate (The learner is literate in an alphabetic language other than Roman.) Khalil comes from Jordan. He completed 2 years of secondary school and is literate in Arabic.
Roman-alphabet literate (The learner is literate in a language that is written in the Roman alphabet). Alex is a senior from Russia. As a young man, he studied French. Even though he was a professional (engineer) in his own country, he does not want to move to a higher level class.
Others who may benefit from a literacy-level class are individuals with learning disabilities or individuals who, because of age, physical or mental health issues, or family situations, find that the slow and repetitive pace of such a class better meets their needs and goals [Excerpted from *Working With Literacy-Level Adult English Language Learners* (Florez & Terrill, 2003)]

So, understanding that in many programs the literacy-level class may be quite diverse, the general information about teaching adult English language learners in FAQ #18 and the instructional practices described in FAQ#9 are appropriate for literacy-level learners and classes as well.

As in other adult ESL classes, conducting learner needs assessment (initial and throughout the course) is an essential element of classroom practice. For more information on learner needs assessment, see these publications
Needs Assessment for Adult ESL Learners
"Needs Assessment and Learner Self-Evaluation" from the *Practitioner Toolkit: Working with Adult English Language Learners*
Working With Literacy-Level Adult English Language Learners
The REEP ESL Curriculum for Adults from the Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP) includes an extensive section on learner needs assessment and goal-setting.

Other effective activities include

Dialogues with related activities. Oral dialogues can be springboards for literacy-oriented activities such as cloze or substitution where learners supply the missing words in written dialogue or exercise where learners substitute different vocabulary words in structured dialogues, sentence strips, role plays, or dictations.

Vocabulary-building activities. For literacy-level learners, matching pictures to words is key for vocabulary development. Flash cards, concentration games, labeling, vocabulary journals, picture dictionaries, and bingo activities can be used to practice vocabulary.

Class surveys One type of class survey requires learners to ask the other students one or two questions, such as "What month were you born? or "What is your last

name?" and record the answers on a form. The class can debrief the answers to make a chart or graph. If learner names are gathered, the list can be used for alphabetizing practice. A second kind of survey asks learners to find "someone who likes soccer" or "someone who comes from Bolivia." To find the information, learners need to ask questions such as "Do you like soccer?" and record the information on a form. Class surveys are useful for community building as well as for practicing the four language skills, reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Language Experience Approach (LEA). The teacher records text that learners generate from a shared picture or event, drawing out vocabulary that is relevant to the learners. Other activities based on the learner-generated text follow, such as vocabulary development, phonics exercises, choral reading, or dictation.

For more information on LEAs, see the digest *Language Experience Approach and Adult Learners* and "Language Experience Approach Revisited : The Use of Personal Narratives in Adult L2 Literacy Instruction" (Adrian J. Wurr in *The Reading Matrix*, Vol.2, No.1, 2002)

Phonics exercises. Exercises such as minimal pairs (e.g., hat/cat, pan/fan) or identifying initial word sounds are important components of literacy-level lessons. Relating such exercises to the vocabulary being taught in a lesson contextualizes the learning and makes it relevant. Be sure to use actual words, rather than nonsense syllables (Burt, Peyton, & Van Duzer, 2005). Whenever possible, use authentic materials (flyers, schedules, advertisements, bills) to connect literacy development to real-world tasks.

Dictations of students' names, phone numbers, and addresses. These activities can provide interesting, meaningful content while developing encoding skills. Tactile activities such as drawing the letters in sand with the fingers, coloring letters, or manipulating plastic cutouts of letters may offer some variety).

Many CAELA publications offer teachers information about learner background, philosophies, methods and activities that will help them work effectively with literacy-level adult English language learners including:

How Should Adult ESL Reading Instruction Differ from ABE Reading Instruction?
Native Language Literacy and Adult ESL Learners
Mental Health and the Adult Refugee: The Role of the ESL Teacher
Picture Stories for ESL Health Literacy
Practitioner Toolkit: Working with Adult English Language Learners
Project-based Learning for Adult English Language Learners
Reading and Adult English Language Learners: A Review of the Research
Social Identity and the Adult ESL Classroom
Teaching Low-Level Adult ESL Learners
Teaching Multilevel Adult ESL Classes
Trauma and the Adult English Language Learner
Valuing Diversity in the Multicultural Classroom
Working With Literacy-Level Adult English Language Learners

For other CAELA resources, see the ESL Resources section on the CAELA Web site. Other resources include

ESL for literacy learners (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2000).

Framework for Adult ESOL in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (1999/2002).
Hands-On English (Adult ESL practitioner newsletter, published six times a year, Anna Silliman is the editor)
Making it Real: Teaching Pre-Literate Adult Refugee Students (Crodyon, Tacoma Community House Training Project, 2006)
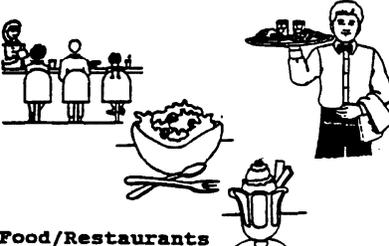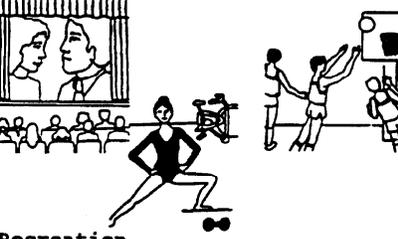
Multilevel literacy planning and practice. *Focus on Basics 1*(c), 18-22. (Shank & Terrill, 1997)
The REEP ESL Curriculum For Adults.
Adult ESL instructors also need to decide what classroom materials are appropriate for literacy-level adult ESL learners. For a list of possible materials, see *Teaching Low-Level Adult ESL Learners*.
Finally, instructors should keep in mind what Shirley Brod said in *What non-readers or beginning readers need to know: Performance-based ESL adult literacy,* literacy-level learners "may be beginning learners, but they are not beginning thinkers" (Brod, 1999, p. 5 ERIC No. ED 433 730)

Note: Under development for completion in September 2006 is an online resource collection Working with Literacy-level Adult English Learners. Watch the CAELA homepage for updates.

I need English for:
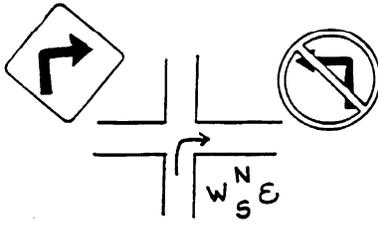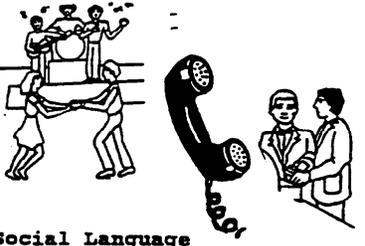
Directions/Signs _____	Social Language _____
Post Office _____	Money/Banking _____
Emergencies _____	Food/Restaurants _____
Recreation _____	Other:

Colorado Certificate of Accor
English as a Secon

ESL Needs Assessment-Intermediate Level

ESL NEEDS ASSESSMENT
(If necessary, assist students to complete the assessment)

Do you speak English here?	Yes	No		Do you want to speak better English	Yes	No
-at work	___	___		-at work	___	___
-on the bus/train	___	___		-on the bus/train	___	___
-with friends	___	___		-with friends	___	___
-with neighbors	___	___		-with neighbors	___	___
-at the doctor's	___	___		-at the doctor's	___	___
-on the telephone	___	___		-on the telephone	___	___
-in stores	___	___		-in stores	___	___
-at your children's school	___	___		-at your children's school	___	___

Other places where you speak English

_____

Can you read or write these in English?	Yes	No		Do you want to read or write in English?	Yes	No
-checks	___	___		-checks	___	___
-bills	___	___		-bills	___	___
-ads in newspaper	___	___		-ads in newspapers	___	___
-catalogues	___	___		-catalogues	___	___
-work notices	___	___		-work notices	___	___
-report cards/school notes	___	___		-report cards/school notes	___	___
-forms	___	___		-forms	___	___
-job applications	___	___		-job applications	___	___

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From the ESOL Starter Kit, Virginia
Resource Center. October 2002, p.A-45   A-2b

From the *ESOL Starter Kit*, Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center. October 2002, p. A-45

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