

FROM THE EDITORS

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 25th anniversary volume of the *MinneWITESOL Journal*! It is a remarkable accomplishment to have not only a professional organization for teachers in the state for more than 25 years, but to also have a quarter century of scholarly contributions from ESL teachers and researchers in our region. To mark this special anniversary, part of this volume of the *Journal* is devoted to looking back on this accomplishment. First, we include at the beginning of the volume a journey in the way-back machine to the early days of the *Journal* with Mark Landa, the first editor (1981-1983). Second, a table of contents for Volumes 1 to 24, can be found at the end of this 25th volume.

In *There Ought to be a Journal...*, Mark describes the challenges of starting a journal and notes the technological changes from typewriter to web site, but in reading his comments, we realized that much has stayed the same over the years: The *Journal* continues to offer articles with broad and practical appeal as well as readable descriptions of research with an emphasis on regional importance.

In addition, compiling the cumulative table of contents brought to light how many topics have appeared repeatedly over the years. In particular, the special topic of the current issue—research and best practice concerning the instruction of ESL learners with low levels of literacy—was first addressed here in 1982 with the article *Designing an ESL program for the preliterate adult: An account of one program's development*. This topic continues to be of great interest for ESL educators in our region. In the *Journal* editors' survey at the 2006 MinneTESOL conference, it topped the list of subjects that attendees said they wanted to read about.

Section 1

The first section of this volume includes articles that concentrate on our special topic: research and best practice concerning the instruction of ESL learners with low levels of literacy.

In the opening article, "'Maestra! The letters speak.'" Learning to Read for the First Time: Best Practices in Emergent Reading Instruction,' Patsy Vinogradov provides an insightful overview of research-based methods for teaching ESL students with low levels of literacy. This is an article that you can hand to new teachers in search of guidance who find themselves teaching this population of students for the first time.

A second article you may want to share with such a teacher is Julia Reimer's 'Learning Strategies and Low-Literacy Hmong Adult Students,' in which she details a year-long research study on teaching learning strategies to Hmong students with low levels of literacy. Reimer provides an extensive literature review on learning strategies instruction with low-literacy students and insights into what may or may not work when teaching strategies to this student population.

If you are a teacher in need of guidance in choosing a textbook, this section of the *Journal* also includes several reviews of materials which may be used for working with low-literacy students. Anne Lazaraton and Andrew Baker present a comparative review of materials from the series *Literacy Plus*, *English-No Problem!*, *LifePrints*, *Ventures*, *Taking off* and *Longman ESL literacy*. Rhonda Petree examines *Step Forward Introductory Level I: Language for Everyday Life*, a textbook for pre-literacy adult

students, Parthy Schachter reviews *Sam and Pat 1: Beginning Reading and Writing* and Kate Clements reviews *The Basic Oxford Picture Dictionary*.

Section 2

The second section of the journal includes articles on a range of topics. First is an article by Lisa M. Bolt Simons, "Conversations about Inclusion: Connecting Mainstream and ESL," that discusses what the inclusion model of ESL teaching looks like in action and provides numerous examples of the varieties of inclusion.

In "Classroom Strategies and Tools for Differentiating Instruction in the ESL Classroom," Anne Dahlman, Patricia Hoffman, and Susan Brauhn explore how Differentiated Instruction can be used in the ESL classroom.

The section finishes with a book review of *Teaching Content to English Language Learners: Strategies for Secondary School Success* from Kathryn Huebsch.

There will not be a special topic for Volume 26 of the *Journal*, but we hope that readers will continue to submit their work on various issues related to teaching ESL, with special encouragement to submit grammar usage studies, which have appeared in the journal in the past, but have been fewer in number in recent years. We welcome your explorations into the realms of American English grammar which (after these 25 years) remain unexplored.

Finally, another year, another editorial change. We thank Marguerite Parks and Michelle Fuerch for their service as journal editors and ask our Wisconsin readers to consider volunteering as editors since the editorial staff is currently without a WITESOL representative. Many hands make light work.

We thank all of those involved in the process of creating this volume of the *Journal*, particularly the authors and the Editorial Advisory Board. We also thank Hamline University and the University of Minnesota for their support of the editorial process.

Mike Anderson
University of Minnesota

Bonnie Swierzbina
Hamline University

“There ought to be a journal . . .”

Mark Landa

When the idea of starting a journal first came up in 1980, MinneTESOL was still a relatively new organization. Some of us felt that, like any new arrival, it needed its own goals and challenges, or it would not be able to develop. The affiliate had taken on the missions of “fostering professional development” and “collecting and disseminating information pertinent to ESL.” Putting out a journal seemed a good way to accomplish those objectives; another way was establishing an ESL materials resource center at about this same time. These projects would supplement the organization’s conferences and social events.

As I recall, the four of us who ended up working on the 1981 issue—Eric Nelson, Sharon Dwyer, Dianne Pecoraro and I—were aware that it would set a precedent for members to decide whether to consider submitting articles. There was no shortage of topics and capable writers, but we obviously lacked the budget and scope of other established organizations and their journals. We wondered what our niche would be?

We wanted a collection of articles with broad and practical appeal. At the same time, we wanted to include readable research-based articles. Of the 17 authors in the first three years, four were university faculty, eight were ESL instructors in the area, and five were graduate students. The journal became a blend with features of TESOL’s *Essential Teacher*. Most articles were written by teachers for teachers.

The first articles that came in covered a variety of subfields: the role of the ESL teacher, assessment, conversation and listening comprehension courses, and a bibliography for teaching children. The articles needed little editing, but we faced a major challenge—and a weekend crisis or two—in preparing them for publication. Remember, this was back before the Internet and e-mail, and yes, even before we had access to word processing.

We re-typed each article on blue-lined paper using the ESL secretary’s electronic typewriter in Klaeber Court. Fortunately, we had enough white correction paper and fluid to cover our flaws. The first issue was eventually on its way to the printer in downtown Minneapolis. A few weeks later, what a joy to see the green covered *MinneTESOL Journal* in the hands of members!

From this humble beginning, the journal has evolved to today’s outstanding publication—*The MinneWITESOL Journal*, now accessible to me by website as I sit here at my desk in Japan.

AUTHOR

Mark Landa was the *MinneTESOL Journal* editor from 1981-1983. He now teaches graduate students who are preparing to be teachers at Mukogawa University in Nishinomiya, Japan, and can be reached through <http://markandmary.com>.

MINNEWITESOL JOURNAL TABLE OF CONTENTS, VOLUMES 1 - 24

2007, Volume 24

Editors: Mike Anderson, Michelle Fuerch, Marguerite Parks, Bonnie Swierzbin

Educating English language learners in a rural district: A case in point by Edstam, Tina Scott, Walker, Constance L., & Stone, Karla

Overcoming Limitations: How a Filipino speaker of English uses compensation strategies by Lloyd, Jennifer

Improving literacy of L1-non-literate and L1-literate adult English as a second language learners by Trupke-Bastidas, Julie & Poulos, Andrea

Making Decisions about ESL curriculum by Hoffman, Patricia & Dahlman, Anne

...And the beat goes on: Further evidence to support the need for accommodations and universal design in high stakes testing of English language learners by Erichsrud, Andrea & Johnstone, Christopher

2007 reviews

The Lion's Share and Dhegdheer by Said Salah Ahmed & Marian A. Hassan, Minnesota Humanities Commission
reviewed by DeKam, Katie

All New Very Easy True Stories: A Picture-Based First Reader by Sandra Heyer, Pearson Education
reviewed by Coggins, Michael

Sourcework: Academic Writing from Sources by Nancy E. Dollahite & Julie Haun, Houghton Mifflin
reviewed by Lindbloom, Tor

All Clear Listening and Speaking 3, 2nd Edition by Helen Kalkstein, Thomson Heinle
reviewed by Jaynes, Cameron

2006, Volume 23

Editors:

Don Hones, Kristi Kline Liu, Marguerite Parks, Nima Salehi

"Hmoob Boy Meets Hmong Girl": Orthographic codeswitching in a playscript by Burt, Susan

Tracking the progress of students whose first language is not English toward English proficiency: Using CBM with English Language Learners by Betts, Joseph, Muyskens, Paul, & Marston, Doug

Can music be used effectively to teach grammar? by Fagerland, Rhoda

Tutoring programs for ELLs: Moving beyond the classroom to support academic achievement by Ranney, Susan & Edstam, Tina

2006 reviews

A gift for Sadia by Marie Fritz Perry, Buttonweed Press
reviewed by Dualeh, Anita

Essential academic vocabulary: Mastering the complete academic word list by Helen Huntley, Houghton Mifflin
reviewed by Leach, Debra

From college to careers: Listening in the real world by Angel Bishop Petty & Robert Engel, Houghton Mifflin
reviewed by Liptak, Christine

World link: Developing English fluency by Douglas Stempleski & JR Morgan, Thomson Heinle
reviewed by Martin, Charlotte

Targeting Pronunciation: Communicating Clearly in English by Sue Miller, Houghton Mifflin
reviewed by Tabbut, Julia

My name is... Stories and art by young refugees in Minnesota schools by Center for Victims of Torture
reviewed by Xiong, Shervun

2005, Volume 22

Editors: Don Hones, Kristi Kline Liu, Nima Salehi

Finding a voice and a place: Using life histories in a second language writing classroom by Collins, Molly Rojas, Murie, Robin, & Detzner, Dan

Educational models and effective practices in occupational English for immigrant workers by Johnson, Kimberly & Marchwick, Kelly

Non-native teachers in expanding circle countries: Assets and implications for teacher education by Dudzik, Diana

ELL teacher preparation: A process for becoming strategic teachers by Henn-Reinke, Kathryn

An alignment study of the Test of Emerging Academic English and Minnesota's standards for reading in grades 3, 5, 7 and 10 by Lombard, Thomas, Henderson, Julie & Vansickle, Tim

2005 reviews

Sound bites: Pronunciation activities by JR Kozyrev, Houghton Mifflin
reviewed by Davis, Larry

Inspired to write: Reading and tasks to develop writing skills by J. Withrow, G. Brookes & MC Cummings, Cambridge University Press
reviewed by Tarell, Amy

Accommodating and educating Somali students in Minnesota schools by M. Farid & D. McMahan, Hamline University Press
reviewed by Kurtz, Elizabeth

Growing up in two worlds: A Murri trilogy from Australia by M. McDonald & BM Pryor, Allen & Unwin
reviewed by Hones, Don

Hey, Hmong girl, whassup? by L. Rempel, Hamline University Press
reviewed by Munson, Rhonda

2004, Volume 21

Editors: Kristi Kline Liu, Nima Salehi, Susan Huss-Lederman

Professionalism in practice: ESL voices by Edstam, Tina

The new English language proficiency standards: Issues in curriculum and ESL teacher professionalism by Bigelow, Martha & Ranney, Susan

Exploring the immediate and delayed effects of formal instruction: teaching giving and responding to compliments by Ishihara, Noriko

2004 reports

Using children's multicultural literature in the culturally and linguistically diverse classroom: An African example by Johnson, Feng-Ling Margaret

Keeping it real: Using authentic materials with beginning adult learners by Vinogradov, Patsy

Issues and a model of assessment for determining learning disabilities in the adult English as a second language population by Frank, Marn

Preparing English education majors to teach second language learners by Durham, Marilyn

2004 reviews

Teaching adult ESL: A practical introduction by Betsy Parrish, McGraw Hill
reviewed by Liden, Astrid

Weaving it together: Connecting reading and writing by M. Broukal, Heinle
reviewed by Markman, Becky Uran

Are ESL professionals on the way out? TESOL Quarterly article by Platt, Harper & Mendoza
reviewed by Hansen, Kit

2003, Volume 20

Editors: Don Hones, Kristi Kline Liu, Nima Salehi

Curriculum components of the practicum in ESL by Ishihara, Noriko

When one size doesn't fit all: English language learners and content standards by Stone, Karla

Sustained content for business English programs: Structuring, selecting, and implementing learning by Tarnopolsky, Oleg

Addressing cultural and linguistic diversity in the classroom: Becoming culturally competent by Boshier, Susan

2003 reviews

Silence; issue of journal Paj Ntaub Voice: A journal giving expression to Hmoob Voices
by Mai Neng (Ed.)
reviewed by Hubers, Amy

Dual language instruction—A handbook for enriched education by Cloud, Genesee & Hamayan
reviewed by Austin, Sara

2002, Volume 19

Editors: Susan Gillette, Randall Gwin, Don Hones

Mental and written translations in ESL by Cohen, Andrew D.

Evaluating the needs of workers and employers in a workplace ESL program: Some ideas for consideration by Barncard, Ann M.

Collaboration to improve English language learners' access to a standards-based curriculum by Foote, Nicolas

Meaning, dimension, and perspective as explanation to some thorny prepositions by Gao, Carl Zhonggang

2001, Volume 18

Editors: Don Hones, Patricia Eliason, Susan Gillette

La club de lectura: An oasis for struggling readers in bilingual classrooms by Henn-Reinke, Kathryn

The multicultural classroom: Immigrants reading the literature of the American immigrant experience by Collins, Molly

A look at ESL instruction for literacy-level adults by Vinogradov, Patsy

Issues related to ESL students and Minnesota's Basic Standards Tests: A synthesis of research from MAP by Anderson, Michael E., Swierzbin, Bonnie, Liu, Kristin K. & Thurlow, Martha L.

Poem: ImAgInArY WoRID
Farah, Hawa

Poem: A Bird Flying up the Sky
Farah, Hawa

2001 review

New immigrants in the United States by (Ed.) McKay & Wong, Cambridge University Press
reviewed by Hansen, Adele

2000, Volume 17

Editors: Don Hones, Patricia Eliason, Susan Gillette

Understanding and teaching American cultural thought through English metaphors by Gao, Carl Zhonggang

An alternative model for novice-level elementary-ESL education by Duke, Karen & Mabbott, Ann

Wisconsin's approach to academic assessment for limited-English proficient students: Creating a continuum of assessment options by Boals, Tim

More than the usual heterogeneity in the ESL writing class by Balhorn, Mark

Poem: The Great Escape
Hones, Don

2000 reviews

Bilingual education: Teachers' narratives by Nancy Lemberger, Erlbaum
reviewed by O'Malley, C-C

The Internet activity workbook by Dave Sperling, Prentice Hall Regents
reviewed by Skinner, John

1999, Volume 16

Editors: Suellen Rundquist, Don Hones

Expanding our vision of English language learner education in Minnesota: Implications of state population projections by Tarone, Elaine

Mainstream teachers' perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of teaching ESL students by Youngs Jr., George A. & Youngs, Cheryl Stanosheck

Recruiting minority teachers from within local school districts: The Lakeland College urban teachers outreach program by Rettig, Perry R.

The importance of content in the academic achievement of English language learners by Hammond, Marina

Form, function, and meaning: Understanding/teaching English participles by Gao, Carl Zhonggang

1999 students' work

Nostalgia

Jer

My Way

Sato, Midori

The Shield of the Republic of Colombia

Beltran, Gladys Helena

1999 reviews

Street speak: Essential American slang and idioms by Burke & Harrington, Caslon
reviewed by Teutsch-Dwyer, Maria

Extensive reading in the second language classroom by Day & Bamford, Cambridge University Press
reviewed by Poulos, Andrea

Materials development in language teaching by Brian Tomlinson, Cambridge University Press
reviewed by Kirchoff, Elizabeth

Beyond training: Perspectives on language teacher education by Jack Richards,
Cambridge University Press
reviewed by Christenson, Andria

Focus on form in classroom second language acquisition by Doughty & Williams (Eds.),
Cambridge University Press
reviewed by Przybilla, Ann

1998, Volume 15

Editors: Thomas A. Upton, Suellen Rundquist

Strengthening the bridge: A high school-university partnership by Murie, Robin

Ch'emyon in the EFL classroom by Robinson, James

The changing artwork of the Hmong by Weickelt, Alice

Creating university communities by Mutschelknaus, Mike

Direct grammar instruction in the communication-based classroom by Hansen, Sheila E.

1998 students' work
Mountains and Trees
Yang, Youa

I Really Want...
Xiong, Zang

The Only One
Vang, Soua

1998 reviews
The American ways: An introduction to American culture by Datesman, Crandall &
Kearney, Prentice Hall Regents
reviewed by Adler, Julie

New ways in content-based instruction by Brinton & Master (Eds.), TESOL
reviewed by Stoffers, Pat

1997, Volume 14

Editors: Robin Murie, Suellen Rundquist, Thom Upton

LEAP English Academy—an alternative high school for newcomers to the United States by
DuFresne, Jeff & Hall, Sandra

Defining the world: Content-based learning in an ESL classroom by Hoadley, Elizabeth

The world wide web and electronic mail: Applications for ESL by O'Hatnick, Joannah

Reading lab: A comprehensive starter kit by Richards, Tom

1997 reviews

Voices from the language classroom by Bailey and Nunan (Eds.), Cambridge University Press

reviewed by Hansen, Adele

To destroy you is no loss: The odyssey of a Cambodian family by JoAn Criddle, East/West BRIDGE

reviewed by Murie, Robin

Bamboo & butterflies: From refugee to citizen by JoAn Criddle, East/West BRIDGE

reviewed by Hoover, Jeff

"My trouble is my English": Asian students and the American dream by Danling Fu, Heinemann

reviewed by Poulos, Andrea

1995-6, Volume 13, first joint issue

Editors: Adele G. Hansen, Robin Murie, Thom Upton

Iwareru and Meiwaku: A comparative analysis of Japanese and American communicative styles by Saito, Masako & Robinson, James H.

Reading in the elementary classroom by Weickelt, Alice

An overview of Hmong for ESL teachers by Dettinger, Lisa & Upton, Thom A.

Reading Lab: From pleasure reading to proficiency? by French, Evangeline L.

The paraphrasing process of native speakers: Some implications for the ESL classroom by Anderson, Laurie Ekblad

Poem

Hilberer, Sharon

1995-6 Reviews

Academic Listening, Research Perspectives by John Flowerdew, Cambridge University Press

reviewed by Dennis, Xochitl

Understanding Communication in Second Language Classrooms by Karen E. Johnson,
Cambridge University Press
reviewed by Ibele, Gail

Apple Pie: Delta's Beginning ESL Program, revised edition by Sadae Iwataki, Ed., Delta
Systems Co., Inc.
reviewed by Andrews, Lesley

1994, Volume 12

Editors: Adele G. Hansen, Robin Murie

*Images of American Indians in an ESL film class: Teaching content from Dances with
Wolves* by Arent, Russell

The effects of training on written speech act behavior: Stating and changing an opinion
by Cohen, Andrew D. & Tarone, Elaine

Hmong gangs: Preventing lost youth by Bertrand, Shelly M. & Simons, Lisa M. Bolt

1994 work in progress

MemoryLink vocabulary flashcards: The 90s version of an old standby by López i Agustí,
Mercé & Weaver, Susan J.

1994 students' work

My family

Temim, Anna

My brother

Lor, Mee

Illustrations

Temim, Aka

Yang, Moua

1994 reviews

Guidelines: A cross-cultural reading/writing text by Ruth Spack, St. Martin's Press
reviewed by Desmonde, Wendy

A writer's workbook: An interactive writing text for ESL students by Trudy Smoke, St.
Martin's Press
reviewed by Desmonde, Wendy

1993, Volume 11

Editors: Diane J. Tedick, Adele G. Hansen

The role of art in language learning by Moore, Catriona R., Koller, Judith A. & Aragón, Maria Kreie

Confucian orthodoxy meets ESL: Teaching across academic cultures by Dunham, Patrick J. & Robinson, James H.

Perceptual learning style preferences of second language students by Eliason, Patricia A.

Friday prayer: Describing a process in Arabic and English writing by Ayari, Salah & Tarone, Elaine

Comparing perspectives on ESL education: A case study of Pine Tree School by Duke, Karen E.

Mainstreaming ESL students: The case of the Hmong by Dufresne, Jeff

Breaking barriers: Three Hmong women's perspectives on attaining higher education in the U.S. by Rubright, Diane M.

1993 students' work

Stories of the homeland

Nguyen, Tuan

Nguyen, Ngoc Ha

Stories of immigration

Thao, Sa

Bui, Kien

Stories of life in the U.S.A.

Lyfoung, Santi

Vang, Bao

Chu, Nu

Lao, Xiong

Illustrations

Hoang, Huy

Hoang, Ha

Hoang, Ngan

Ly, Chong Tong

Her, Long

1993 reviews

The multicultural classroom: Readings for content area teachers by Patricia A. Richard-Amato & Marguerite A. Snow, Longman
reviewed by Boehlke, Lisa

1992, Volume 10

Editors: Diane J. Tedick, Adele G. Hansen

Who's missing from this picture? National educational reform efforts and language minority students by Walker, Constance L. & McCollum, Pamela

Pull-in programs—A new trend in ESL education? by Mabbott, Ann Sax & Strohl, Judith

Our Town: Drama as curriculum by McGowan-Rink, Molly

A literature course for the ESL classroom by Partridge, Jeff

Children of the Abya-Yala: EFL students consider the quincentennial of Columbus' arrival by Hones, Donald F.

Developing oral communication skills through cassette journals by Petring, Jane

Using compliments in the ESL classroom: An analysis of culture and gender by Dunham, Patrick

The importance of a good kibun in the ESL classroom by Robinson, James H. & Fisher, Alex

Test-taking strategies on ESL language tests by Cohen, Andrew D.

1992 work in progress

Teachers' reformulations of ESL students' responses by Dobson, Jim

Acculturation, ethnicity, and second language acquisition: A study of Hmong students at the post-secondary level by Boshier, Susan

1992 students' work

Poetry

Namin-Nejati, Masoumeh

Nguyen, Linh

Tuy, Kinchhe

Ngo, Hoang

Chhoeung, Yeng

Nguyen, Ngoc

Lamas, Carlos

Syonesa, Kaysone

Kouch, Chantha

Nabuilla, Zaheeda

Essays

Sounthala, Bounpasith

Insixiengmay, Sack

Yang, Khoua

Nguyen, Dai

Bang, Kyung

García, Paola

Fong, Cynthia Wong

1992 reviews

What's in a word? Reading and vocabulary building by Samuela Eckstut & Karen

Sorensen, Longman

reviewed by Abdelaal, Caren Hohenstein

Culture shock U.S.A. by Esther Wanning, Graphic Arts Center Publishing

reviewed by Gökçora, Deniz

1991, Volume 9

Editors: Diane J. Tedick, Adele G. Hansen

Film as a teaching medium by Johnson, Diane F.

Culture day: Emotional support for ESL students by Kaplan, Marge

Southeast Asian literature for the ESL classroom by Quest, Carol

Your textbook is in the library—or you could make your own by Peterson, Robyn

1991 work in progress

Recall protocols and L2 reading research by Upton, Thomas A.

1991 students' work

Poetry

Moun, Yong

Nguyen, LeMai

Farooq, Rizwan

Nguyen, Uyen

Son, Samean

Nou, Maley

Illustrated Essays

Lam, A Me

Xiong, Shoua

Xiong, Mai Youa

1991 reviews

Second language teacher education by Jack C. Richards & David Nunan (Eds.),
Cambridge University Press
reviewed by Heisig, Doris

Breaking the language barrier: creating your own pathway to success by H. Douglas
Brown, Intercultural Press
reviewed by Mamer, Ellen

1990, Volume 8

Editors: Helen Jorstad, Thomas A. Upton

"Back to Basics:" Literacy for second language learners in the public schools by Tarone,
Elaine

*Geodes like sky blue popsicles: Developing authorship literacy in limited English
proficient students* by Boehlke, Lisa & Rummel, Mary Kay

Finding a voice: Secondary students write their stories by Allen, Lindsey

Citizenship education: The three S's—self, school, and state (excerpts) by Mullins,
Michael J.

*Schemata, strategies, and social construction: Some implications for second language
pedagogy* by Prior, Paul

Some effects of teaching culture in the ESL classroom and their implications for teaching
by Buchanan, Laura

The role of error correction in the process-oriented ESL composition classroom by
Bosher, Susan

1990 poetry

To all the people who made the circle by Egenberger, Amy

Explaining miracles by Jesseph, Jennifer

1990 reviews

Teaching and Learning Vocabulary by I. S. P. Nation, Newbury House
reviewed by Hansen, Adele

*When they don't all speak English: Integrating the ESL student into the regular
classroom* by P. Rigg & V. G. Allen (Eds.), National Council of Teachers of English
reviewed by Leone, Betty

1990 The Forum

Comments on "Chinese students, American universities and cultural confrontation" by Torkelson, Kristine

1987-1989, Volume 7

Editors: Helen Jorstad, Thomas Upton

Chinese students, American universities and cultural confrontation by Upton, Thomas A.

Why aren't Third-World scholars going home? Focus on adjustments in China's overseas policies by Ackerberg, Lynne

Teacher-executed needs assessment: Some suggestions for teachers and program administrators by Tarone, Elaine

Toward collaboration as a viaduct for student/teacher interaction by Prendergast, Irene K.

Fossilization and learning strategies in second language acquisition by Sims, William R.

1986-1987, Volume 6

Editor: Eric Nelson

A word is worth a thousand pictures: A writing project for the primary grades by Mann, Vivian

Teaching paraphrasing to ESL students by Odean, Patricia, M.

Self-monitoring of articles and verbs in ESL written production by Schwarte, Barbara & Matsumura-Lothrop, Emiko

Choosing helpful examples of structures by Nelson, Eric S.

1985, Volume 5

Editor: Eric Nelson

Preparing LEP students for on-the-job training by Robinson, Catherine

Clinically speaking: ESP for refugee nursing students by Marston, John & Hansen, Adele G.

Modifying an ESP course syllabus and materials through a teacher-planned needs assessment by Sorensen, Karen

Using a sensitive topic in teaching lecture comprehension by Meyers, Colleen & Erdmann, Diane

1984, Volume 4

Editor: Eric Nelson

Montessori language lessons: The almost silent way by Nichols, Ann Eljenholm

The excommunicative approach (and how to avoid it) by Yule, George

Some neglected vocabulary needs of ESL students by Richards, Tom

The doughnut that fell into the dishwasher: Thoughts about teaching relative clauses and other structures by Nelson, Eric

1984 review

Understanding Academic Lectures by Abelle Mason, Prentice Hall

reviewed by Gillette, Susan

1983, Volume 3

Editor: Mark Landa

Current events for ESL students: A course description for the teacher by Frederickson, Terry L.

Cultivating the cabbages: An ESP program for refugees by Hansen, Adele G.

Hmong bilinguals: How did they learn English? by Malcolm, Lois

Facilitating teacher growth: An approach to training and evaluation by Stenson, Nancy, Smith, Jan & Perry, William

An evaluation of a training course for foreign teaching assistants: A case study approach by Landa, Mark & Perry, William

1982, Volume 2

Editor: Mark Landa

What do we know about the way a child acquires a second language? by Tarone, Elaine

Hmong refugees in an American city: A case study in language contact by Downing, Bruce T. & Dwyer, Sharon

Designing an ESL program for the preliterate adult: An account of one program's development by Vaut, Ellen

A selected bibliography of work in discourse analysis and English as a second language by Gundel, Jeanette K.

1981, Volume 1

Editor: Mark Landa

Being with students: Some good advice for teachers by Hildenbrand, Joan

Current events for advanced conversation by Huddleston, Leisa C.

Cultural test bias: How does it relate to the LEP student? by Kaplan, Marge

Listening comprehension in the oral tradition by Lunge-Larsen, Lise

You have to reach 'em to teach 'em: The beginnings of a bibliography in ESL for children
by Peterson, Pat Wilcox

MinneWITESOL Journal

www.minnewitesoljournal.org

Volume 25, 2008

"MAESTRA! THE LETTERS SPEAK." ADULT ESL STUDENTS LEARNING TO READ FOR THE FIRST TIME

Patsy Vinogradov

ABSTRACT

Young adult and adult students with little or no literacy in their first languages are tackling a double challenge: acquiring English while learning to read for the first time later in life. There is a considerable lack of research in this area of ESL, but the available research and professional wisdom can guide our practice. Five general principles help us create vibrant, successful classrooms for our low-literacy students: keep lessons contextualized, combine bottom-up and top-down approaches, cater to a variety of learning preferences, tap into students' strengths, and nurture their confidence. This report outlines these principles and connects them specifically to serving adult emergent readers.

INTRODUCTION

What happens when a child learns how to read? Librarians and teachers assert that reading opens up the world to a child, and middle-class parents in literate cultures surround their children with books and print. Children in modern, literate cultures generally learn to read as young children. In fact, we say that kids spend their first years in school learning to read, and then all their school years thereafter are spent reading to learn. Throughout our adult lives, we rely on print for learning new things: textbooks, pamphlets, instructions, manuals, references books, dictionaries, websites, etc. When we learn, as products of a literate culture, we are naturally drawn to print for information and memory. We write notes in margins, make lists to remember, and use highlighters to focus our attention. We tend to be visually oriented, and we are generally confident in our abilities to learn new things (Brod, 1999).

Childhood literacy has a tremendous impact developmentally and socially on an individual. This first language (L1) literacy has "transformative power" (Bigelow & Tarone, 2004, p.692), as L1 literacy transforms how one thinks and processes language (Olson, 2002; Ong, 1988, cited in Bigelow & Tarone, 2004). But what if a person doesn't learn to read in his first language, before he begins learning a second language? Many of our ESL students are from oral traditions, and their languages perhaps have never been written down. Others speak first languages that do have written forms, but due to distance, poverty, civil unrest, or a host of other reasons, some of our adult ESL students never learned to read in their first languages. Many of them reach adulthood having never learned to read, and only encounter literacy after immigrating to the United States. They enter our ESL classrooms, then, with a double purpose: to learn English and also to acquire literacy for the first time. These emergent readers are beginning the challenge of connecting meaning with print, and they are doing so in a second language.

Students with low L1 literacy (or “literacy level students”) often have proficient oral skills and high communicative competence. There may be a strong ‘mismatch’ between students’ speaking and listening abilities and their written language proficiency. As ESL teachers, we are charged with boosting students’ language in all four modalities. Literacy is such a critical part of American culture. It is essential to becoming a full participant in the community. However, literacy instruction at this level can be a slow and difficult challenge for both learners and instructors. To complicate the matter, there is not a great deal of research for practitioners to draw on. As Bigelow and Tarone (2004) point out, “...despite the unfortunate prevalence of such high levels of illiteracy worldwide, research on second language acquisition (SLA) has virtually ignored the impact of L1 literacy level on a learner’s acquisition process...” (p.689).

Reading is a skill that you learn to do only once, regardless of what language you learn to do it in (Genesee, 2008). Our older (post critical-period) students in high schools and adult education programs are learning to read for the first time in a new language. Given the lack of definitive research in this area of SLA, what do we know for sure? What research and professional wisdom is out there to inform our practices? This article attempts to fill in the blanks by outlining five guiding principles that should be part of any literacy-level instruction. These five principles overlap a great deal with what we know about good teaching, with added emphasis on how to serve older emergent readers. They include using contextualized lessons, combining top-down and bottom-up reading instruction, catering to a variety of learning preferences, drawing on learners’ strengths, and boosting their confidence as learners.

1. Keep it in Context

The message is a simple one: that people learn best when learning starts with what they already know, builds on their strengths, engages them in the learning process, and enables them to accomplish something they want to accomplish (Auerbach, 1997).

Learning rarely occurs in a vacuum, and ESL literacy is no exception. From the first moments of the first day of class and thereafter, we must engage students in topics that are interesting and meaningful for them. We must seek out and listen actively for what’s important to our learners, and then, within those themes, find ways to incorporate needed vocabulary, grammar, phonics instruction, cultural competencies, and a great deal of meaningful practice. Most ESL textbooks are thematically organized, and this is no coincidence. Students learn best when there is a useful, relevant topic that serves as the backdrop for all other language learning.

Building reading in emergent readers does NOT begin with the alphabet. It begins with a conversation, serious questions that stretch students’ thinking, and with a genuine interest in learners’ responses. Once we have established strong rapport, students have shared with us what they think and know about a topic and what they would like to find out, then we are ready to go to print. We are ready to begin reading and writing tasks based on real-life applications.

Wrigley (1993) writes, "To help contextualize ideas, initial print is supported by pictures from magazines, family photographs, and pictures drawn by learners. By starting with the images, concepts, words, and expressions that are familiar to the learners, rather than with the alphabet, innovative programs provide opportunities for "meaning making" from the first day of literacy education" (p.1). Perhaps nothing is less engaging and less memorable to an older student than bland alphabet work that is not connected to meaningful content. Start with a topic, generate interest and enthusiasm, and then begin to pull out key vocabulary words, look for patterns, and together, discover the rules beneath the language you are using.

David and Yvonne Freeman (2006) advocate using theme-based, meaningful curricula in their book, *Closing the Achievement Gap*. They write, "What [students] need are activities that will stretch them. Effective teachers organize their curriculum around themes based on big questions designed to push students' thinking. Without a challenging curriculum, older English learners will not develop the academic English they need to close the achievement gap" (p.16). Keep in mind that older students come to ESL classes with tremendous life experiences. They are capable, competent, intelligent people who have a great deal to share. It is critical to tap into this life experience and build literacy skills within meaningful contexts. As Fish, Knell, and Buchanan (2007) assert, "Pre-literate students are beginning readers, but they are not beginning problem solvers; therefore, it's important to utilize materials and methods that can connect to students' immediate needs" (p.2).

2. Go Up and Down the Ladder

Years ago, when teachers and researchers discussed how best to teach reading, the debate between whole language versus phonics received a great deal of attention. Today, most reading and ESL professionals agree that reading is an interactive endeavor that includes *both* top-down and bottom-up processes, and teaching reading should be balanced to include both types of instruction (Campbell, 2004).

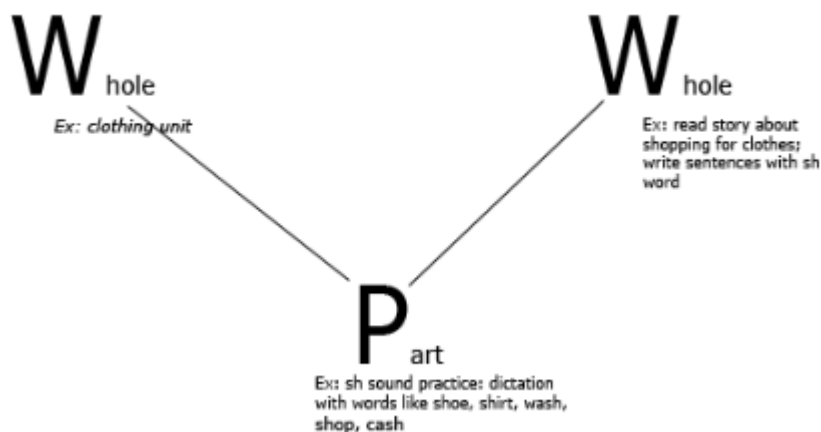
Top down instruction begins with meaning, and gradually moves to print knowledge. It traditionally means that students actively construct meaning by discussing their own previous experiences related to the text, that teachers value activating background knowledge, and also that comprehension is facilitated by using realia, pictures, and hands-on projects related to a reading text (Fish, Knell, & Buchanan, 2007). Bottom-up instruction, on the other hand, begins with the text and builds its way to meaning. It is more focused on the text itself, building decoding (sounding-out) skills, learning patterns of sounds, syllables, and word families in order to eventually construct meaning from texts.

Building reading in emergent readers requires instruction that is both top-down and bottom-up. We cannot expect pre-literate students to learn to read within the vacuum of a de-contextualized lesson, nor can we expect these students to acquire alphabetic knowledge by osmosis, without deliberate attention paid to symbols and sounds. Our

reading instruction must be both meaning-based *and* explicit. Effective instruction for emergent readers requires first finding a meaningful topic, engaging the learner, and then looking for ways to *pause*, focus on individual words, sounds, and patterns, and then go right back to the topic to continue to talk about it, read, problem-solve, do projects, etc. This kind of reading instruction is called Whole-Part-Whole, and refers also to an innovative way to incorporate phonics instruction into a meaningful, theme-based lesson.

As Trupke-Bastidas and Poulos (2007) describe it, the Whole-Part-Whole method includes teaching whole words in context, then examining particular words to present and practice a phonics or phonemic awareness skill, and then returning these words to the larger context to continue practice. As Brod (1999) further explains, "Thus sound/symbol correspondence is introduced after they have acquired a bank of familiar words, giving them a chance to discover for themselves how letters and sounds are related" (p.16).

Figure 1: Whole-Part-Whole (*Trupke-Bastidas, 2007*)



For example, perhaps you are studying family and family members in your class. You have shown your family's photo, and students have brought in photos of their families as

well. They are comfortable with this vocabulary and are interested in saying and hearing more about this topic. Now, you pause to focus on the sounds /m/, /s/, /f/, and /b/ and their corresponding letters.

Teacher:

What family words begin with the sound /s/? (sister, son)

What about /b/? (brother, boy, baby)

Now let's make four columns on the board, one with each of these letters. Come up and write one of the family words we've used in the right column.

What do you notice about these words: mother, brother, father? What do they have in common? (-ther)

Students could continue working with these four sounds and the *-ther* word family in a variety of ways. After 20 minutes or so, the teacher again brings the class together and asks students about their own brothers and sisters and where they live. Then students continue with a mingle and chart activity that has them ask several classmates about their siblings, their names, and where they live, and make notes on a simple chart.

In the Whole-Part-Whole method, going back and forth between top-down and bottom-up activities is critical. As Croydan (2007, personal interaction) puts it, every day with literacy level students, we must go up and down the ladder, all class long. Emergent readers need the constant engagement and high interest of top-down learning, as well as the systematic and building-block approach of bottom-up learning.

We have to keep going up and down the ladder.

3. Provide a Buffet of Learning Opportunities

Much has been written in recent years about learning styles, learning preferences, and multiple intelligences. It is now commonly accepted that learners learn differently, and that teachers should provide learners with a variety of ways of processing information and demonstrating what they have learned. Instructional approaches such as project-based learning, language experience approach, competency-based education, and the participatory approach, to name a few, aim to serve students innovatively. Drawing on multiple approaches when teaching ESL has become the norm (Parrish, 2004). When we apply this professional wisdom to teaching low-literacy ESL learners, the results are profound. We cannot expect students with limited formal schooling to immediately excel in a traditional 'Western' classroom. It is important to assume that these students will learn differently, and to provide an array of opportunities for them to receive, process, and master the material in our lessons.

Pre-literate learners often hail from oral traditions, where learning typically takes place in informal settings. This learning is done largely through observation in a cooperative, relevant manner, where learners are performing a task that is necessary and works

towards the family's or community's well-being (Adler, 2000). This is in sharp contrast to the traditional Western classroom, where learning is largely done through print (textbooks, workbooks, chalk boards, overhead projectors, written tasks). Western learning is generally based on independent initiative, and is done with teachers students don't know well. This model is quite abstract, while learning in an oral tradition is much more concrete (Adler, 2000).

As ESL instructors, and particularly as teachers of emergent readers, we have a lot to learn from the oral tradition. Research confirms again and again that in order for adult students to learn well, it must be relevant and meaningful for them (Imel, 1994). The most memorable tasks are those that are interesting and immediately useful to the students, and that push them just beyond what they are already capable of doing. Cunningham and Cunningham write, "All instruction must help learners develop cognitive clarity and become engaged with what they are learning. All instruction also must be as multi-faceted and multi-level as possible" (cited in Farstrup and Samuels, 2002, p.88).

There are plenty of activities in the classroom that engage students in a concrete way with reading. The first step, as described in principle #1 above, is to seek out relevant themes and to create an engaging learning environment. Then we need to move from more concrete tasks to more abstract ones. Reading is an extremely abstract task, so we need to start by activating schema about the topic and tap into learners' prior knowledge (Parrish, 2004; Vinogradov, 2001). Bringing in real objects to spark discussion can be a formidable tool with new readers. For example, at the beginning of a unit on travel, a teacher could bring in a suitcase and ask students to talk about what goes inside, why, where you have taken a suitcase recently, and where you might like to visit someday. When students can immediately relate to the topic of discussion, they will be more likely to contribute. By the time they begin to read a text about travel or write a story about a place they have visited (perhaps LEA style, discussed in the next section), they are already in that mindset; the topic has been made concrete for them.

Besides bringing in real objects to the classroom, using pictures, flashcards, story strips, picture stories, hands-on projects, field trips, guest speakers, songs and chants, internet websites, etc. can reach students who may otherwise struggle to connect with the lesson. By mixing up instruction to include whole class work, group work, pair work, and individual work, teachers can cater to a variety of preferences. When we provide a wide array of learning opportunities, we create many, many ways for our students to succeed.

4. Tap into Strengths

There is a tendency for teachers and researchers to define emergent readers in terms of what they lack: formal schooling, L1 literacy, print awareness, etc. This is a very 'deficit' way of approaching instruction. While these learners may not have the same approach to learning as those socialized in modern, literate societies, they are of course no less capable or intelligent, and in fact, they may have many skills that literate students do not. For example, as Bigelow and Tarone (2004) point out, members of oral cultures have a great number of well-developed strategies for remembering content without

notes, and their lack of literacy may actually guide them toward a less analytical way of learning the L2, one that lends itself to acquisition versus learning (Krashen, 1981, in Bigelow & Tarone, 2004). In addition, many emergent readers have L2 oral skills that are quite proficient, so much so that oral intake assessments can often misplace students into high levels of ESL, with staff only later realizing that students' written skills are not at the same level.

The fact that emergent readers often have more developed listening and speaking skills is a tremendous resource for literacy teachers. One very promising practice that capitalizes on students' oral ability is Language Experience Approach (LEA). In LEA, students first share a common experience, whether it's a field trip or an experience like making a salad in the classroom. Then, the teacher guides them to re-tell the experience aloud. Students recall what happened, and the teacher or another scribe writes down their words. Later, these words are printed and used as students' reading texts. From here, a number of bottom-up focused techniques can be used to focus on particular sounds and structures. Later, students revisit the entire text they have created, and perhaps add to it. LEA taps into students strengths by connecting what they are able to communicate orally to what they are learning to do in writing. It is a very efficient technique in working with emergent readers (Crandall & Peyton, 1993).

The Language Experience Approach is one way to create student-generated texts. Whether done formally starting with a shared experience like a field trip or an in-class project, or much less formally by simply looking at a photograph together or providing engaging prompts, when students are writing, they are creating reading texts as well. ESL teachers often have students journal or free-write during class time, and these student-generated texts can create abundant opportunities for looking at bottom-up strategies, too. The advantage of using student-generated texts is that the text is already comprehensible, meaningful, and interesting to the learner. Since the learner created it, he/she has ownership over those words and that story. By using these texts within the Whole-Part-Whole method, we can focus on particular sounds, word families, or other reading skills within content that the student created him/herself. This creates an engaging and memorable lesson for learners.

Tapping into oral skills is but one way to capitalize on students' strengths. But students come to us with a wide array of talents and interests that can also serve as "jumping off points" for literacy lessons. At one adult education site in St. Paul, we learned that a number of our students were gifted seamstresses. We created a sewing class, purchased sewing machines, and worked on literacy within this meaningful, interesting context. We researched fabric stores, examined patterns, measured and cut fabric, considered various options for our sewing projects, and eventually created a large quilt together. Throughout the process, teachers were drawing on students' background knowledge and talents to create literacy tasks as we talked, read, and wrote about the experience along the way.

Whether it is music, gardening, cooking, automotive repair, child rearing, soccer, or something else entirely, effective literacy-focused lessons can be created within any

context. The key is to keep listening to your students and to find the themes and strengths that they bring with them to class (Weinstein, 1999).

5. Nurture Learners' Confidence

Older, struggling English learners often lack confidence. They may not see themselves as capable. They may not understand how schools work, or they may have concluded that schooling does not offer them any benefits. Effective teachers help all their students value school and value themselves as learners (Freeman & Freeman, 2002, p.17).

For many of our emergent readers, school is a fairly new experience. As mentioned above, the bulk of some students' learning experiences may have been in informal settings. Or, on the contrary, they may have had a great deal of school experiences either in the U.S. or at home, but without a great deal of success. Older learners, in particular, often lack confidence in their ability to learn English and acquire literacy (Brod, 1999). One of the main goals teachers need to have for emergent readers is to nurture their confidence as learners.

One promising practice in working with emergent readers works toward both boosting reading skills and building confidence at the same time. While used a great deal with higher levels and in college programs, extensive reading has not received the attention it deserves with lower levels and emergent readers. Extensive reading, or reading for pleasure, involves providing a wide variety of readings texts to students and giving them time to choose something that looks interesting and read on their own. The texts students choose should be easy for them, things they can read without the use of a dictionary. While usually we are trying to challenge students, using Krashen's I + 1 theory (Krashen, 1985), in extensive reading we should provide reading texts that are "I - 1". We want students to work on reading fluency, to gain confidence in their ability to read, and to find pleasure in reading. In establishing a "reading lab" or "free reading time," as it's sometimes called, a large selection of interesting, level appropriate reading materials is key. While there is not a great deal available yet from publishers that is as low-level and high interest as required, there is some. Ask your publishers' representatives about reading texts for low-literacy, older learners. Many publishers have begun producing short, interesting books for adults that have only one or a handful of words on each page. Even if your newest readers are only focusing on the pictures, they are involved in the act of literacy, and they are becoming more confident readers and learners through this practice.

Emergent readers need time and practice to work on their new skills. Often, ESL textbooks don't provide nearly enough practice for our lowest-level students. They might cover an important skill or text in just one or two pages, when our students could benefit from several lessons. One thing teachers of emergent readers notice time and time again is that *repetition* is key. Students need to spend a great deal of each class time reviewing previously covered materials, texts, and tasks. In fact, consider dividing

your class time daily with one-half or even two-thirds of the day devoted to re-activating schema, review, and re-visiting material, and only one-half to one-third devoted to new material. This doesn't mean doing the same tasks over and over. With minor adjustments, the task can become new while the content is not. For example, in the family example discussed above, students were working on the sounds /m/, /s/, /f/, and /b/. They listed family words on the board that begin with these sounds. Several other options can give students this same practice, but in a slightly new way. For example, students can be handed slips of paper with the family words on them, and then asked to sort them onto the /b/ table, the /m/ table, etc. Or students can divide their own papers into four blocks, and with a partner, write the words in the appropriate blocks. Then they could use letter tiles to spell out the words that the teacher or another student calls out. Then they could search these same words for those sounds in final-syllable or middle-syllable position. All of these tasks are working on the same set of words, and the same set of four sounds. We are providing a great deal of repetition without necessarily doing the same task again and again. This kind of sequence sets students up for success and creates confidence in their ability to learn.

As ESL teachers and literacy coaches, we can work to create successful, confident learners. Some of the "school skills" that students may have missed can be taught explicitly to encourage success. Teachers can establish routines, post agenda and objectives, teach organization skills and strategies that will serve learners in and beyond school. A sense of predictability goes a long way when nurturing learners' confidence. By creating simple classroom routines, whether it's to begin the day with calendar work and a journaling prompt, or having a consistent time for reading lab, or maybe to have a specific part of the day devoted to open questions and conversation, we can help boost learners' confidence by taking some of the 'mystery' out of the school experience. As Cummins (1989, cited in Ortiz 2001) points out, "Preventing school failure begins with the creation of school climates that foster academic success and empower students."

CONCLUSION

There is no simple answer to how to best serve our emergent readers. A lack of research in this area of ESL makes our work more difficult, but the available research and professional wisdom can go a long way to guiding our practice. Five general principles can help us create vibrant, successful classrooms for our low-literacy students: keep lessons contextualized, combine bottom-up and top-down approaches, cater to a variety of learning preferences, tap into students' strengths, and nurture their confidence.

The process of learning to read for the first time later in life is a slow and difficult undertaking. But there arrives a moment when it all comes together for a learner, when the strange lines and curves on the page begin to make sense, and literacy emerges. As one learner said at this very moment, "Maestra! The letters speak." Exactly. No scholar could say it better than that.

AUTHOR

Patsy Vinogradov began teaching in Russia in 1994, and later worked extensively with adult immigrants and refugees in the U.S. She completed a B.A. in Russian Language from the University of Nebraska, and an M.A. in ESL from the University of Minnesota. She has taught English to adults at the University of Minnesota, Lao Family English School, and Metro North ABE. Currently, Patsy is an adjunct faculty member at Hamline University, where she works with graduate students in the TEFL Certificate and Adult Certificate programs. Her research interests include literacy development for adult students, especially those with limited first-language literacy. She is the Executive Assistant for MinneTESOL, the state professional organization for teachers of English to speakers of other languages.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to Katharine Malaga and her eloquent student for providing the title for this article. Thank you to Astrid Liden and Andrea Poulos for their excellent feedback on this article, and for being such amazing colleagues. I am so grateful to you both.

REFERENCES

Adler, J. (2000). A quarter century of progress in the United States. *ESL Magazine*, September/October 2000. Available on-line at: www.eslmag.com/modules.php?name=News&Ffile=article&sid=33. Accessed July 8, 2008.

Auerbach, E.R. (1997). *Making meaning, making change*. Washington DC: Center for Applied Linguistics and Delta Systems, Inc.

Bigelow, M. & Tarone, E. (2004). The role of literacy level in second language acquisition: Doesn't *who* we study determine *what* we know? *TESOL Quarterly*, 38(4), 689-700.

Brod, S. (1999). *What non-readers or beginning readers need to know*. Denver, CO: Spring Institute.

Campbell, P. (2004). *Teaching reading to adults, a balanced approach*. Edmonton, Alberta: Grass Roots Press.

Crandall, J. & Peyton, J.K. (Eds.). (1993). *Approaches to adult ESL literacy instruction*. Washington, D.C., Center for Applied Linguistics.

Croydan, A. (March, 2007). Personal communication. Seattle, Washington: International TESOL Convention.

Farstrup, A.E. & Samuels, J. (Eds.). (2002). *What research has to say about reading instruction, 3rd edition*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Fish, B., Knell, E., & Buchanan, H. (2007, August). Teaching literacy to preliterate adults: The top and the bottom. *TESOL Adult Interest Section Electronic Newsletter*, August 2007. Website: <http://www.tesol.org>. Accessed July 30, 2008.

Freeman, D. & Freeman, Y. (2002). *Closing the achievement gap*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Genesee, F. (2008). "[Leading Language Expert Disagrees With New Brunswick FSL Plan.](http://hamlit2008.blogspot.com/2008/05/leading-language-expert-disagrees-with.html)" Website: <http://hamlit2008.blogspot.com/2008/05/leading-language-expert-disagrees-with.html>. Accessed June 8, 2008.

Imel, S. (1994). Guidelines for working with adult learners. ERIC Digest No. 154. Columbus, OH: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult Career and Vocational Education. ED 377313. Available on-line at: <http://www.ericdigests.org/1995-2/working.htm>

Krashen, S. (1985). *The input hypothesis: Issues and implications*. New York: Longman.

Ortiz, A. (2001, December). English language learners with special needs: Effective instructional strategies. *CAL Digest EDO-FL-01-08*. Available online at: www.cal.org/resources/digest/0108ortiz.html. Accessed July 30, 2008.

Parrish, B. (2004). *Teaching adult ESL: A practical introduction*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Trupke-Bastidas, J. & Poulos, A. (2007). Improving literacy of L1 non-literate and L1 literate adult English as a second language learners. *MinneWITESOL Journal*, 24. Available on-line at: <http://www.minnewitesoljournal.org>. Accessed July 30, 2008.

Trupke-Bastidas, J. (2007). *Phonics/Phonemic awareness activities for teaching low-level ESL adults*. Handout of presentation at Minnesota Literacy Council, St. Paul, MN, February 2007.

Weinstein, G. (1998). *Learners' lives as curriculum: Six journeys to immigrant literacy*. Baltimore: Delta Systems Co.

Wrigley, H.S. (1993). *Innovative programs and promising practices in adult ESL literacy*. Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education for Limited-English-Proficient Adults. ED 358748. Available at: <http://www.ericdigests.org/1993/promising.htm>

Vinogradov, P. (2001). *Successful instruction for literacy level adults, CARLA Working Paper 17*. Minneapolis, MN: Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition.

MinneWITESOL Journal
2008

www.minnewitesoljournal.org

Volume 25,

LEARNING STRATEGIES AND LOW-LITERACY HMONG ADULT STUDENTS

Julia Reimer

ABSTRACT

This article describes a short-term classroom-based study on learning strategy use and strategies instruction to low-literate adult Hmong students with no prior formal education. Data on strategy use was collected through classroom observations and interviews with 11 Hmong students. Results showed that participants were using a number of strategies successfully, and could benefit from more focus on metacognitive, compensation, and social strategies. Seven strategies instruction sessions were provided to the class.

INTRODUCTION

I am a teacher educator, working primarily with teachers who hope to teach English abroad. My primary motivation for entering the field of ESL nearly 20 years ago, however, was a desire to work with adult immigrant learners. While I have had several short-term opportunities to teach this population, I've never worked with low-literate students. A recent sabbatical provided me with an ideal opportunity to observe, interview and teach a group of low-literate learners.

While working with these students, I was reminded of a number of realities faced by teachers of adult ESL. They have very little classroom time to help their students with learning English. Issues of program funding and student mobility and life demands mean that students often don't have the luxury of learning English in a formal setting over many years. So, teachers really need to prepare their students for learning beyond the classroom. Language learning strategies are a way to empower students to continue learning on their own, in the real world of work and interaction with native speakers. It is also important to remember that low-literate students may not present strategies that we see in higher level or more educated learners, and we must re-direct our thinking to notice and tap into the many strategies they have in their repertoires. This study took a two-pronged approach: observing and eliciting what strategies a group of low-literacy students were currently using, then using that information to determine what additional strategies would be useful to teach to this group.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of Learning Strategies

Cohen (1998), O'Malley & Chamot (1990), and Oxford (1990) have done much work on defining and categorizing language learning strategies. Chamot (2005) defines strategies as actions that facilitate learning. They are goal-focused, and as they are being learned, must be conscious. Once a strategy has been used many times, it may become more automatic. Chamot points out that a major advantage of strategies is that they can be taught to learners who are struggling. While this may be true, Oxford and Leaver (1996)

note that the purpose of strategies instruction is not to encourage each student to use exactly the same strategy for the same situation or task. Rather, learners need to become aware of and build on strategies they already use, so that they can make choices that best fit their individual needs. Cohen (2003) also points out that strategies can not be labeled as "good" or even "effective" on their own: their effectiveness depends a given task or situation, and the learner's own learning style preferences.

While there are a number of schemes for categorizing strategies, a common list includes cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies (Cohen, 2003). Cognitive strategies include using memory aids, analyzing language to find patterns, practicing the language, and so on. (It should be noted that Oxford (1990) separates memory strategies out from other cognitive strategies.) Metacognitive strategies are those that help in organizing and evaluating one's learning. Affective strategies include actions that help one deal with the emotions that go along with learning a language. Social strategies are techniques for eliciting explanations and practice opportunities from other people. Cohen (1998) has distinguished between language *learning* strategies and language *use* strategies. The former are strategies to aid actual learning, and the latter are strategies used once the language has been learned and is available for use in communication.

Much reported research on adults' use of language learning strategies has been conducted with learners who have a strong prior educational background. For example, Bedell and Oxford (1996) cite studies done with learners from a wide variety of countries, primarily at the university level. Given the population under study for this paper, Starks-Martin's (1996) research on Hmong university students' perception of their own strategies use is interesting.^[1] Using think-alouds, reading journals, and study skills portfolios to collect data, Starks-Martin (1996) found that her learners used a lot of memorization and repeated readings to comprehend texts. They also tended to use word-for word answers from the textbooks in answering questions, and studied alone. These findings seem to indicate use of cognitive strategies.

A smaller number of learning strategies use studies have been done with immigrant adults in the US in community colleges or community-based ESL programs. In a small-scale study, Degenhardt (2005) worked with a group of low-level adult learners in a community-based ESL program. Through the use of teaching journal entries, an observation checklist, and field notes, she collected data on observable strategies used by her learners while they worked on a cookbook project. The strategies she focused on were mostly cognitive and social ones, and included translating, code-switching, getting help, using mime or gestures, among others. Participants were Hmong, Karen, and Spanish speakers. Degenhardt found that, compared to the Spanish speakers, the Hmong and Karen students had fewer instances of using social strategies. She also found that cross-language pairings resulted in increased use of compensation strategies, and that all learners rarely used the strategy of self-evaluation.

Learning Styles and Learning Strategies

A recent survey of language strategies experts shows near uniform agreement that a learner's background (among other factors) affects choice of learning strategies (Cohen, 2008). These background factors include things such as age, gender, prior knowledge, and so on. Several published studies have looked at the background factor of learning style preferences among Hmong learners. Oxford (2003) defines learning styles as general preferences for approaching learning, whether it be learning content, learning a second language, or solving a problem. These can be perceptual styles (e.g. tactile, visual), social styles (e.g. introverted, extroverted), or cognitive styles (e.g. analyzing, synthesizing).

Hvitfeldt (1986) did a microethnographic study to examine the cognitive styles of field independence and field dependence (or field sensitivity) in a group of upper-beginning Hmong adults with little literacy background. Field independent learners tend to focus on internal modes of learning, pay less attention to social aspects of learning, enjoy learning abstract concepts and analyzing details, and so on. Field dependent learners, on the other hand, are more attuned to external, social aspects of learning such as peer and teacher support, and do well with global learning. Hvitfeldt notes that "Hmong classroom behavior, particularly the emphasis on cooperative achievement, the establishment of a warm and personal classroom climate, and the reliance on teacher guidance and direction, fits the description of field-dependent (or field-sensitive) observable behaviors" (p. 73). Worthley (1987) administered the *Group Embedded Figures Test* to a group of male Hmong students (17 years of age and older), and concluded that the majority of the group were field dependent.

Park (2002) looked at perceptual and social learning styles of Southeast Asian immigrant high school students from a variety of cultural backgrounds, including Hmong, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Lao. She also included Anglo students in the study. Specifically, she collected data on the perceptual preferences for auditory, visual, kinesthetic, and tactile learning; and on the social preferences for group and individual learning. Park's data on Hmong students show a "major preference" for all four perceptual styles, with tactile learning scoring the highest. The data also show "major preference" for group learning, and "minor preference" for individual learning. Of all six learning styles examined, the Hmong learners scored highest preference for group learning.[\[2\]](#)

Given the results of the Hvitfeldt (1986) and Park (2002) studies on Hmong learners' cognitive, perceptual, and social learning style preferences, can we make some inferences about their strategy use? Cohen (2003) reminds us that learning styles and learning strategies do not operate separately from tasks. He notes that research literature linking style, strategies, and task is difficult to find. More common are studies that more broadly link certain styles with certain strategy preferences. Rossi-Le's (1995) is one such study that is of some relevance here because the subjects were adult ESL learners in two community colleges. Correlating data from the Perceptual Learning Style Questionnaire (Reid, 1987, as cited in Rossi-Le) and the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (Oxford, 1986, as cited in Rossi-Le), she found, for example, that learners who showed a style preference for group learning reported using affective /

social strategies such as working with peers; those who showed a style preference for kinesthetic learning reported using authentic language use strategies, such as seeking out native speakers; and those who reported a style preference for visual learning reported using visualization as a strategy.

The picture emerging from the studies cited above on learning styles and strategies use among adult Hmong students seems to show learners that are field dependent (Hvitfeldt, 1986; Worthley, 1987) and with a preference for group learning (Park, 2002). These findings may lead one to believe that social learning strategies would be preferred. It is interesting, then, to note that both Degenhardt (2005) and Starks-Martin (1996) comment on low use of interactive strategies among their Hmong learners.

Strategies Instruction

If strategies can indeed help students become more effective learners of the language, it makes sense that teachers should try to integrate strategies instruction into their curricula. Chamot (2005) notes a number of important principles for strategies instruction, including identifying strategies that learners are already using, thoughtful matching of strategies and tasks, and providing both implicit and explicit strategies instruction. Citing a number of studies on the effectiveness of strategies instruction, Chamot goes on to note outcomes such as improvement on language skills tests [\[3\]](#), positive attitudes toward language learning strategies, and transfer of learning strategies to new tasks following strategies instruction.

There are many factors to consider as one approaches strategies instruction: In what language should the instruction take place? Over what period of time will the instruction take place? Which strategies should be taught? What are the students' current levels of awareness about strategies? Will the instruction be integrated with regular classroom instruction, or will there be a special "strategy class"? What is the learners' educational level and background? Clearly, each setting and situation will require slightly different approaches to strategies instruction. While there is no one-size-fits-all method to instruction, Oxford and Leaver (1996) advocate what they call "strategy-plus-control" instruction. They define control as the ability (on the part of the student) not only to use a specific strategy, but to evaluate the success of use, as well as the ability to consciously transfer the use of the strategy to a new setting or task. They note a number of characteristics of instructional models that emphasize "strategy-plus-control":

1. Identification of strategies to be taught.
2. Assessment of current strategy use as a precursor to strategy instruction.
3. Strategy instruction of students over a long period of time.
4. Explicit demonstration, discussion, use, evaluation, and transfer of specific strategies.
5. Preparation and use of specific materials tailored to the regular language learning tasks.
6. On-going evaluation by teacher and participants of the effectiveness of the strategy instruction.

7. Flexibility in individualizing or adapting strategy assistance to the needs of each learner. (p. 236)

Another commonly used model for strategies instruction is the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) Model (Chamot, Barnhardt, Robbins & El-Dinary, 1996), which involves the following steps:

1. Preparation: students prepare for learning a new strategy by identifying the prior knowledge and use of the strategy.
2. Presentation: the teacher models the use of the new strategy.
3. Practice: students practice the strategy with materials of moderate difficulty.
4. Evaluation: students evaluate their use of the strategy and how well it is working for them.
5. Expansion: students apply the strategy in a new situation or learning task.

The CALLA model and the strategy-plus-control models share a number of key steps, including assessment of strategy usage, explicit modeling of the strategy, practice with the strategy, evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategy, and then applying the strategy in new situations / tasks.

In summary, while learning strategies and styles have been categorized and studied among students from a variety of cultural backgrounds, and various models of strategies instruction have been proposed, little has been published on strategies use and instruction with adult immigrant learners with little to no prior educational background. These learners are perhaps in particular need of strategies instruction, since they are often in formal ESL instructional settings for a short period of time, due to limited funding and the need to find a job. Their lack of formal education means that learning to learn in general is vital for their success. The current study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What learning strategies are adult Hmong students with little or no prior formal education using to learn English?
2. What strategies would be useful for them?
3. What do teachers of adult ESL need to know about strategies instruction for learners with little prior formal education?

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This project took place in a beginning literacy ABE/ESL class in a metro area learning center. Classes meet five days a week, for four hours each day. There is a workforce focus for the curriculum at this center.

There were four stages to the project: pre-study observations of the class to collect data about observable learning strategies the students were already using; interviews with 11 Hmong students on their use of strategies and their prior learning experiences; six strategies instruction sessions; and an evaluation session with the learners.

One reality of ABE/ESL classes is the amount of turn-over in the student population. While I chose this site specifically because it has a workforce education focus, and students' financial support is dependent on their attendance, there were few students who were involved in all four stages of the study.

PARTICIPANTS

As noted above, different students participated in different stages of the project. The pre-study observation stage focused primarily on five of the Hmong students (two of whom I later interviewed), and one Karen student (whom I didn't include in the interview group).

In the second stage, interviews were conducted with 11 Hmong students. (See Table 1) Two students were male and nine were female. Ages ranged from 20 to 58. Most had no prior formal education in Hmong. The amount of ESL study (both in the current program and prior programs) ranged from one month to slightly over 2 years. Ten of the participants reported some degree of proficiency in at least one other language (Thai or Lao). The two men both reported a fair level of fluency, while the women mostly reported understanding / speaking "a little". Participants were given a CASAS test in March, 2007. (Those scores with an asterisk were from January, 2007.) Scaled CASAS scores ranged from 174-191, which placed them at the beginning ABE literacy level. The following is a description of functional and workplace skills for learners scoring less than 200 on the CASAS test.

Individual has little or no ability to read basic signs or maps and can provide limited personal information on simple forms. The individual can handle routine entry level jobs that require little or no basic written communication or computational skills and no knowledge of computers or other technology.
(National Reporting System for Adult Education, 2007)

Table 1: Demographic Information on Interview Participants

Participant #	Gender	Age	Prior Formal Education (other than ESL)	Amount of ESL Study	Other L2 (self-reported proficiency)	CASAS score (scaled)
1	F	29	0	2 years, 3 months	Thai (a little)	188*
2	M	58	0	2 years	Thai (fluent), Lao	174
3	F	24	> 1 year	2 months	Thai (a little)	180
4	M	36	0 (learned to read Hmong from parents)	1 month	Thai and Lao (fairly fluent in both)	184

5	F	27	0	6 months	Thai and Lao (a little)	178*
6	F	24	0	1 year, 6 months		174
7	F	48	0	1 year, 6 months	Thai (a little)	176
8	F	50	0	3 months	Lao ("less than Hmong")	176
9	F	20	0	1 month	Lao (understands a bit)	191
10	F	37	0	8-9 months	Thai (a little)	176
11	F	46	0	1 month	Thai (a little)	175

The post-interview phase involved six strategies instruction sessions. All students in the class participated in these sessions, whether I had interviewed them or not. Attendance varied at each session, with approximately 15 learners each session. Learners were Hmong, Karen, and Somali. Because a number of the interviewees had already moved on to a higher level class, or had left the program, I didn't focus specifically on the Hmong group. The fourth and final stage involved surveying students who had participated in these strategies instruction sessions (regardless of whether I had interviewed them or not) to get their perspective on the strategies instruction they had received.

DATA COLLECTION

In selecting the methods for data collection, I kept a number of factors in mind: 1) The learners were low-literate; 2) There was a language gap: I speak no Hmong, and the learners have low English proficiency; 3) The learners had likely had little experience reflecting on their own learning, so this would be a novel concept for them; and 4) I wanted to select methods that other ABE ESL teachers could use with a similar population. These factors pointed to methods that didn't involve reading or writing on the part of the learners, that could be done with a translator, that would be fairly open-ended and conversational, and that were fairly intuitive for teachers. I had also decided that I wanted to get a general picture of strategies use, both inside and outside of the classroom, rather than focusing on a specific skill area. A final point I considered was that while the learners had had little formal education, they were all adults who had clearly learned many things during their lifetimes. How could I help them to reflect on their prior informal learning experiences to see what strategies they already used that could be transferred to language learning?

Cohen and Scott (1996) discuss a number of approaches to assessing language learning strategies: strategies interviews and written questionnaires, observation, verbal report, diaries and dialog journals, recollective studies, and computer tracking. In the current study, I used observation and interviews that focused on current and past learning experiences.

Observations

Cohen and Scott (1996) note that a major drawback of collecting data on learning strategies through observation is that only a limited number of strategies are behavioral; many occur on a cognitive level and are thus not observable. While this is clearly a disadvantage, I felt observation would still be a good initial, impressionistic way to gather data while at the same time allowing the students to get used to my presence in the classroom prior to the interviews, and also to learn about the tasks that the teacher used. I observed 9 sessions, for approximately 2 hours each session. For the first two sessions, I wrote general notes about strategies that I observed a number of learners using. For the next seven sessions, I focused on a specific student, and collected data through three-column field notes. In one column, I noted the time; in the second I noted the task and the teacher's actions, instructions, corrections, interactions with students, and so on; and in the third column, I noted the student's actions, utterances, and responses. To analyze this data, I read through the field notes and marked where I had observed a learning strategy, named the strategy, and noted whether it seemed an effective strategy for the specific task.

Interviews

The primary way that I collected data on learning strategies use among the group of eleven Hmong learners was through one-on-one oral interviews, with the aid of a translator. Cohen and Scott (1996) discuss the advantages and disadvantages of structure within learning strategy questionnaires and interviews. They note that with more structured interviews, there is more control on the part of the interviewer, and the data collected with this type of instrument is more easily analyzed statistically. On the other hand, less structured interviews offer the participants the opportunity to explore areas of interest to them. A disadvantage noted by Cohen and Scott is that data collected in this manner is more likely to be individualized, and this therefore makes it difficult to find overall patterns. Another point made by Cohen and Scott is that interviews can focus on either current learning experiences or past ones (recollective).

The interview questions I developed were intended to be a hybrid of structured and unstructured probes, and I hoped to have learners reflect on both current language learning experiences as well as past informal learning experiences (learning another L2 or a job). The interview covered six general areas: 1) the participants' prior formal learning experiences; 2) literacy activities in Hmong; 3) other language learning experiences; 4) participants' prior jobs and how they were learned; 5) learning English in the current program; and 6) use of English outside of the classroom.

Section 1 helped me assess how experienced the participants were in formal education settings, as well as how those educational experiences (if any) compared to their current program. Section 2 gave more details about level of L1 literacy. I knew most of these learners were considered to be low-literate in Hmong, but I wanted to get further

information. Sections 3 and 4 helped students reflect on informal learning experiences (learning jobs and other languages) and the strategies they used

Section 5 included the most structured questions. Using Oxford's *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* (Oxford, 1990) as a point of departure, I created general questions with two specific examples to cover the six areas of the SILL: memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. For example, for memory strategies, I asked, "Do you do things to help you remember words and new ideas in English?" then gave some specific examples: "Do you try to use new words? Do you review your English lessons? Your notebook and papers?" I hoped to have students reflect generally on the strategy, then give a simple frequency answer: "many times", "sometimes", or "never". In practice, it was very difficult to get students to respond with frequencies, even with the translator's help. After several interviews, I dropped the frequency questions and just noted if the students reported using this type of strategy.

The final section of the interview, section 6, focused on use of English outside of the classroom. I hoped that it would give me a chance to explore again some use strategies.

RESULTS

Observation

Table 2 below summarizes the most common effective and ineffective strategies observed. Table 3 includes a number of strategies of unknown efficacy. I have labeled each with one of the six areas covered in the SILL. However, it should be noted that there may be other areas that each could fit into.

Table 2: Most Common Effective and Ineffective Strategies

Effective Strategies

Paper and pens ready, on track with papers; look over handouts as class gets ready. **(metacognitive)**

Copy from board or handouts when appropriate (when the teacher gives them time); attend to classroom activity **(cognitive and metacognitive)**

Copy from board or handouts and ask questions that show comprehension **(cognitive)**

Spontaneous repetition of dialogs; personalizing of new vocabulary (Ex: "Mai x-ray four time." i.e., I've had x-rays four times.) **(cognitive)**

Create new language as requested **(cognitive)**

Ineffective Strategies

Difficulty keeping track of papers

Copy from board or handout when the teacher is explaining something else or is leading choral repetition

Copy from board or handouts, but with attention solely on form, not meaning

Use text, pictures, other clues to orient themselves to the material (i.e., on grocery ads, look for pictures of "apples" as well as text) (cognitive and compensation)	Look only for requested text (i.e., on grocery ads, look for the word "apples" alone)
Ask teacher for help: clarification of directions, correction of answers, etc. (cognitive and metacognitive)	Avoid interaction with teacher
"Teach" other students: checking their work, asking teacher to help others, etc. (social)	

Table 3: Most Common Strategies of Unknown Efficacy

Ask for and give translations in L1 **(cognitive)**

Choral repetition to self **(cognitive and memory)**

One needs to be careful in generalizing these results, particularly since they only represent observable strategies. However, a few things do bear noting. First, students were very adept at a number of observable social strategies. They asked each other questions, checked their work with the teacher and with peers, asked the teacher to help peers who needed it, translated for each other, and so on. They truly made their learning a social experience. This is in line with Hvitfeldt (1986), Worthley (1987) and Park's (2002) work which showed Hmong learners to be field sensitive and to have a preference for group learning. Second, there were a number of "routine" classroom strategies that these learners were clearly familiar with: copying, repeating to themselves, and scanning a text to find target words. This was interesting for me to note, since most of the learners had little experience in a formal classroom setting. I noticed that the more experienced learners often directed the newcomers to write things down, and the teacher certainly asked for repetition and gave students time and directions to copy, too. However, it is also interesting to note that these strategies were not always effective. Indeed, sometimes students were engaged in copying, for example, in a way that hindered their learning (for example, when the teacher was explaining something else). As mentioned in the literature review, Cohen (2003) reminds us that strategies can only be judged effective (or not) within the context of a given task or situation. So, for a strategy to work, there needs to be informed choice on the part of the learner: they need to know why they're using it, and the appropriate times and settings to use it.

Interviews

As mentioned earlier, the interviews with the Hmong learners covered six general areas. The results for each are discussed below.

1) Participants' prior formal learning experiences

Only one of the participants had any formal education (outside of ESL classes). She had attended school in Thailand for less than a year when she was about 10. She reported

that the teacher's writing on the board and "explaining things" were helpful to her learning. In terms of her own learning strategies, she reported that writing in a notebook was helpful. Due to the remoteness (in time and distance) of this experience, it was difficult to get more details.

2) Literacy activities in Hmong

Seven of the participants reported some literacy in Hmong (five women and both men). One reported learning to read from his parents, another from her children, and a third from friends. Of the seven, four reported being able to write: one writes her name, one writes grocery lists, two write to relatives, and one writes "many things". In terms of reading activities, six of the seven reported some skills: two can sound out words but not read sentences; one reads notes and letters from family; and three reported feeling comfortable reading a variety of texts (one of these specified that she reads typed texts more easily).

3) Other language learning experiences

As noted above, ten of the participants reported some degree of proficiency in at least one other language (Thai or Lao). The two men both reported a fair level of fluency, while the women mostly reported understanding / speaking "a little". Most reported being able to do tasks such as naming objects, talking about their family, and shopping. None of the participants had studied Thai or Lao formally. They all reported learning the languages through talking with native speakers. One participant noted, "It was easier to learn Thai because I had to speak it. Thai is easier to understand than English. When I hear Thai, I can just try to speak it. The words are easier to understand. English has so many words, [synonyms]." This was particularly interesting to me. These learners may have low proficiency in English, but they are not novice language learners: they've spent most of their lives in

settings where they are not native speakers, and they've learned at least some of the other L2. I had seen them speak Thai (seemingly without embarrassment) with Karen speakers in the class, and they also seemed largely comfortable trying to speak with the teacher in English. When asked in another question about how they feel when they need to speak English, most reported not feeling nervous. Yet, it was fascinating that seven of them later reported using no English outside of the class, and one of these reported actively avoiding using English.

4) Participants' prior jobs and how they were learned

All eleven participants reported having at least one prior job (held in either Thailand or Laos). Ten of them had done farming with their family. Four had done farming for others. Two had done sewing. One each had done construction, road work, retail work, and work as a maid. When asked how they had learned their jobs, nearly all reported beginning to work as a child, and observing older people work.

5) Learning English in the current program (learning strategies)

Table 4 summarizes the participants' reported use of strategies. There are several points worth noting. For metacognitive strategies, eight of the learners reported trying to review material at home, between 30 minutes to 2 hours a day. This was surprising to me. I expected that they would not have much time for learning at home. They also reported great frustration with review, because they could not remember what the material meant, or could not read their own handwriting. In addition, nine of the participants reported spending a lot of time thinking (and worrying) about the fact that they need to learn English. In terms of affect, there were mixed responses. Three participants noted feeling stressed about learning English. In contrast, when asked how they deal with nervousness about speaking English, eight reported not feeling nervous. Perhaps they interpreted the question to be about nervousness in the classroom.

Table 4: Participants' reported strategy usage in current program

Memory strategies	Cognitive strategies	Compensation strategies	Metacognitive strategies	Affective strategies	Social strategies
saying words outloud (n=5)	listening to TV in English (n=7)	using a translator (n=3)	reviewing at home (n=8)	in class, focusing on listening rather than responding (n=1)	asking for help from others (teacher, peers, children, others) (n=11)
writing words down (n=4)	listening to relatives speak English (n=3)	using realia (in time to store, eg) (n=3)	setting aside (in time to practice with family) (n=1)		
	checking comprehension with others (n=2)	preparing ahead for communication (n=1)			
	speak less Hmong in class (n=1)				

6) Use of English outside of the classroom

As mentioned earlier, seven of the participants reported using no English outside of the class, and one of these reported actively avoiding using English. Of the others, three use English in the grocery store, two with their children's teachers, two with doctors (although one pointed out that she quickly resorts to a translator), and one practices with her family.

STRATEGIES INSTRUCTION

After the observations and interviews, the classroom teacher and I wanted to teach some relevant strategies to the learners. We reviewed the data I had collected, and the







teacher added her own observations of areas where the learners were having difficulty. It seemed like the most immediate needs were for memory strategies, metacognitive strategies, and compensation strategies. More specifically, since learners had identified the desire to review at home, but a lack of understanding of their materials, we felt that teaching them first how to create flashcards, then use them would be useful (memory strategies). It was also clear that the materials in their notebooks were not well organized, and this impeded review (a metacognitive strategy). Planning opportunities to practice with native speakers in low-stress situations was another goal (a metacognitive and social strategy), so we wanted to help them identify common phrases they could use. We also felt that they needed some phrases that would help them with circumlocution (a compensation strategy).

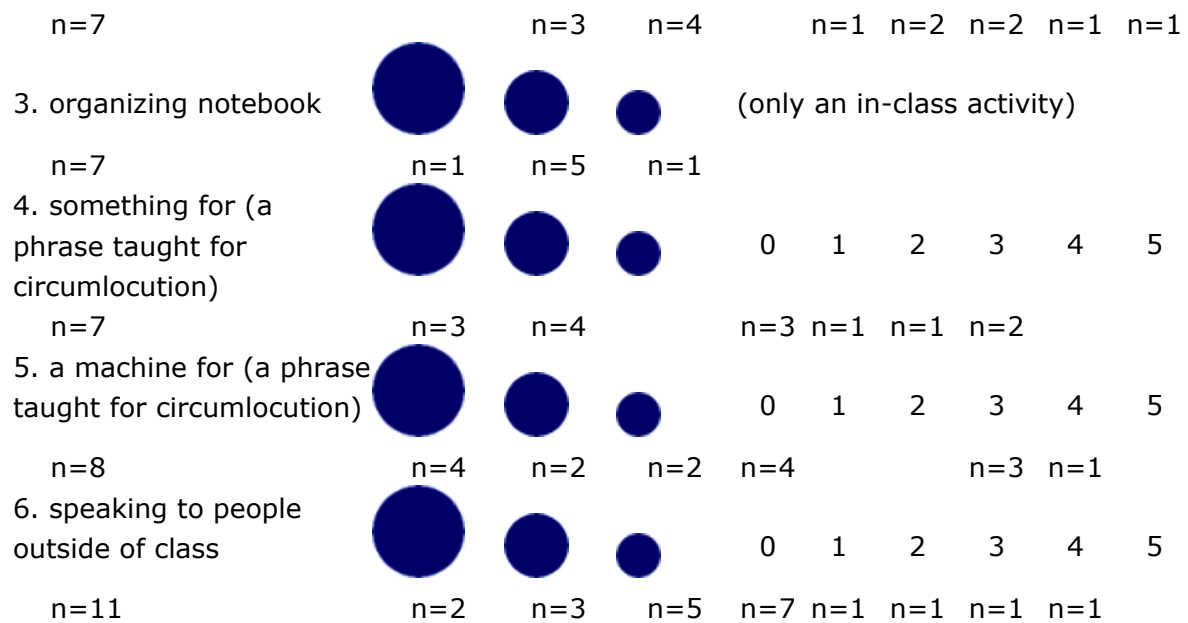
We developed seven one-hour long strategies instruction sessions, which were conducted approximately weekly. For three of these, more proficient students (from a higher level class at the site) were used as translators. The others were conducted entirely in English. Each session began with a brief statement of why the strategy was important, when it could be used, and how it related to problems that the interviewees had articulated. Then, the instructor modeled the strategy. The bulk of the time was spent having learners either create their own materials (flashcards) or practicing using the strategy. For about half of the strategies, the classroom teacher was able to follow up during the rest of the week to help students to either continue applying the strategy, to apply the strategy to new language, or to check on their use of the strategy outside of class. For example, after identifying a schema for organizing the materials in their notebooks, she had them identify where to place class handouts each time they received them.

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK ON STRATEGIES INSTRUCTION

After the seven strategies instruction sessions, I wanted to get feedback from the learners. I developed a feedback sheet that used visuals, and also used more proficient English speakers from a higher level class as translators. While there were eleven respondents in all, not all of them had attended every instructional session. Table 5 provides the participants' responses. In the second column, "helps me learn / speak", participants were instructed to select the largest circle for "a lot", the middle one for "some", and the smallest one for "a little".

Table 5: Learners' Feedback on Strategies Instruction

Strategy	Helps me learn / speak			I use it x times out of class					
1. making flashcards				0	1	2	3	4	5
n=7		n=4	n=3				n=3		n=1
2. using flashcards				0	1	2	3	4	5



The participants found the metacognitive strategy of organizing their notebooks to be most helpful, followed by the phrases taught for circumlocution (a compensation strategy). The social strategy of speaking to people outside of the class was the one they reported as least helpful, and also the one they tried least frequently outside of class.

DISCUSSION

This project began as an attempt to answer three key questions about adult Hmong learners' use of learning strategies. While there were a number of problems in the design and carrying out of the project, interesting information did result. After discussing a number of the drawbacks in the study, I will address each of the three key questions.

One area of weakness in the design was that the interview questions about strategy use were very general, and thus the responses lacked detail. Indeed, this lack of detail made it difficult to categorize some of the behaviors. A better option would have been to have learners perform a specific language task, then reflect on how they had accomplished the task. In terms of the strategies instruction section, the project would have benefited from a more long-term time frame. Much more time could have been spent in practicing and applying each strategy. Finally, it is difficult to evaluate the impact, if any, of the strategies instruction sessions on the learners' use of strategies and on language learning. Again, the timeframe was too short to allow for more follow-up.

1. What learning strategies are adult Hmong students with little or no prior formal education using to learn English?

It is of course impossible to generalize the results of the observations and interviews. In addition, the more important question is what strategies they are using effectively. The clearest one that I saw was using peers and the teacher to help them learn. A number of learners were able to focus their attention in the classroom appropriately. I was also gratified to hear that at least one learner spent time planning for interactions, and

another allowed herself to just sit and listen in class when she felt overwhelmed. Perhaps the most interesting insight for me was less about a specific strategy, but that these learners are very experienced in being non-native speakers and language learners, despite the fact that they are recent immigrants to the US, and have only recently been in formal learning situations. Are there elements of informal learning, which seems to have served them well in learning Thai, that could be built into ESL curricula here? Perhaps a more experiential, community-based approach may replicate some of their successes, and be more familiar to them than sitting in a classroom. This is not a criticism of the teachers at the site of the study, who do a very good job of integrating a lot of field trips into the curricula, as well as applying work skills in a hands-on way at a thrift shop housed at the site.

2. What strategies would be useful to students?

We chose strategies based on the outcomes of the observations and interviews. For this reason, it is difficult to generalize which strategies would be useful for another group. However, I think that most low-literate learners with no prior education would benefit from metacognitive strategies, particularly those related to thinking about, organizing, and evaluating their learning. In addition, because there are so many language gaps when one is at a low proficiency level, some compensation strategies would also likely benefit most low-literate learners.

3. What do teachers of adult ESL need to know about strategies instruction for learners with little prior formal education?

Awareness about the different types of strategies is important for all teachers, as well as ideas about how to gather information about students' current strategy use. Teachers also need to think about integrating strategies instruction in with the rest of their curriculum, and find ways to recycle strategies once they have been taught.

In addition, there are a number of factors that are helpful for those working with learners with no prior formal education. These include:

1. Trying to anticipate what students will have difficulty with as a result of being low-literate. For example, our students had real difficulty with metacognition about their first language. (It was hard for them to think of a word in their L1 that "sounded like" an English word – something I asked them to do when making flashcards.)
2. Breaking strategies down into smaller steps. For example, students made flashcards in session one. In session two, they practiced using the flashcards. In session three, they added more information to their cards (person, thing, action).
3. Having students practice strategies with known material. When students are familiar with the basic task and language, they are free to focus more on the strategy being taught.
4. Using higher-level students as translators during strategy training sessions. This allows for more depth in the explanations. In addition, the strategies apply to all levels, so it's time well spent for all students.

CONCLUSION

This project shows that preliterate adult Hmong students are already using a number of learning strategies effectively. It also suggests that many learners can benefit from additional strategies instruction, and in fact want to learn how to learn more effectively. When providing strategies instruction, teachers need to pay particular attention to teaching them in manageable steps, and using known material for practice. Suggestions for further research are to do more in-depth interviews with individual learners. To focus specifically on current language learning, it would be good to have them perform a learning task, and then reflect on that. Another fertile area for further exploration is the learners' experiences of learning Thai. An interesting way to gain retrospective information on these informal learning experiences would be asking them to tell stories about learning the language. Perhaps there are program and curricular changes that we could make to better match the learning styles and preferences of these learners.

AUTHOR

Julia Reimer is an Assistant Professor at the Center for Second Language Teaching and Learning at Hamline University. She has taught ESL in Minnesota and Spain. She received her MAT in ESL from the School for International Training.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author is grateful to MinneTESOL for the grant which supported this project.

REFERENCES

Bedell, D. A. & Oxford, R. L. (1996). Cross-cultural comparisons of language learning strategies in the People's Republic of China and other countries. In R. Oxford (Ed.), *Language learning strategies around the world: Cross-cultural perspectives* (pp. 47-60). Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center.

Chamot, A.U., Barnhardt, S., El-Dinary, P., & Robbins, J. (1996). Methods for teaching learning strategies in the foreign language classroom. In R. Oxford (Ed.), *Language learning strategies around the world: Cross-cultural perspectives* (pp.175-188). Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center.

Chamot, A. U. (2005). Language learning strategy instruction: Current issues and research. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 25, 112-130.

Cohen, A. D. (1998). *Strategies in learning and using a second language*. London: Longman.

Cohen, A. D. (2003) The learner's side of foreign language learning: Where do styles, strategies, and tasks meet? *IRAL*, 41 (4), 279-91.

Cohen, A. D. (2008). Coming to terms with language learner strategies: Surveying the experts. In A. D. Cohen and E. Macaro (Eds.), *Language learner strategies: 30 years of research and practice* (pp. 29-45). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cohen, A. D. & Scott, K. (1996). A synthesis of approaches to assessing language learning strategies. In R. Oxford (Ed.), *Language learning strategies around the world: Cross-cultural perspectives* (pp.189-106). Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center.

Degenhardt, K. (2005). *Language learning strategies and low-level adult English language learners*. Unpublished master's thesis, Hamline University, St. Paul.

Hvitfeldt, C. (1986). Traditional culture, perceptual style, and learning: The classroom behavior of Hmong adults. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 36(2), 65-77.

National Reporting System for Adult Education. (2007). *Implementation guidelines: Measures and methods for the National Reporting System for Adult Education*. Retrieved December 31, 2007 from <http://www.nrsweb.org/docs/ImplementationGuidelines.pdf>

O'Malley, J. M., & Chamot, A. U. (1990). *Learning strategies in second language acquisition*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Oxford, R. L. (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. Boston: Heinle and Heinle.

Oxford, R. L. (2003) Language learning styles and strategies: Concepts and relationships. *IRAL*, 41(4), 271-278.

Oxford, R. L. & Leaver, B. L. (1996). *A synthesis of strategy instruction for language learners*. In R. Oxford (Ed.), *Language learning strategies around the world: Cross-cultural perspectives* (pp.227-246). Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center.

Park, C. C. (2002) Crosscultural differences in learning styles of secondary English learners. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 26(2), 213-229. Accessed Nov. 13, 2007 from http://brj.asu.edu/content/vol26_no2/pdf/ART13.PDF

Rossi-Le, Laura (1995). Learning styles and strategies in adult immigrant ESL students. In J. M. Reid (ed.) *Learning styles in the ESL/EFL classroom* (pp.118-125). New York: Heinle and Heinle.

Starks-Martin, G. (1996). *Using "think-alouds," journals, and portfolios to assess Hmong students' perceptions of their study/learning strategies*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 399 803)

Worthley, K. M. E. (1987). *Learning style factor of field dependence / independence and problem solving strategies of Hmong refugee students*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Wisconsin, Stout. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 288 919)
MinneWITESOL Journal www.minnewitesoljournal.org *Volume 25,*
2008

[1] It should be noted that the Hmong participants in studies cited in this review of literature, with the exception of Degenhart's study, are from the first wave of Hmong immigration to the US in the 1970s and 1980s, or US-born children of those who arrived during that period. We are still learning about the most recent group of Hmong immigrants (those arriving post-2004).

[2] Park notes the need for further research to determine whether Hmong learners did in fact have a strong preference for five of the six styles, or whether they just had a tendency to answer positively to research questionnaires. (In fact, when compared with the other ethnic groups in the study, the Hmong had the highest preference scores of all groups for five of the six learning styles.)

[3] Chamot does point out that in some studies, the correlation between strategies instruction and language performance is more "complex" (p. 119).

COMPARATIVE REVIEW OF RECENT LITERACY-LEVEL TEXTBOOKS

Anne Lazaraton

Andrew Baker

INTRODUCTION

Teaching adult ESL at the literacy level presents challenges common to other ESL/EFL contexts – such as a lack of planning time, large classes, and issues of assessment – as well as others that are unique to that setting. Policies about rolling enrollment, the reality of multilevel classes, and ever-tighter funding pose additional demands on teachers when choosing materials and creating lessons. Where, and how, does an ESL instructor start with a group of learners who have varying amounts of literacy in their first languages and less, if any, in English? What are the immediate needs of literacy-level adults?

The purpose of this comparative book review is to consider a number of new and recent materials that are available to the literacy-level ESL instructor. These texts are evaluated on a number of criteria, including content and skill focus, activity types, physical layout, and additional materials available for users. Our comparative table at the end of this review summarizes our findings and should prove useful for instructors looking for guidance on textbook selection for this unique student population.

Literacy Plus A: Language, Lifeskills, Civics

Literacy Plus B: Language, Lifeskills, Civics

Joan Saslow, the author of the comprehensive ***Literacy Plus A*** and ***Literacy Plus B*** (2003) books, “recognizing the reality that adults can’t wait to become literate in order to work and carry on their lives” (*Literacy Plus A*, p. iii), employs a three-pronged approach to pre-literacy instruction: work in the basic literacy concepts of letters and sounds, practice with basic survival English, and an introduction to elementary civics concepts. A “teacher’s box” on each page of the student book describes the literacy aims or language/civics goals, providing the instructor with clear, observable objectives around which to plan lessons. A comprehensive scope and sequence table lays out these objectives for each of the ten units in each book. (Other materials include a teacher’s edition containing complete lesson plans for each page in each book, a CD-ROM with printable worksheets, achievement tests, and vocabulary, number, and letter flashcards; and a *Guide for Native Language Tutors* (available for free download from the books’ website)).

From the first unit in *Literacy Plus A*, entitled *Welcome*, learners are engaged with the colorful drawings and pictures that make up most of the content. Assuming no prior knowledge of English, page 1 teaches the language of self-introductions by having students look at simple pictures, listen to a short dialogue (on classroom audiocassettes, which are somewhat inconvenient in that they cannot be cued as a CD can), listen again

and repeat it, and finally engage in pair work using the simple structures "I'm/Nice to meet you." On the next page, learners are instructed how to hold a pencil in either the left or right hand, then trace lines from left to right and top to bottom to reinforce the directional nature of English text from the very beginning. Learners also trace their own names (written by the teacher), circle or cross out drawings of similar or different common items (books, folders), and practice saying goodbye using the appropriately informal "Bye" or "See you later."

Subsequent units provide a sequenced presentation of literacy concepts, from recognizing shapes, tracing numbers, and working with capital letters to recognizing sound-symbol correspondences, working with lowercase letters, reading and saying money words, determining word boundaries, and finally, writing name, phone number and area code on a form.

Both the *Welcome* material and the literacy topics covered in *Literacy Plus A* are reviewed, recycled, and expanded in *Literacy Plus B*. By Unit 4 in the second book, learners recognize and write cursive letters, decode rhyming words, practice short and long vowels, address envelopes, copy full sentences, and ultimately fill out a job application with personal information.

The thematic content of each unit is familiar to those who have worked with other survival-level ESL texts: occupations, housing, transportation, clothing, times, dates, seasons, food and meals, family, the human body, money, and work skills. For example, *Literacy Plus A*, Unit 6: *Common Foods and Drinks, and Meals* asks learners to first look at, then listen to, and then repeat the pronunciation of words for eight food drawings (chicken, meat, fish, cheese, bread, rice, pasta, fruits) and six drink/liquid pictures (milk, coffee, tea, juice, water, oil). A brief dialogue between a customer and a supermarket clerk introduces the question form "Where is..." and the response "... is in/ across from...." After listening to and repeating the dialog again, learners engage in a pair-work activity using six of the food drawings as stimuli. The civics objective for this page is "Supermarkets are organized by categories. Salespeople can tell you where each food is" (p. 100).

The identical sequence of activities is repeated with seven fast food items, which are practiced following a dialog on ordering food; students learn about small, medium, and large sizes, foods associated with meals, and ways to express likes and dislikes about food. To conclude, students are asked to provide personal information about their food likes and habits, and then role play conversations based on a picture of people in a supermarket.

As with the literacy skills material, *Literacy Plus B* covers the same topics as *Literacy Plus A*, but these are expanded on by including more survival language practice. So in Unit 4, in addition to clothing language, sizes and types of stores are introduced. Unit 6 on food and meals also covers condiments (e.g., salt, pepper) and stating opinions about the healthiness of particular foods, in addition to the food language presented in the first book.

Although the author does not explicate a teaching methodology or learning theory underlying these books, she adheres to many of the best practices in teaching literacy-level ESL postulated by Vinogradov (2001): visual aids help students learn; connecting the classroom to real life is important; connecting oral language to written language is crucial; and activities that encourage cooperative learning are beneficial. The predictable sequence of activities in each chapter and the extensive repetition, both of oral input and of written symbols, are certainly meant to lead to automaticity in the cognitive processing of spoken and written English.

Evaluation

As one of the few series aimed solely at the pre-literacy level, *Literacy Plus A* and *B* have much to recommend them, but they are, of course, not without shortcomings. Although books in color are attractive and engaging, they are generally more expensive. More substantively, there is no real connection between the literacy material and the survival language, which alternates within each unit. That is, letters in *Literacy Plus A*, and in *Literacy Plus B*, words, do not necessarily have a connection with the thematic content of a unit; the constant shifting of attention may be jarring to learners at this level. Finally, it is disappointing that *Literacy Plus A* and *B* devote no attention to the role of electronic literacies – computer, information, multimedia, and CMC (computer-mediated communication) literacy (Kern, 2006) – prevalent in our wired world. Kern notes that the introduction of multimedia elements into print text, the alternation of traditional discourse structures, and new formulations of authorship on the Internet “requires a complexified view of literacy that goes well beyond the skills of encoding and decoding texts” (p. 195). The use of email messages as input, pictures of websites to obtain information, and a contextualized introduction to concepts such as *account* and *register* would be a logical way to at least acknowledge the importance of technology in communication today.

Longman ESL Literacy

Nishio’s **Longman ESL Literacy** (3rd ed., 2006), another stand-alone literacy level ESL textbook, moves at a more accelerated pace than *Literacy Plus A* and *B*. After one unit of copying letters, students learn numbers and begin copying whole words and short sentences – exercises that are introduced much later in the *Literacy Plus* books. In Unit 2, they practice writing lowercase and capital letters, then fill in the missing letter in various words, and finally copy those words in order to complete sentences.

In its introduction, *Longman ESL Literacy* claims to provide “the fundamental literacy skills and basic communicative competence needed to participate in school, in the workplace, and in the community” (p. ix). The author states that “each page is a lesson” with “thorough integration of the basic language skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing” as well as “cooperative learning” and “student-centered instruction” (p. ix). The communicative nature of the book appears in exercises that prompt students to talk and write about their lives and routines. A typical page has students listen, read, speak, then

write, the order of which suggests a comprehension-based approach to language teaching, as does the inclusion of Total physical response (TPR) activities.

The scope and sequence table in the front of the book introduces units on the alphabet, numbers, school, time, the calendar, money, the family, food, health, and work, and correlates each unit to CASAS, LAUSD (Los Angeles Unified School District), and Florida standards. Throughout the book, students engage in a considerable amount of pair work – including practicing conversations, and asking for and giving information. Helpful communication strategies are also presented: for example, when asking for an address, students learn to say “Please write it” (p. 33). On the pragmatic front, students learn how to give a firm but polite refusal when someone on the phone asks them for their credit card number: “No thanks, goodbye” (p. 110). Among other civics concepts, students learn how to write checks, ask about a business’s open hours, write a note requesting an excused absence, and call for emergency assistance.

Each unit ends with two or three pages of creatively designed review material. Instead of approximating a quiz, the reviews follow a “use what you have learned” format. For example, students play bingo with vocabulary or numbers (they copy the words or numerals into their bingo grids for extra writing practice), or they complete information-gathering “ask your classmates” activities.

To get a sense of the content and organization of the material, consider Unit 8, *Food*. Students listen and point, then listen and repeat as the names of fruits are introduced. They then practice a conversation between a waiter and a diner asking “What’s in the fruit salad?” Plural forms of nouns are practiced while students learn to talk and write about what foods and drinks they like and don’t like. Using this information, students fill out survey grids and complete fill-in-the-blank sentences with the likes and dislikes of their classmates. Practice talking about prices is recycled from Unit 6 (*Money*) and is expanded upon with exposure to subject-verb agreement (“How much are mushrooms?” “How much is a pineapple?”). Through TPR students act out how to wash, peel, slice and eat an apple and then write those sentences next to illustrations of each action. The chapter does not forget the literacy basics – students practice writing capital and lowercase L, then read a dialog, circling all the examples of lowercase L. Finally, they write the words that contain a lowercase L. Toward the end of the unit, students listen to a story about shopping and eating while numbering six pictures that correspond with the six narrative sentences. Students then turn to the back of the book and read the story, before they write it out. In the unit review, students go to a cafeteria, restaurant or other food venue and write down the prices of various menu items. They also match questions and answers (e.g., “What do you like to drink?” goes with “I like coffee.”) and fill in a chart with vocabulary words (types of fruits, vegetables, drinks, and food).

Evaluation

Even though *Longman ESL Literacy* lacks color, the pages are laid out in a clear and approachable style. The “action” on each page generally moves in brief sequences from top to bottom, simplifying the processing for students who may have a hard time

following a long line of text. Additionally, activity types are identified by visual icons (Write/Listen, Listen to the Conversation, etc.), which build predictability into and provide visual support for exercises in the book. A teacher's resource book with audio CD and a set of transparencies are extra materials, and from a companion website instructors can print additional worksheets. One concern with this text (as mentioned in the previous review) is that it does not give students exposure to other literacies, namely electronic literacy. The words *Internet*, *e-mail*, and *cell phone* do not appear anywhere in the text. Nevertheless, the book is quite appealing and would make a fine choice for a class with only pre-literacy level learners in it.

Taking Off: Beginning English Literacy Workbook
Ventures Basic Literacy Workbook

Teachers in community-based adult basic education programs face the challenge of classes with students of mixed abilities and open (or "rolling") enrollment. In these classes it is common to have students with good verbal skills and non-existent literacy skills seated next to students with no verbal or literacy skills, perhaps even without literacy skills in their native language. In such circumstances, differentiated instruction becomes indispensable. Tomlinson (2002) defines differentiated instruction as engaging students "through different learning modalities, by appealing to differing interests, and by using varied rates of instruction along with varied degrees of complexity" (p. 24). Neither the *Literacy Plus* books nor *Longman ESL Literacy* deals with this issue in any systematic way, but two additional books that we will briefly mention put those goals into practice.

***Taking Off: Beginning English (2008)*, a four-skills book for low-beginners, comes with a *Workbook* and a *Literacy Workbook*. While the *Workbook* assumes letter-level literacy and quickly advances students to word-level literacy, the *Literacy Workbook* gives students a complete volume of “on ramp” practice at the letter and sound level. In fact, the first section of the workbook focuses strictly on letter and number practice, much like the material in *Literacy Plus A*. Then in Section 2, entitled “Phonics Practice”, students listen to, repeat, and write consonant and vowel sounds and letters in the context of simple words. Section 3 provides level-appropriate activities that correlate with the main text, filling in the first letter of related vocabulary words or circling words that are the same as a prompt, while students using the standard *Workbook* write words to fill in the blanks of short sentences.**

A different approach to the multilevel class challenge is taken in ***Ventures Basic*** (2008), the first book in the five-level *Ventures* series for adults ranging from Basic to High-Intermediate. A central feature of *Ventures* Levels 1-4 is the multilevel *AddVentures* worksheets for each level. These “tiered” activities are “controlled” at Tier 1, “additional practice” at Tier 2, and “practice that expands beyond the text” at Tier 3 (p. ix).

This same principle of differentiated instruction is followed in the ***Ventures Basic Literacy Workbook***, although only at two levels: a lower level defined as “pre-, non-, or semi-literate in their own languages”, and a higher level in which students are “literate in their first languages, but unfamiliar with the Roman alphabet used in English” (p. ix, *Ventures Basic*). For example, in Unit 4, Health, at the lower level students work with two words, “office” and “patient”, circling, reading, tracing, and/or copying letters, and then matching words to pictures. At the higher level, learners work at the word level with “office”, “patient”, and “doctor”, by reading, tracing, circling, and copying these items from the main text chapter.

The approach to multilevel classrooms promoted in both *Taking Off* and *Ventures Basic* is innovative and appealing; we would expect to see other series move toward differentiation of instruction in just this manner.

LifePrints Literacy Book and Literacy Workbook

Rather than stand-alone literacy books or “add-on” literacy workbooks to texts that start above the literacy level, two additional multilevel series start at the literacy level. We were made aware of the first of these series by the Minnesota Literacy Council, who uses

the four-level *LifePrints* program in its adult ESL classes. We came across *English-No Problem!* when checking out *LifePrints* on the New Readers Press website. Neither of these series has the visibility of other books which are marketed by large publishers, and we believe that ESL literacy teachers would benefit from knowing about these less-publicized teaching materials.

LifePrints Literacy and ***LifePrints Literacy Workbook*** (2002) are composed of six units on survival topics including *Welcome to English Class*, *Personal Information*, *In the Neighborhood*, *Going Shopping*, *I Am Sick*, and *I Want a Job*. The black-and-white book contains simple, realistic drawings and a large font for text, much of which is in capital letters. There are seven basic activity types: listen, read, trace, say, write, match, and circle, each notated with an icon as well as the word. Students follow a listen, say, trace, write order for working on the alphabet, and at the end of the first unit they are expected to write their own names. Subsequent units include practice with writing words, matching pictures to words, writing numbers, filling out a personal information card, matching prices to pictures of currency, writing the time on clock faces in numbers, and ultimately filling out a very basic job application form. The *Literacy Workbook* gives additional practice for all of these activities, with some time spent writing the missing letters for content vocabulary in the unit (e.g., Monica goes shopping on Tu _____ and Th _____; p. 16). There is also a practice and review section at the end of the *Workbook*.

English—No Problem! Literacy Book and Literacy Workbook

Our most notable find was the five-level series *English – No Problem!* In the introduction to the ***English – No Problem! Literacy Book*** (2004), the authors establish that it is “theme-based” and “performance-based” and that it develops critical thinking. The authors state that it is “appropriate for and respectful of adult learners” and that it uses “rich, authentic language.” Indeed, from the very beginning, the book tries to link language learning with everyday life. For example, as students learn letters and numbers, they also see photos of “Cecile” using them to function in the real world: she needs to know “B” in order to find her car in row B of a large parking lot, how to spell her name in order to pick up a prescription at the pharmacy, and how to recognize numbers so that she can read the license plate on her car – which is parked next to one of the same model and color. The conclusion students should draw is that numeracy and literacy skills are vital – and quickly transferable – to all aspects of life.

The book presents information and skills in eight units (two of which are “warm-up” units) of creative situations: *Cecile’s Day*; *Omar’s Day*; *Welcome!*; *Smile!*; *You’re Sick*; *Money, Money, Money!*; *No Milk*; and *Hurry Up!*. Every unit begins with a full-color photo of a scene to illustrate the upcoming theme. Underneath is the question “What do you see?” For example, in Unit 3: *You’re Sick*, we see a girl in the nurse’s office at school. Her mother has just entered the room. These illustrations are useful tools for students to generate language – either spoken or, if appropriate, written. Across the page is an abbreviated “picture dictionary” entry to introduce new vocabulary. In this example,

students learn *boy, girl, nurse, fever, head, headache, calendar, chair, clock, and thermometer*, and immediately practice writing the words.

Unit 2, "Smile!", introduces vocabulary for relatives, provided in the context of looking at family photos and having a photo ID card made. A simple but effective sequence of activities is also found in this chapter (and others) and is indicative of the book's integration of skills. Students make a "family address book" with names, addresses, and phone numbers of relatives. They then write names from their list on the board while other students ask questions ("Who are Ramon and Lila?" "They are my grandparents.").

The units also include information-processing activities that prompt students to analyze what is going on in the photos – either by answering true/false questions or circling the correct answer out of two choices. Looking at a phone conversation between the nurse and the mother, the students have to determine who is sick – the nurse, daughter, or mother.

Finally, the "Technology Extra" activities interspersed throughout the book include simple ideas such as typing class names and family address books into a computer, inputting a week's activities into an online calendar, and using a calculator. While not extensive, the inclusion of any technology for learners at this level is welcome.

The ***English – No Problem! Literacy Workbook*** provides students with extra practice at the letter and word level for the same themes and skills as the *Literacy Book*, with the beneficial addition of a page at the end of each unit where students can monitor their progress. A list of the vocabulary words for that unit allows students to check off whether they can listen to, speak, read, and/or write each of the items. Teachers, too, could use these handy grids to generate spelling tests, pronunciation quizzes and other assessments.

Evaluation

The student books in these two series provide no guidance for the teacher; for this support, a teacher's edition for each level would be necessary. However, both the *LifePrints* and the *English – No Problem!* websites are rich sources for the "extensive support for teachers to help learners reach their goals and leave each lesson with something they can use outside class" (back cover of *LifePrints*) and the correlations with CASAS, SCANS and other published standards. Audiotapes, CDs, and assessment books are other available materials. In fact, these websites contains a wealth of additional teaching materials (such as Teacher's Resource Files and Lesson Plan Builders) and links to a number of research-based papers that provide a theoretical justification for the approach used in the books themselves. This linkage of theory and practice is impressive, and the more mainstream publishers might consider following the lead of New Readers Press in this area.

SUMMARY

On the whole, we conclude that any of these textbooks could serve as core materials in an ESL literacy course. Whether the choice is a stand-alone literacy text, a literacy supplement to a higher level text, or a series starting at the literacy level, proper and constant recycling and review of old material along with the judicious introduction of new concepts would make any of them a viable option. As we have suggested, an awareness of different student abilities and needs is probably necessary to use these materials effectively. Furthermore, if these materials are representative, it is still left up to the ESL literacy instructor to decide if, and how, to integrate technology into literacy-level instruction. Likewise, if, and when, a particular group of ESL learners is ready to deal with the multiple literacies that underlie competent second language use is another informed decision the ESL literacy instructor will need to make; these materials, with the exception of *English – No Problem!*, offer little guidance in this area.

AUTHORS

Anne Lazaraton is an Associate Professor of ESL at the University of Minnesota, where she teaches courses in ESL Methods, Language Analysis, Language Assessment, Discourse Analysis, and Practicum.

Andrew Baker is a recent graduate of the master's program in ESL at the University of Minnesota. He teaches ESL classes in Minneapolis.

REFERENCES

Kern, R. (2006). Perspectives on technology in learning and teaching languages. *TESOL Quarterly*, 40, 183-210.

Tomlinson, C. (2002, September). Different learners, different lessons. *Instructor*, 112, 2, pp. 21, 24-26, 91.

Vinogradov, P. (2001). Successful instruction for literacy-level adults. *CARLA Working Paper 17*. Minneapolis: CARLA.

BOOKS REVIEWED

Bitterlin, G., Johnson, D., Price, D., Ramirez, S., & Savage, K.L. (2008). *Ventures basic student's book*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Bitterlin, G., Johnson, D., Price, D., Ramirez, S., & Savage, K.L. (2008). *Ventures basic literacy workbook*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Fesler, S.H. & Newman, C. M. (2008). *Taking off: Beginning English* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw Hill.

Fesler, S.H. & Newman, C. M. (2008). *Taking off: Beginning English literacy workbook* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw Hill.

Florez, M.C. (2002). *LifePrints: ESL for adults – Literacy*. Syracuse, NY: New Readers Press.

Florez, M.C. (2002). *LifePrints: ESL for adults – Literacy workbook*. Syracuse, NY: New Readers Press.

Minicz, E., & Taylor. M.L. (2004). *English—No problem!: Literacy book*. Syracuse, NY: New Readers Press.

Minicz, E., & Taylor. M.L. (2004). *English—No problem!: Literacy workbook*. Syracuse, NY: New Readers Press.

Nishio, Y.W. (2006). *Longman ESL literacy* (3rd ed.). White Plains, NY: Pearson Longman.

Saslow, J. (2003). *Literacy plus A: Language, life skills, civics*. White Plains, NY: Pearson Longman.

Saslow, J. (2003). *Literacy plus B: Language, life skills, civics*. White Plains, NY: Pearson Longman.

<i>Taking Off</i> (2 nd ed., 2008)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Color, index, listening scripts, vocabulary lists, learning log	Y
<i>Taking Off</i> <i>Literacy</i> <i>Workbook</i> (2 nd ed., 2008)	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	<u>Workbook:</u> answer key, CD, listening scripts	
<i>Ventures Basic</i> (2008)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Color, grammar reference charts, listening scripts,	Y
<i>Ventures</i> <i>Literacy</i> <i>Workbook (2008)</i>	Y	Y	**	**	**	**	US map, self assessments, vocabulary lists	

* **BEST** = Basic English Skills Test (www.cal.org); **CASAS** = Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (www.casas.org); **EFF** = Equipped for Future (<http://eff.cls.utk.edu>); **Florida** = Florida Standardized Syllabi (www.fldoe.org/workforce/syllabi.asp); **LAUSD** = Los Angeles Unified School District Course Outline; **NRS** = National Reporting System (www.nrsweb.org); **SCANS** = Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (wdr.doleta.gov/SCANS); **SPL** = Student Performance Levels (www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/slspls.html)

** Not yet published; based on website sample unit

**STEP FORWARD INTRODUCTORY LEVEL: LANGUAGE FOR EVERYDAY LIFE
BY J. K. SANTAMARIA**

Santamaria, J.K. (2008). *Step Forward Introductory Level: Language for Everyday Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. iii + 172. Introductory Student Book \$16.50.

**Reviewed by
Rhonda Petree**

Oxford University Press has introduced a new *Introductory Level* textbook for pre-literacy adult learners in the four-part *Step Forward* series. This standards-based textbook is based on practical themes and has supplemental workbooks, a teachers' guide, and an audio program. It is designed to be used with *The Basic Oxford Picture Dictionary*.

This book is organized into 12 units with five lessons each. Each unit is divided into topics such as, "How are you feeling?" and "What time is it?" Within each unit, there is a consistent format that covers vocabulary, life stories, grammar, everyday conversation, and real-life reading. The conversation sections model natural speech and are set in authentic contexts. Each lesson has a learning objective at the bottom of the page, such as, "Identify appropriate language to describe feelings and emotions." Many lessons end with assessment activities that ask learners to bring information to class such as a shopping list or the names of schools in their community. These authentic resources are then used for discussion or as learning tools.

The table of contents also links the lesson material to four major adult assessment programs, including the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) and Equipped for the Future (EFF). Teachers who need to meet these specific assessment competencies will find this information useful.

This textbook not only effectively presents basic literacy skills, but most units have sections that work on critical thinking skills, math concepts, and pronunciation. In the unit about families, for example, the real-life math section has an activity about converting inches to feet for measuring height. While in the problem-solving section of the families unit, learners listen to the script while looking at some pictures, they need to decide how a parent should deal with her son who did not do well on a test. In the unit about time, the pronunciation section has listen and repeat exercises that help learners practice their intonation in yes/no questions. Not every textbook can claim to be so thorough in its breadth of incorporating skills.

Yet the textbook provides more than just skills practice, there are also many useful resources at the end of the book. There are listening scripts, grammar charts, a vocabulary list, an index, and a U.S. map. The index is divided into academic skills, civics, life skills, the topics covered in the book, and workforce skills. These resources provide many more ways to access the practical features in the book.

In addition to being well designed and comprehensive, the pictures in this textbook are realistic, interesting, and colorful (which makes it appealing, but could also be a cost factor). The pictures of people represent a variety of cultures and ages and are reflective of adult learners who may be using the book.

Step Forward Introductory Level is a well-designed, visually appealing, and effective textbook. This would be a great book to use with beginning-level ESL students in newcomer programs or adult basic education programs. It covers a wide-range of skills and reflects the images and needs of the adults who are likely to use the book.

AUTHOR

Rhonda Petree has taught ESL/EFL to learners of all ages for the past ten years. She is currently in the MA in ESL program at the University of Minnesota and a teacher at the Hubbs Center in St. Paul.

MinneWITESOL Journal
Volume 25, 2008

www.minnewitesoljournal.org

**SAM AND PAT 1: BEGINNING READING AND WRITING BY JO ANN HARTEL,
BETSY LOWRY & WHIT HENDON**

Jo Anne Hartel, Betsy Lowry, and Whit Hendon (2006). *Sam and Pat 1: Beginning Reading and Writing*. Boston: Thomson Heinle. \$15.95

Parthy Schachter

Sam and Pat is an adult phonics series emphasizing reading, writing, and listening. Book 1 features twenty chapters, each presenting a controlled number of consonant and vowel phonemes in short passages. High-frequency sight words are featured as well. Questions follow the readings in which students fill in missing letters of a word, answer yes/no content questions, complete sentences by adding missing words, and circle words dictated by the teacher for phonemic distinction. Later chapters feature more open-ended writing exercises. Numeracy and preliteracy exercises are not included, and there is no explicit grammar presentation at any point.

The text contains suggested listening scripts to be read during sound identification exercises. Additionally, "key word cards" are provided for short vowels, consonants, and consonant digraphs, with the recommendation that the teacher tape them to note cards for in-class reference. Phonetic word grids are provided at the back for each short vowel sound; these contain pictures and include many of the book's content words.

The readings themselves are stories from the lives of Sam and Pat, a racially ambiguous married couple. Pat cooks, shops for groceries, and works as a school lunch lady. Sam studies, works in a grocery store, and fishes in his spare time with Gus the taxi driver. Despite the severely content-limiting nature of the phonics approach, the readings about Sam and Pat manage to touch on authentic issues: Pat struggles with New York cab drivers, Sam experiences a tumultuous job search, and the two make financial decisions while adhering to a tight budget. Some elements of the storyline appear to be geared toward westernized students – the couple share a kiss on a football field, for example, and Pat comically sends Sam to the bathtub when he returns smelling from a fishing trip. The text also features multiple references to and pictures of ham; this is doubtless because of the word's phonemic regularity, but its presence in the text could prove baffling, if not offensive, to some Muslim learners.

Sam and Pat claims to be "for all beginning English readers and writers," both those who are new to the Roman alphabet and those that are new to literacy in any language. The exercises, however, are clearly geared toward the latter category. Highly developed oral skills seem to be an assumption for users of this text, as many of the exercises address lexical items not presented in the reading. One exercise, for example, asks students to label a number of pictures with words containing /u/, including a truck, a puddle, and a duck (none of which have any connection to or appearance in the readings). Additionally, the book contains idiomatic expressions and complex grammatical features such as contractions while providing no explanation. This begs the question of whether

students who are not already proficient English speakers would understand what they are reading, even if they are able to sound out the words in the text.

The limited scope of the book may be its greatest weakness, making it appropriate for only a small sector of the preliteracy population - those with highly developed oral skills and no cultural objection to kissing couples and ham for Sunday dinner. The engaging storyline is its strength, though, and could provoke interesting discussions and serve as a basis for a number of other content-based classroom activities.

Reviewer

Parthy Schachter is an MA TESL student at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. She has taught ESL in the US and Israel and currently teaches Hebrew at Talmud Torah of St Paul.

MinneWITESOL Journal

www.minnewitesoljournal.org

Volume 25, 2008

THE BASIC OXFORD PICTURE DICTIONARY

Gramer, M.F. (2003). *The Basic Oxford Picture Dictionary, 2nd Ed.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. ix + 120. List price: \$14.50

Reviewed by
Catherine Clements

Thirteen years after the publication of the popular first edition, *The Basic Oxford Picture Dictionary* has been updated with color-coded topic guides, contemporary artwork and a revised Teacher's Guide. Designed for low-beginning, literate adult ESL/EFL students, the dictionary features more than 1,200 words presented in context of lifelike, realistic tableaux. Attractive, lightweight, and affordable (\$14.50), it functions both as a standalone dictionary and as a companion to other materials in *The Basic Oxford Dictionary Program*.

The book is thoughtfully laid out and easy to use. Its utilitarian cover accurately depicts what the interior delivers: useful vocabulary for an English learner's daily life. Inside, it is divided into 12 thematic areas addressing its target audience's most immediate language needs. The book is full color throughout, illustrations are clear and informative, and type is large and legible.

Each page features 8-16 vocabulary words, which are sometimes shown alongside a single picture, but more often are incorporated into a scene. For example, "The Intersection" (p. 72-73) shows a busy street corner illustrating nouns such as "newsstand" and "curb" and verbs such as "come out of the store" and "buy groceries." Questions using some vocabulary are located at the bottom of each page.

The characters in the pictures are of all ages, ethnicities and social classes, reflective of the learners who are the target audience for this book. Themes such as A Day-Care Center (p. 90) and phrases such as "grate cheese" (p. 46) employ vocabulary needed by the audience.

However, the book leaves something to be desired in terms of cultural sensitivity. For instance, the emotion "scared" (p. 18) is illustrated by an affluent, nervous-looking Anglo couple walking down an alley with graffiti painted on it. For many learners, a graffiti-filled wall does not instill fear, and the connection between the signifier and the signified may be unclear. Also, the section "Occupations" devotes more space to blue-collar than white-collar jobs. This may be chance or a well-intentioned effort to depict jobs likely to be held by readers, but it does not suit the needs of adults who have left office jobs in their home countries and need to talk about their former jobs with prospective employers.

This dictionary is part of a package which includes student resources like a workbook and picture cards, and instructor resources such as a teacher's book, a book with reproducible activities, and an audio program with a CD or cassette tapes. Teachers can

pair the dictionary with complementary materials to create multifaceted, engaging lessons. If instructors can choose only one supplementary piece, the teacher's book is the best choice; it includes numerous quick, creative ideas for additional student practice, games, and expanding in-class activities

Even without additional supplementary materials, this is an effective dictionary, with many basic, practical nouns plus limited adjectives and adverbs (which are difficult to portray in pictures) that can easily be integrated into an existing syllabus. It admirably fulfills its dual purposes of being clear enough for beginning learners and real enough for adults. Its usefulness and affordability make it a wise purchase for ABE instructors and students.

Reviewer

Catherine Clements is a graduate student in the MA-ESL Program at the University of Minnesota and teaches ESL at the Minnesota English Language Program.

MinneWITESOL Journal
2008

www.minnewitesoljournal.org

Volume 25,

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT INCLUSION: CONNECTING MAINSTREAM AND ESL

Lisa M. Bolt Simons

ABSTRACT

In the past few years, inclusion or collaboration has become the English as a second Language (ESL) model used by several schools and districts, including the St. Paul Public Schools, which has increasingly closed the achievement gap for its ESL population. Though there are drawbacks and potential problems with this model, the author and her colleagues have found its application successful in their elementary school. Examples of how inclusion works in various elementary classroom settings end the report. The following is based on a presentation given by the author and her co-worker, Becky (Bonertz) Gibson, at the 2006 MinneTESOL Conference, as well as at a 2007 meeting for the University of Minnesota's TEAM UP (Teaching English Language Learners Action Model to Unite Professionals) development program.

INTRODUCTION

According to the Minnesota Department of Education, there are several ESL programs: Sheltered English Instruction, Structured English Immersion, Specifically Designed Academic Instruction delivered in English (SDAIE), Content-based ESL, and Pull-out (2005). Inclusion, one of several program models, could be considered a blend of all of the above.

Though comprehensive studies by Thomas & Collier (1997; 2002) have shown that "two-way" (dual language) bilingual education programs have the highest levels of long-term academic achievement and fewest dropouts and whose students outperform those who only speak one language, the limited resources and shortage of bilingual teachers in our district do not allow for such a program model. Thomas & Collier write that if a school must use all-English instruction, it is best to teach ESL "through academic content and current approaches to teaching as a more efficacious alternative that helps students develop academically and cognitively to a greater degree" (1997).

In an exemplar paper for North Carolina State University, "Implementing an ESL/Bilingual Inclusion Model," Christine Ann Gebhardt writes, "Inclusion is a planned philosophy of instruction for ESL students in which the classroom teacher and the ESL teacher work together in one of three 3 distinct ways: co-teaching, consultation, and classroom support" (2003). In other words, it means collaboration that better addresses ESL students' needs. Elizabeth Platt, in her article, "White Papers: The Inclusion of Limited English-Proficient Students in Florida's K-12 Content Classrooms," writes that three expectations must be met for inclusion to be successful: "comprehensible instruction, opportunities for participation and interaction, and an appropriate curriculum" (n.d.). According to a paper through the Bureau of Academic Achievement through Language Acquisition (AALA) at the Florida Department of Education, "Inclusion is a term that is often used to describe the provision of instruction within the

conventional/mainstream classroom" (2006). Inclusion is NOT, however, a "sink or swim" theory when no language assistance is given in the mainstream classes. Further, the AALA paper states, "Inclusion is an innovative approach prompted by the goal of full and more meaningful participation of all students in all instructional programs."

For the purpose of this paper, the author specifies "inclusion" as the name of a program model with "collaboration" as the key component. Though St. Paul Public Schools use "collaboration" more often in regards to a model or pedagogy that addresses ESL student needs, the district has also created and experimented with such specific models as the TESOL Inclusion Program, or TIP.

WHAT DOES INCLUSION LOOK LIKE?

For the past nine years, St. Paul Public Schools has been focusing on "inclusive instructional collaboration models" (H. Bernal, personal communication, June 11, 2008) to replace tracking or pulling out ESL students. In fact, the central office mandates the practice (Zehr, 2006). In an *Education Week* article, author Mary Ann Zehr writes that "the district has even produced purple buttons that say, 'Got Collaboration?'" According to Zehr's article and another published in *Minnesota Parent* by Simons (2006), ESL students are passing standardized tests at the same rate as native English speakers, which means the district has been making adequate yearly progress for its English language learners (ELLs) under No Child Left Behind.

The following formats of inclusion are adapted from Friend, Burrello, & Burrello (1996). Except for not listing "one teach, one observe" and the "centers" being referred to as "station teaching," Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie also listed the following variations of inclusion (2007).

1. One teach, one observe

While the classroom *or* ESL teacher teaches, the other observes oral production, listening skills, behavior, etc. It is important to note that the ESL teacher can teach the whole mainstream classroom. This can also be a time for the mainstream teacher to pull out one of her students and work with that student one-on-one, which can be a rarity otherwise.

2. One teach, one drift

While either the classroom *or* ESL teacher instructs the class, the other teacher circulates to students, monitors progress, adjusts instruction, and/or provides feedback. There are times, for example, when a teacher is teaching, and the drifting teacher is sitting on the floor next to a group of the neediest children. She can whisper, repeat information, clarify, ask questions, and help generate answers.

3. Centers

This can happen two ways: the ESL students are divided as equally as possible between all center groups, so that one or two are in a group. The ESL teacher then works with one center all week as the students rotate, giving her the opportunity to work with ESL and mainstream students. The second way is when the ESL students are in one group, and the ESL teacher follows the students through each center during the week.

Teachers can plan the centers together, or the ESL teacher can help the mainstream teacher modify the centers for the ESL students.

4. Parallel teaching

This format occurs when both the ESL and mainstream teachers teach the same lesson, content, or skill. This can happen with a small group of ESL students, a pair of students, or one-on-one. In my school, I usually take a small group of students (this past year, the groups were anywhere between four and 17) to another location versus staying in the classroom.

Modifications are apparent with this format. The pace is slower, there is one-on-one support or the total student number is smaller, the visuals are more elaborate, etc. The bottom line is that the focus and objectives are the same as in the mainstream classroom. Each teacher is responsible for planning her own lesson, although the ESL teacher will focus more on language objectives versus the content objectives.

5. Alternative teaching (Push-in or pull-out)

The ESL teacher either works at a separate table with individuals or a small group of ESL students. She pushes them in (stays at a table or corner of the classroom) or pulls them out (goes outside the classroom) to work on a specific concept being taught in the mainstream class. This could be used for pre-teaching and/or reviewing in particular.

6. Co- or team-teaching

This format involves both mainstream and ESL teachers teaching part of the lesson in the same classroom, one after the other, or teaching different skills within the same lesson at the same time. This format can provide a good opportunity to model ESL teaching strategies for the mainstream teacher. It's also an opportunity for the ESL teacher to observe the mainstream teacher's strategies.

The class can be divided into two groups with the ESL teacher teaching the ESL students and possibly low-level English speakers, while the mainstream teacher teaches the other students, which may include high-level ESL students. It is important to emphasize that the ESL teacher can instruct low-level English speakers because lesson modifications can help those children. In addition, some higher-level ESL students benefit from staying with equally leveled students versus being put in a low-level group solely because of their ESL label.

THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF INCLUSION

Based on my experiences and on research, I have found numerous positives of inclusion.

+ Inclusion is true collaboration in the name of growth, progress, and success for ALL students. As Duke & Mabbott state in their article, "An Alternative Model for Novice-Level Elementary ESL Education," one of the reasons the alternative model was successful when implemented was the fact that "each member of our team was committed, flexible, and willing to change the way things had always been done because of the common goal of providing the best education possible to all students" (2001). Brice, Miller, & Brice write, "Studies (Brice, 2002; Brice, Miller, & Brice, 2006; Figureroa & Hernandez, 2000) have shown that students in ELL classrooms, speech and language or special education classrooms, and general education classrooms all benefit from more lesson planning and co-planning with other school professionals" (2006). Sakash & Rodriguez-Brown (1995) state, "Creating closer collaboration between mainstream and bilingual/ESL teachers in schools with programs that serve limited English proficient (LEP) students is one type of partnership that can result in a shared commitment to systemic school reform leading to higher achievement and greater multicultural understanding in America's schools."

+ When inclusion is practiced effectively, ESL students are not missing mainstream content classes, which has become more important with "the nation's emphasis on standards and accountability" (Reeves, 2006). In fact, with inclusion, there is the awareness of the importance of language in ALL content classes, whether it's science, history, or math. For example, a student cannot answer the following math problem without knowing the English language: "Erika has 14 cents. Juan has 15 cents. How many cents do they have all together? Who has more? How much more?" With content-based and sheltered instruction, ESL students learn the curriculum *through* language, not just about the language (Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006; Krashen, 1991; Reed and Railsback, 2003). Stephen Krashen (1991) writes that teaching subject matter together with teaching language "is very time-efficient; students get both language and subject matter knowledge at the same time."

+ Inclusion provides many more classroom content connections. This helps "link core academic instruction to the content standards set by the state" (Reed and Railsback, 2003). Inclusion also provides background knowledge. If a class is going to be reading a story about hermit crabs, perhaps the ESL teacher can bring in a live hermit crab and have the students see it and ask questions about it. If bringing in a live animal is not possible, the teacher can at least show the students pictures and talk about the creature, so that when the story is read, the students will already have some knowledge about this animal they might not otherwise know. Inclusion also provides comprehensible input for the students. "Comprehensible input" is when students build upon their understanding of English based on what they already know, while new information is given (Krashen, 2003; Reed and Railsback, 2003). For example, I taught a student from México who came to our school in March of her 1st grade year. The student learned, "Get your pencil(s)" quickly because that phrase was used so often in the mainstream classroom.

One day, approximately two months after she had arrived at our school, there was a pencil lying on the floor. I asked the student, "Is that your pencil?" She shook her head and told me whose pencil it was. The student already comprehended "pencil" and was challenged with the question versus a command or statement. There wasn't an explicit lesson about questions and answers. Instead, this student received more English language input by engaging in authentic dialogue with me.

+ ESL strategies help mainstream teachers develop their teaching skills for ALL students. The mainstream teacher can develop ways to differentiate instruction for ESL and native English speakers when the ESL teacher is not in the classroom. [Editor's note: See the Dahlman, Hoffman & Brauhn article in this volume for more information about differentiation.] One extremely important note: there are high-level ESL students, just as there are low-level native English speakers. ESL strategies can help teachers reach low-level, native English speakers and develop their language and content-area skills. The past few years, based on my ESL assessments as well as mainstream assessments, I have chosen to work with native English speakers who lack literacy skills. I have also monitored ESL students on my caseload because they are at grade level academically, even if they didn't pass the oral fluency test.

+ Inclusion can ease the burden of lesson planning for the teachers. Sharing ideas with each other while creating content and language objectives and activities can solidify lessons (Coltrane, 2002). Collaboration can also actuate staff collegiality, connections, and respect (Levine, 2005; Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2006).

+ This teaching model allows for more individualized instruction and attention to need (Duke & Mabbott, 2001; Hansen-Thomas, 2008; Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2006). In addition, Thousand, Villa, & Nevin write, "With multiple instructors there is increased flexibility in grouping and scheduling, thus making it possible for students to experience less wait time for teacher attention and increased time on task, an important factor documented to increase academic productivity (Kneedler & Hallahan, 1981; Lloyd, 1982; Wheldall & Panagopoulou-Stamatelatou, 1991)."

+ With inclusion, students are not taught in isolation in comparison to exclusive pull-out (Coltrane, 2002; Duke & Mabbott, 2001; Sakash & Rodriguez-Brown, 1995; Thomas & Collier, 2002). In addition, there is little stigma that a student is different from his peers when inclusion and push-in models are used. "They don't feel like outcasts," write Duke & Mabbott (2001). A charter school liaison and special-projects coordinator for the St. Paul School District said of her ESL experience in the late 1970s, "I remember being pulled out of class all the time—I think it was three times a week. It made me feel like I'm dumb and don't know anything. Kids think maybe something is wrong with you if you need extra services" (Zehr, 2006). Moreover, there are more interactions with native English speakers in inclusive classrooms (Duke & Mabbott, 2001; Hawkins, 2001; Platt, Harper, & Mendoza, 2003; Seaman, 2000; Thomas & Collier, 1997).

+ When the ESL teacher attends the students' conferences, the parents see this as a team effort; plus, the ESL teacher learns exactly how the students are doing in class in

every content area. In addition, the ESL teacher and/or a cultural liaison can communicate success or concerns with the parent because interpreters are there; therefore, parent/school communication increases (Duke & Mabbott, 2001; Sakash & Rodriguez-Brown;1995).

+ Inclusion promotes an interest in bilingualism (Platt, Harper, & Mendoza, 2003) or even biliteracy, and it also promotes multiculturalism (DaSilva Iddings, 2005; Simons, 2006). Furthermore, inclusion spreads understanding and awareness of students learning English as another language throughout the school (Duke & Mabbott, 2001).

THE DRAWBACKS OF INCLUSION

No method, ideology, theory, or practice is perfect. As beneficial as inclusion has been, these factors are what I have found to be detrimental to its complete success.

- There is not enough common planning or prep time, if any at all (Coltrane, 2002; Duke & Mabbott, 2001; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007). This is probably one of the biggest concerns at my school.

Possible solutions: Talking with the principal about the importance of common prep time might help make it a priority. One possible solution was tried at my school. For the first 20 minutes of the school day on Tuesdays and Thursdays, grade level teachers had a common prep while their students went to a different grade level to eat breakfast. For example, on Tuesday, the 1st grade teachers would meet while the 5th graders and their teachers came to the 1st grade pod (classroom area). On Thursday, the 5th graders still came to 1st grade, but the 5th grade teachers met. This short amount of time only once a week is not at all ideal, and it was hard for the teacher teaching kindergarten and 1st to know which grade level meeting to attend. However, the idea of that common planning time was a step in the right direction.

Another solution is to have a working/planning lunch once a week, which is what I have done with kindergarten.

One year, I spent a great deal of time on the phone with the teachers I worked with—from my home to theirs on nights and weekends—in order to plan together.

- On occasion, there is unwillingness to share one's territory and collaborate with someone with equal authority or expertise (Coltrane, 2002; Garza & Crawford, 2005; Williams, 2003). Because it is difficult for some teachers to share their classroom with another teacher, the ESL teacher may be treated like a paraprofessional, even unintentionally.

Possible solutions: At Frost Lake Magnet School in St. Paul, teachers were not being held accountable "for students' progress in all areas, [so] teachers had to learn to trust their colleagues and share that responsibility" (Duke & Mabbott, 2001). This will not happen overnight, but hopefully the success found with other teams will extend to other

teachers and teams, as well as the entire staff in the schools (Platt, Harper, & Mendoza, 2003).

As for the ESL teacher feeling like a paraprofessional, I believe it's the attitude the ESL teacher has that needs to be adjusted. ESL teachers have gone to school and attained a license just like their colleagues. Though a particular task could be seen as something a para could do, especially during one-on-one time or centers, I find myself instructing students differently than a para because of my expertise and background. In addition, because I am willing to do other tasks to assist the mainstream teacher, I feel I earn more respect from my co-workers.

- The time the ESL teacher spends in the classroom (usually 30 minutes in the entire day) is not enough (Duke & Mabbott, 2001).

Possible solutions: Because I work with ten teachers, I try to work with pairs of them instead of all individually. For example, with the five first grade teachers, I team with two sets of two and then team one-on-one with the fifth teacher. In other words, Mrs. L, Miss B., and I have a working-with-words lesson scheduled at the same time. It is during this time they use flexible grouping, so with the addition of the ESL teacher, the group numbers are smaller. Teaming with more than one teacher allowed me longer blocks of instruction time.

Another solution could be to cluster the ESL students. At another elementary school in my district, the classrooms are clustered, so that the ESL teacher gets to work with students in two classrooms instead of four.

- Inclusion doesn't provide a "safe haven within the school" for ESL students (Platt, Harper, & Mendoza, 2003).

Possible solutions: Parallel teaching in another part of the school in smaller groups addresses this problem. In addition, pull-out sessions with some of the newcomers can also help. Ideally, working one-on-one with students helps build trust and a sense of security. Usually, ESL teachers will have an office or a classroom where a student knows he or she can go to for support and encouragement.

- If working with more than one grade level, the ESL teacher may not feel a sense of belonging with any grade. For example, where does the ESL teacher go during grade level meetings? One year, I was teaching 1st, 3rd, and 5th grade, which made my decisions on where to go extremely difficult.

Possible solutions: Ideally, there would be one ESL teacher per grade level. Since this is not possible at the school where I teach, I either attend half of the meeting in each grade level or rotate—this day/meeting, I'm with kindergarten; the next one, I'm with 1st grade.

- As always with education, there is not enough money for curriculum, staff development, resources, etc. (Batt, 2008; DaSilva Iddings, 2005; Karabenick & Noda, 2004).

Possible solutions: The ESL teachers in another school in my district have written numerous grants to help fund resources and programs. As for staff development, instead of paying an outside consultant hundreds if not thousands of dollars, the ESL teachers in the schools can lead the training. Other ESL teachers and I have done this before with much success.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS WITH INCLUSION

· If newcomers and students with limited English proficiency, limited formal education, posttraumatic stress disorder, or students who are not progressing do not have some pull-out time, they may not be adequately supported (Platt, 2005; Platt, Harper, & Mendoza, 2003).

Discussion: Platt, Harper, & Mendoza (2003) write, "Indeed, Brisk (1998) found that many different conditions distinguish successful educational programs for language minority students, and several studies have shown that type of instruction cannot be easily mapped according to program model (Baker, 1993; Ramírez, Yuen, & Ramey, 1991; Tikunoff, 1983)." In other words, there isn't a simple solution. Many factors have to be considered when structuring programs to address individual student need. Inclusion, as I stated above, is a blend of several models, which includes pull-out. Moreover, especially with children who have lived in refugee camps and have posttraumatic stress disorder, a social worker and other school professionals might need to step in to address other issues. It's truly a team effort.

· If a student is not progressing, the inclusion model may not have adequate instruction and assessment modification (DaSilva Iddings, 2005; Platt, Harper, & Mendoza, 2003).

Discussion: This furthers the case for working as a team. The ESL teachers need to help mainstream teachers modify lessons. In addition, more training and staff development may be needed. Teachers need to make site visits that help show how successful inclusion models work. Mainstream teachers need to learn about and utilize more strategies to reach the lower-level students, such as using concrete objects or manipulatives and including pictures for new vocabulary, on a more consistent basis. The bottom line remains: it can take between five and ten years for a student to learn academic English, and this is when the student is literate and does not have learning disabilities. English is an extremely difficult language to learn (and teach) because of its idiosyncrasies, rules, and inconsistencies.

· "If an inclusion program attempts to conceal the so-called English language deficits of students, or if the school ignores the linguistic and cultural diversity that English language learners bring, then the goals of inclusive education are subverted" (Platt, Harper, & Mendoza, 2003).

Discussion: This is not a problem in my school for the most part. Two years ago, the bulletin board in the school's foyer had "Welcome" in at least ten languages, including all the languages spoken by our students, as well as American Sign Language. This past year, the bulletin board had a world map on it with pins stuck in various countries around the world, countries where our students originally came from. In another elementary school in my district, the staff and community hosts an International Night with food, crafts, costumes, activities, and dancing from people around the world. Most teachers try to bring in not only students' stories but also incorporate multicultural texts throughout the school year.

Though my colleagues and I don't speak Somali, we've tried to learn some words, especially "thank you," for the students' and their families' benefit. During 1st grade's morning meeting, the students can choose one of three languages (English, Spanish, and French) for the birthday song. In Mrs. G.'s class, the students write "Happy Birthday" to classmates in English, Spanish, or Somali. (Though there wasn't an exact phrase in Somali, the Somali liaison provided Mrs. G. a close translation.)

In Garza & Crawford (2005), a bilingual ESL teacher (referred to in this article as an "English Language Acquisition" or "ELA" teacher) used Spanish in teaching her students. Questions were asked bilingually, and Spanish answers were permitted. The teacher even encouraged Spanish responses if they could not think of answers in English. "Therefore [the students] are allowed to speak their native language for clarification and to respond to evaluative question. The messages the ELLs receive about native language use in [this teacher's] ELA classroom are permissive and validating even though learning English is the goal of the instruction."

Thomas & Collier (1997) write, "In a socioculturally supportive school, all students and staff and parents are respected and valued for the rich life experiences in other cultural contexts that they bring to the classroom. The school is a safe, secure environment for learning, and students treat each other with respect, with less expression of discrimination, prejudice, and hostility."

- If training is not given to mainstream teachers about ESL students—for example, the difference between BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) and CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency)—then the priority of inclusion and the success of ESL students could be diminished (Batt, 2008; Cartiera, 2006; Coltrane, 2002; Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006; Glenn & Gort, 2008; Hansen-Thomas, 2008; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Platt, 2005; Platt, Harper, & Mendoza, 2003; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007; Zehr, 2007).

Discussion: As mentioned earlier, training, observations, and site visits are vital to understanding and working with ESL students. Though consultants and speakers from other schools and businesses could be helpful, especially if they steer away from theories and role model specific strategies, in-district staff could be the experts who share their wealth of information.

- If inclusion is looked upon to solve an inequity battle, as in ESL students need to be part of the mainstream classroom all the time in the name of equity, then that could diminish the whole point of inclusion (DaSilva Iddings, 2005).

Discussion: As stated before, inclusion includes pull-out as part of its practice. It just defines pull-out sessions differently than the traditional way with its isolation, lack of collaboration, and lack of connections with mainstream content. The goal of inclusion is to help students learn the English language while learning content. If an ESL basal is teaching a 1st grader about what objects float on water and why, but the mainstream teacher is teaching about the moon, then there is no background knowledge and connections provided in the ESL pull-out session. However, if the ESL teacher pulls out a student and practices spelling and sounding out "moon," as well as "night" and other things having to do with the moon, then background knowledge and connections are made *through* the English language.

In many ways, forcing teachers and students to commit to the mainstream format can be detrimental. In DaSilva Iddings' article, she writes that the school she studied had cut the bilingual program and the students moved to mainstream classrooms not only because it was judged to be ineffective based on standardized test scores, but also because the principal claimed that ESL students would interact more with native English speakers. DaSilva Iddings notes that "it was evident that in the urgency to get ELLs to achieve academic proficiency in English, little value was placed on the identities of competence they did gain as students...teachers were severely underestimating these students." Further, DaSilva Iddings states that with marginal expectations of ESL students, they were "at a serious educational disadvantage in relation to the native speakers of English" (2005).

- If an ESL teacher is not considered an expert in language acquisition, a valuable resource for mainstream teachers, and a support system for ESL students, then *any* model for ESL students is insubstantial. Moreover, if ESL teachers are relegated to other district responsibilities, like interpreting or translating, especially in the middle of their own classes, then their student contact time is shortened and educational background diluted (Batt, 2008; Platt, Harper, & Mendoza, 2003).

Discussion: ESL teachers specialize in language acquisition and multiculturalism. They are licensed professionals whose job it is to not only provide a student with English-language instruction through vital content but also cultural recognition and respect. In turn, the ESL teacher should extend her expertise to those who have ESL students in their classrooms. Mainstream teachers are also valuable resources for the ESL teacher in terms of sharing information about expectations, state standards, and assessments. Interpreters and translators should be hired, so that the sometimes erratic time commitments and burdens don't fall on teachers who are trying to actually teach.

- If a band-aid approach to the growing number of ESL students is to hire paraprofessionals and/or cultural liaisons who are not schooled in language acquisition, then mainstream teachers will not have the benefit of ESL teachers' expertise and ESL

students' academic success will suffer (Batt, 2008; DaSilva Iddings, 2005; Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006).

Discussion: As mentioned earlier, ESL teachers go to school and take not only general education classes, but also the classes that allow them to be expert resources in the area of language acquisition. Though paraprofessionals and cultural liaisons are vital to the staff and success of program models and student achievements, they have not been trained like licensed teachers. In addition, because ESL teachers are licensed, they can teach whole group, mainstream lessons.

EXAMPLES OF INCLUSION

For the following, I have included at least one example of each variation of inclusion, which I have practiced with my colleagues.

Kindergarten

One teach, one drift

The mainstream teacher, Mr. T., has students reach in a bag to feel for and recognize the chosen shapes during math time. He includes the color when he announces which one to find. As the ESL teacher, I stay with the newcomer and help him identify the shape he pulls from the bag, and I assist him in naming the shapes and colors correctly. I also make sure to emphasize other descriptors for the shapes, such as sides and corners. I also circulate and check in with other ESL students during this time.

Language objectives:

The student will name the color word before the name of the shape; name colors; name shapes; and differentiate between "sides," "corners," and other attributes.

Content objectives:

The student will name shapes and describe a shape using an attribute.

Centers

I stay with the ESL group the entire week for math centers. However, once a week, during a math manipulative exploration, I bring in my own literacy activity to work on with the ESL students (i.e., letter recognition working with the students' names, a guided reading book, etc.).

Language objectives:

In math, the objectives vary. As an example, I'll use sorting coins. The student will know what a "coin" is and what "cent" means; be introduced to the colors "silver" and "copper"; know the names of the coins; and recall the names of the numbers 1, 5, 10, and 25. For language arts, the objectives also vary but align with the theme, the alphabet letter, or "star word" (sight word) of the week.

Content objectives:

The students will recognize and name the four different coins.

First Grade

One teach, one observe

I teach the writing mini-lesson about using periods. I tell the class that a period means holding one's breath, that it can't be let out until one sees a capital. Meanwhile, Mrs. G. sits with the students on the floor, close to the lowest-level ESL children, monitoring their comprehension. Sometimes during these lessons, we teachers engage in conversation to role model metacognitive skills or ask questions aloud in order to see if students can figure out the answers themselves. Then during Writers' Workshop, both teachers circulate to the students; I focus on the ESL students primarily but do not ignore the English-speaking students.

Language objectives:

The student will be introduced to new terms like "punctuation" and review old terms like "capital letter," "period," and "finger space."

Content objectives:

The student will demonstrate understanding of sentence structure by starting each sentence with a capital letter and ending with a period.

Parallel Teaching

Mrs. G. teaches the short E vowel sound and incorporates that sound into a word family, or rhyming pattern, and the students write down the words. She then leads the class into reading the story that has short E as its focus. I pull out my ESL students and do the same lesson. I modify the lesson, however, by having the students highlight the words in the word family in a reproducible book the students can then take home.

Language objectives:

The student will practice hearing and identifying rhymes; review the terms "vowel," "short," "long," "rhyme," and "word family"; reproduce the short E sound; listen and identify similar sounding words; and learn the term "highlighter."

Content objectives:

The student will read rhyming words in the short-E word families.

Alternative Teaching (Push-in or Pull-out)

During silent sustained reading (SSR) time, I take a group of students to a table in the classroom and teach a word-building lesson, or I take a group of students out during the classroom's SSR time in order to focus on contractions, which is one of the skills being taught for the shared reading book of the week.

Language objectives:

The student will review the meaning of a contraction and will practice reading and listening for contractions in sentences; will listen to contractions, separate the words, and identify the missing letter(s) and sound(s); and will learn what an "apostrophe" is.

Content objectives:

The student will recall the two words that make up the contraction and how to read the words when joined by an apostrophe.

Second Grade

Co- or Team-teaching

I work with a group of ESL students and low-level English speakers and focus on compound words that are in the reading selection; the words are already written on separate index cards (the first word in blue; the second, red). I raise one fist and say, "Com"; I raise the other fist and say, "Pound." Then I put my fists together and say, "Word." Then we sound out and read the words and match the words. The mainstream teacher, Ms. M., works with the mid-level students, which may include higher-level ESL students. Ms. M.'s group focuses on finding compound words in the story and writing them down. The highest-level group, which could include monitored ESL students, creates compound word puzzles or riddles (written on separate cards) for the middle group to put together/solve.

Language objectives:

The student will learn the meaning of the term "compound word" and explore the meanings of several compound word examples.

Content objectives:

The students will recognize compound words when broken into the two parts, identify compound words in a text, brainstorm more compound word examples, or generate compound word puzzles or riddles.

Fifth Grade

Co- or Team-teaching

The mainstream teacher, Mr. D., and I team during a lesson about fractions. First, I pre-teach about fractions using a cookie recipe. I review the recipe on the overhead and show the students my measuring cups. I make sure to emphasize that if I had to make the recipe for the whole class, I would need to double the fractions. On the overhead, the students help me double the fractions. At the end of my pre-teaching lesson, I pass out the cookies I made with the recipe. Mr. D. then teaches the fraction lesson from the math curriculum.

Language objectives:

The student will understand and use such words as "one-half," "one-fourth," and "double"; differentiate between "denominator" and "numerator," as well as "above" and "below"; and remember that "add" means to make bigger.

Content objectives:

The student will understand what a fraction is and add fractions.

CONCLUSION

Though the Minnesota statutes have changed over the course of several years between different representatives and various bills and amendments, the following was included in Sec. 39. Minnesota Statutes 2002, section 124D.61:

“(c) An education program for English language learners must meet the following requirements...

(2) the curriculum of the educational program for English language learners must be coordinated with the mainstream curriculum in which the English language learners are involved and must be consistent with standards set forth by the commissioner...

(4) to the extent possible, the district must avoid isolating English language learners for a substantial part of the school day...” (State of Minnesota, 2002).

I strongly believe in the validity of this statement. Inclusion, when bilingual models are not available, is quickly becoming best practice because it focuses on what is most apt for ESL students—content, comprehensible input, and connections—and drives toward students’ long-term success. As Platt, Harper, and Mendoza (2003) write in, “Dueling Philosophies: Inclusion or Separation for Florida’s English Language Learners?”, “ESL professionals must advance the academic program through instruction that is well integrated with the content and the skills of the academic disciplines, balanced with attention to the language development needs of the students.” Inclusion is a great model to achieve this. Batt sums it up: “The success of ELL students cannot remain the sole responsibility of ESL and bilingual educators in the era of No Child Left Behind” (2008).

Inclusion is also beneficial for native English speakers. In Simons’ *Minnesota Parent* article (2006), Ann Rummel, a 1st grade teacher at Centennial Elementary in Richfield, said that “the exposure to the diversity is such a positive thing for kids and for the awareness of what the real world is like. We have all of these cultures and people right within our classroom to learn about and to become comfortable with a young age.”

In order for inclusion to work, the staff involved needs to be EXTREMELY flexible, able to make mistakes, and willing to experiment with new strategies. When I have encountered reluctance by colleagues to engage in collaboration, I depend on my passion for this program model and also on my beliefs that it has proven to be effective for increasing student progress. In addition, because of the success I have achieved with the 1st grade team, other co-workers have agreed to try inclusion and have continued to team with me in concurrent years.

Asking an entire school staff to start practicing inclusion at the same time is not wise; it would be too much all at once. If teachers don’t agree philosophically about collaboration and inclusion, perhaps site visits can be arranged to demonstrate the possibilities. Ultimately, teachers cannot be forced to practice a model they don’t feel

comfortable with, and conflicting personalities will not make any program run smoothly. Hopefully, research in best practice will continue to prove that the benefits of inclusion outweigh the challenges.

AUTHOR

Lisa M. Bolt Simons has taught ESL in the Faribault School District for five years. After completing the Second Languages and Cultures Master of Education program at the University of Minnesota in 1994, Simons taught English as a Foreign Language in Japan. Upon her return, she taught high school English and elementary ESL in the Mankato district and Adult Basic Education in St. Peter, Le Sueur, and Hutchinson. Simons is indebted to Becky Gibson for her assistance with the original presentations and with this paper.

REFERENCES

Batt, E. (2008). Teachers' perceptions of ELL education: Potential solutions to overcome the greatest challenges. *Multicultural Education, 15*(3), 39-44.

Bureau of Academic Achievement through Language Acquisition. Inclusion as an instructional model for LEP students. Retrieved March 15, 2006 from www.firn.edu/doe/omsle/tapinclu.htm.

Brice, A., Miller, K., & Brice, R. (2006). Language in the English as a second language and general education classrooms: A tutorial. *Communication Disorders Quarterly, 27*(4), 240-247.

Cartiera, M. R. (2006). Addressing the literacy underachievement of adolescent English language learners: A call for teacher preparation and proficiency reform. *New England Reading Association Journal, 42*(1), 26-33.

Coltrane, B. (2002). Team teaching: Meeting the needs of English language learners through collaboration. *ERIC/CLL News Bulletin, 25*(2).

DaSilva Iddings, A. C. (2005). Linguistic access and participation: English language learners in an English-dominant community of practice. *Bilingual Research Journal, 29*(1), 165-184.

Duke, K. & Mabbott, A. (2001). An alternative model for novice-level elementary ESL education. ERIC Digest. (ERIC Reproduction service No. 458 807.)

Echevarria, J., Short, D., & Powers, K. (2006). School reform and standards-based education: A model for English-language learners. *The Journal of Educational Research, 99*(4), 195-211.

Friend, M., Burrello, L., & Burrello, J. (1996). *The Power of 2: Making a Difference Through Co-Teaching* (VHS recording). Bloomington: Indiana University Forum on Education.

Garza, A. & Crawford, L. (2005). Hegemonic multiculturalism: English immersion, ideology, and subtractive schooling. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 29(3), 599-620.

Gebhardt, C. (2003, Fall). Implementing an ESL/Bilingual model. Globe: An online newsletter of NC State University. Retrieved September 19, 2008, from http://www2.chass.ncsu.edu/swisher/vol1_no1/exemplars/Christine's%20paper.html

Glenn, W. & Gort, M. (2008). Discomfort, deficiency, dedication: Preservice teachers voice their ELL-related concerns. *English Leadership Quarterly*, 30(3), 9-13.

Hansen-Thomas, H. (2008). Sheltered instruction: Best practices for ELLs in the mainstream. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 44(4), 165-169.

Hawkins, S. (2001). Effect of total language immersion as opposed to ESL pullout programs at a rural, western Arkansas middle school. Retrieved May 18, 2005 from Arkansas Tech University Web site <http://education.atu.edu/people/swomack/Sonya.htm>

Karabenick, S. & Noda, P. (2004). Professional development implications of teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward English language learners. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 28(1), 55-75.

Krashen, S. (1991). Sheltered Subject Matter Teaching. *Cross Currents*, 18, 183-188.

Krashen, S. (2003, December). *Effective second language acquisition*. Paper presented at Staff Development Resources (SDR), Minneapolis, MN.

Levine, L. (2005). Teacher collaboration for the achievement of all learners. *TEIS News: The newsletter of TESOL's Teacher Education Interest Section*, 20(2).

Minnesota Department of Education (2005). *ELL Education Program Guidelines 2004*. Retrieved September 19, 2008, from <http://www.education.state.mn.us/mdeprod/groups/EnglishLang/documents/Manual/002097.pdf>

Platt, E. (n.d.). White papers: *The inclusion of limited English-proficient students in Florida's K-12 content classrooms*. Retrieved May 18, 2005 from College of Education, Florida State University Web site: www.coe.fsu.edu/whitepapers/inclusion.htm.

Platt, E., Harper, C., & Mendoza, M. B. (2003). Dueling philosophies: Inclusion or separation for Florida's English language learners? *TESOL Quarterly*, 37(1), 105-133.

Reed, B. & Railsback, J. (2003). Strategies and resources for mainstream teachers of English language learners. Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Reeves, J. (2006). Secondary teacher attitudes toward including English-language learners in mainstream classrooms. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 99(3). ERIC Digest. (ERIC Reproduction service No. EJ 744 225.)

Sakash, L. & Rodriguez-Brown, F.V. (1995). Teamworks: Mainstream and bilingual/ESL teacher collaboration. ERIC Digest. (ERIC Reproduction service No. 389 205.)

Scruggs, T., Mastropieri, M., & McDuffie, K. (2007). Co-teaching in inclusive classrooms: A metasynthesis of qualitative research. *Exceptional Children*, 73(4), 392-416.

Seaman, A. (2000). Evaluating an innovative elementary ESL program. *American Language Review*, 4(5).

Simons, L. (2006). Our changing classrooms: Parents may worry about the rising numbers of non-native English speakers in schools, but evidence shows that their inclusion benefits all students. *Minnesota Parent*, 21(5).

State of Minnesota. (2002). www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/statutes.asp.

Thomas, W. & Collier, V. (1997). School effectiveness for language minority students. National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education. ERIC Digest. (ERIC Reproduction service No. 436 087.)

Thomas, W. & Collier, V. (2002). A national study of school effectiveness for language minority students' long-term academic achievement. Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence. ERIC Digest. (ERIC Reproduction service No. 475 048.)

Thousand, J., Villa, R., & Nevin, A. (2006). The many faces of collaborative planning and teaching. *Theory into Practice*, 45(3), 239-248.

Williams, M. (2003). One + one = second language learning in the mainstream classroom. *TESOL Matters*, 13(3).

Zehr, M. A. (2006). Team-teaching helps close language gap. *Education Week*, 26(14), 26-29.

Zehr, M. A. (2007). Instructional Model May Yield Gains for English-Learners. *Education Week*, 27(14), 12.

Classroom strategies and tools for Differentiating Instruction in the ESL Classroom

Anne Dahlman
Patricia Hoffman
Susan Brauhn

ABSTRACT

Differentiated Instruction is a relatively widely used instructional approach across instructional contexts. It has proven to be successful in the general education context where studies have found that students exposed to Differentiated Instruction strategies consistently outperform other students (Tomlinson, 2001). Yet, there is a huge gap in professional literature that addresses the use of Differentiated Instruction in the ESL context. It is the aim of this paper to provide the reader with practical Differentiated Instruction strategies and tools for the use in the ESL classroom as well as the mainstream classroom with ELLs. We suggest three steps in implementing Differentiated Instruction, a) beginning with ensuring high quality curriculum that clearly articulates meaningful learning outcomes, both language and content, without which differentiation is not possible, b) moving onto carefully understanding student needs, their readiness, interests and learning profiles, based on systematic pre- and formative assessment, and finally c) implementing effective Differentiated Instruction strategies in the classroom to maximize the learning of all students. We provide multiple examples and useful tools to clarify each of the three steps.

Introduction

Differentiated Instruction has captured the attention of many educators across the country as they work to ensure that all children will progress toward the requirements of No Child Left Behind legislation. Differentiated Instruction allows classroom teachers to become more adept at planning instruction that is meaningful to every child in their classroom regardless of readiness level. Yet, content classes are not the only place where differentiation of instruction can be a valuable tool. ESL classrooms are often just as diverse as their classroom counterparts. Additionally, ESL teachers may not be fully aware of the mainstream curricular needs of their students. Whether working in collaborative consultation with mainstream teachers or in pull-out ESL programs, the benefits of Differentiated Instruction for ESL teachers and ELLs is worth considering.

The primary audience for this paper is ESL teachers who are dealing with mixed ability classes and who may not realize that Differentiated Instruction is as important in their classroom as in the mainstream classroom. However, much of what we are proposing is also for mainstream classroom teachers who may not understand the unique needs of their English language learners (ELLs).

Unlike the individualized instruction of the 1970's, Differentiated Instruction is not an attempt at having individualized lesson plans for every student. However, it is a systematic way of maximizing learning that is both rigorous in addressing high standards for all students yet personalized to reflect individual learner characteristics and needs. Snow (2000) states that ESL teachers have the unique responsibility of not only addressing core knowledge and skills but also to develop the language and literacy skills of a culturally and linguistically diverse group of students who also have wide differences in their experiential and educational backgrounds. We strongly advocate the responsibility of the ESL teachers to serve as the language professionals who, based on careful consideration of the language and content curricula and student needs, are able to guide ELLs in their dual process of acquiring English as fast and effectively as possible and gaining in content knowledge and skills to reach the highest learning outcomes possible.

At first glance referring to standards and differentiation in the same sentence might appear to be an oxymoron. But standards provide the framework on which to create differentiated instruction (Boyd-Batstone, 2006, p.2). Standards guide us in making decisions about "what" to teach, while Differentiated Instruction gives us the mindset and tools for "how" to teach successfully. Differentiated Instruction begins with the philosophy that all children can learn but will do so at different rates and along different paths of interest. What works well for one child, may cause another to struggle or lose interest.

At its most basic level, Differentiated Instruction means "shaking up" (Tomlinson, 2001, p. 1) what goes on in the classroom so that students have multiple options for taking in information (differing learning styles and interests), making sense of ideas (varying cognitive processing needs, ranging from pacing to levels of abstraction), and expressing what they learn (multiple choices for assessment tasks). When thinking about differentiating content to be learned, Tomlinson (1999) explains that first a teacher will need to make decisions about the essential content, principles and skills that *all* students will master, but at the same time understands student differences and provides opportunities for advanced learners to also work on more complex ideas or problems.

The key is to focus on the big ideas and concepts of the curriculum for all students and differentiate how each child will gain access to them and be evaluated. By providing only one type of activity, for example, to practice a certain skill or body of knowledge will leave behind all of those students whose preferred learning style or interests are not being tapped by the chosen activity.

Schools need to reexamine this whole issue of coverage; so many of the students who are struggling in school have good ideas and are good at critical thinking, but they may not be quite as good with taking in and retaining information. Because of the differences between students' optimal conditions (physical or mental) for learning new information, such as pacing, degree of structure of task, tolerance for ambiguity or physical conditions such as noise level or body movement, students are often not allowed to process new information in an effective manner. Assignments and tests ought to be

more flexible so that different kinds of minds can be effective. We allow this all the time in the adult world (Scherer, 2006); this is exhibited in the fact that individuals typically gravitate toward careers that suit their aptitudes, learning and personality preferences; some get into occupations requiring more practical and hands-on skills, while others choose a career where they can use their creativity and problem-solving. In schools, students who are analytic learners often get adequately served, while students with practical and/or creative mindsets and tendencies are commonly ignored.

Once the principles of differentiated instruction are understood, they can be adjusted for the interests and readiness of English language learners in both mainstream and ESL classrooms. The first principle is that assessment and instruction are intimately linked in a continuous feedback loop. Areas of assessment should focus on concepts or content, critical thinking, and skills or processes to help the teacher(s) judge the learner's mastery. An ESL teacher can be particularly helpful to classroom teachers in understanding particular ELLs strengths and weaknesses which may go undetected in a larger classroom setting. Ultimately, if the achievement gap is to be closed it will be necessary to diagnose (assess) discrete skills and knowledge individual learners have not mastered and plan how to effectively teach or reteach through relevant and appropriate curriculum and instructional strategies.

Both ESL and classroom teachers can differentiate the content (*what* they teach), process (*how* they teach) or product (what they use as *evidence* of learning). They can do so taking into account various students' readiness (what the student already knows), interests, or learning profile (the student's preferred mode of learning). It is important to note at this point that applying Differentiated Instruction strategies is a matter of degree and we highly recommend that the readers begin small. The principles of Differentiated Instruction reflect the very best practice of teaching; what makes this approach unique is the fact that its effectiveness lies in the fact that the principles are carried out proactively and systematically, with great thought. This means that beginning with applying even just small steps into one's practice with this systematic and meaningful approach will yield great gains in instruction. In the following, we will focus on three steps of differentiating instruction in the ESL classroom, accompanied by multiple examples and practical tools for carrying out those steps in any classroom. The three steps are: 1. Identifying meaningful goals, 2. Monitoring student learning, and 3. Creating meaningful activities for the Differentiated Instruction classroom.

This article is designed to be a "how-to" guide for beginning to implement these three principles of Differentiated Instruction. We recommend that this paper be read with a pen and paper at hand and they be used for taking notes about the feasibility in and relevance of the principles presented to one's own teaching context. Also, we encourage that the readers draft an action plan for implementing Differentiated Instruction in their context while studying these principles by jotting down the first concrete steps of differentiating instruction that one plans to take in the near future. Again, begin small!

1. Knowing exactly what to teach: Identifying meaningful goals and objectives (KUDs)

The main premise of Differentiated Instruction is that it begins with a clearly articulated, quality curriculum. We cannot differentiate content that is vague, ill-defined or not directly related to students' academic and social learning needs outside the ESL classroom (Tomlinson, 2001; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). ESL programs that are successful allot effort and resources to carefully evaluate their curriculum across both mainstream content courses as well as in ESL coursework to identify overlap, gaps, and to ensure that the curriculum directly addresses the needs of the learners. This articulation must go beyond basic proficiency levels, listening, speaking, reading and writing to include distinct knowledge, skills and dispositions that will be addressed at each level of proficiency and align with a district's general education standards and curriculum.

Decisions related to ESL curriculum are challenging given the varied needs of learners, the limits to the availability of resources, minimal time in the school day to work with colleagues on curriculum mapping, and the lack of information about options available and the high cost associated with purchasing a commercial curriculum (Hoffman & Dahlman, 2007). Here we focus mainly on decisions made after a program has adopted a curriculum, on the unit- and lesson-level decisions an ESL teacher makes about what to focus on in a given instructional unit or lesson. It is clear from research and our work from the field alike that what distinguishes successful ESL teachers from others are the following features related to this decision-making about what to teach (e.g., Echevarria, J., Voft, M. E., & Short, 2007; Met, 1994):

1. The teacher is superbly clear on both short term and long term learning goals and objectives and everything that is done in a lesson is directly linked to support these learning goals and objectives.
2. The teacher shares these learning goals and objectives with students so that the students are also clear on the learning goals and objectives and can self-monitor their progress.
3. These goals are created based on:
 - a) ESL language and content-area standards (e.g., Language Arts, Science, Math, etc.),
 - b) a pre-assessment of learner skills and prior knowledge (which might vary from learner to learner)
 - c) an exploration of learning needs (language and content) beyond the ESL classroom (e.g., by looking at district curriculum, content standards, and materials in content-area classrooms, consulting with other teachers, etc.)
4. The teacher prioritizes among various learning goals and objectives to identify those that serve as foundational knowledge and skills, yield wide-ranging results and address the biggest obstacles of learning for students.

One of the main challenges that ESL teachers face when identifying meaningful goals and objectives is going beyond identifying language skills, such as speaking, listening, reading and writing. Too often, ESL lessons *merely* focus on surface level language skills and allot too little attention to promoting students' critical thinking and deeper

understandings of language and language learning. We cannot emphasize enough how important these deeper level understandings are in reaching all students; they serve as a bridge between what we want student to learn, namely knowledge (e.g., rules, definitions, vocabulary) and skills (e.g. speaking, listening, reading and writing, thinking and learning strategies, usage of appropriate vocabulary), and students' motivation, feelings and personal ideas about language learning. If this link between knowledge/skills and motivation/feelings does not exist, little meaningful and sustained language learning will occur.

Thus, meaningful language goals and objectives, those that will be relevant and useful to students consist of the following three types (Tomlinson, 2001):

KUD-Objectives:

- § **KNOW** (facts, dates, definitions, people, places)
- § **UNDERSTAND** ("I want students to understand that...")
- § **DO** (specific skills, start with a verb, NOT a classroom activity)

Table 1 illustrates generic sample components under each of the KUD categories from the ESL context.

Table 1. Sample KUDs from the ESL context

"I want students to..."

Know	Understand that ...	Do
§ Facts and information related to academic content.	§ Good language learners use strategies to help them make sense of unfamiliar content.	§ <u>Use</u> appropriate vocabulary, language forms and register to express academic language functions related to content. (list)
§ Key <u>vocabulary</u> related to topic (list).	§ In a school context, we use words and structures that reflect the style of academic communication.	§ <u>Use</u> learning strategies (list) to achieve the skills listed above.
§ Key <u>language</u> (forms and functions) related to content (list).	§ Being a proficient reader means that one is able to read fluently and comprehend the meanings of the text (both literal and inferred).	
§ Learning <u>strategies</u> helpful in acquiring language and content (list).		
§ Features of <u>style/register</u> .		

The “Know”-category contains learning goals and objectives that target facts and pieces of knowledge. This category can be understood as declarative knowledge, which refers to knowledge that we can name and describe. For example, we ask students to tell us what they know about the past tense or about a certain content topic (e.g., rain forests), have students give us language rules related to when usage of a certain type of word is appropriate in a specific context or test them on vocabulary items.

The “Do”-category includes items that target procedural knowledge, i.e., when students actually *use* their knowledge of language in an authentic context. The challenge with creating meaningful “Do”-objectives stem from a number of factors:

1. Ensuring consistent opportunities for authentic contexts for practice and assessment.
2. Identifying *key* skills that are assessable and that yield the most significant improvement.
3. Consistently assessing and having students self-assess their own skill development.
4. Providing meaningful feedback to learners about skills (see section on Assessment for discussion on feedback).

The category that is rarely incorporated in ESL lessons and that is at the heart of Differentiated Instruction is “Understand”. This category refers to what Wiggins and McTighe (2005) call enduring understandings or essential questions. These are ideas that connect the material to be taught with students’ prior knowledge, and perspectives; their realities and backgrounds. This helps us deal with the “So what”-response students often have about learning certain topics and skills. The following questions aim to capture the essence of what is meant by understanding:

- § What is it that we want our students to remember and *understand* about language learning five years from now?
- § What is it in the topic that is deeply meaningful for the learner, beyond the classroom or school?
- § What do we want to convey to our students about what they need to be able to do with language to succeed in the regular classroom?
- § What do good language learners do?
- § Why do we study grammar?
- § What is unique about the language of school?
- § What does it mean to be proficient in a language?

The sample understandings in Table 1 have been designed to address *critical* understandings about successful language learning and to provide meaningful explanations for how language is used. “Understand”-items can also be thought of as the ideas that we as the teacher want our students to have in their minds when they are learning about and using language. These ideas are meaningful, and they aim to help students understand and motivate them. For differentiating instruction, it is crucial that we incorporate all three kinds of goals and objectives. We cannot differentiate just

knowledge ("Know) or knowledge and skills ("Do"); we need all three types of goals and objectives so that we can successfully differentiate instruction.

To help our understanding of the KUD-objectives in the ESL context, let us look at an example set of KUD objectives in Table 2. These are unit goals that an ESL teacher created for a 4th grade Sheltered Science unit on magnets.

Table 2. Sample KUDs: 4th Grade Sheltered Science

"I want students to..."

Know	Understand that ...	Do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> § The seven key concepts of magnets. § How to conduct a science experiment. § Key vocabulary (Content Obligatory): magnet, magnetic field, repel vs. attract, force, north pole vs. south pole. § Key language (Content Obligatory): language used to predict, analyze/ explain and synthesize. § Learning strategies: note taking, using resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Magnets affect us in many ways in our daily lives. § The scientific method involves processes such as observation, prediction, data collection, analysis, drawing conclusions and evaluation. § Good language learners use their background knowledge about a new topic. § Learning grammar forms that relate to prediction, explanation and synthesis allows us to be specific about reporting on our experiment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> § <u>Use</u> key (and expanded) vocabulary and language to communicate about content. § <u>Use</u> identified learning strategies to maximize learning about content.

We would like to make a couple of points here about the items under the categories in the teacher's table. First, goals and objectives that begin with "how to..." (e.g., how to conduct a science experiment) are always "Know"-objectives because "how to..." implies that students are expected to know (and possibly describe and/or explain) how to conduct a science experiment but not actually conduct the experiment. Only when students are asked to actually carry out the skill, e.g., conduct a science experiment, is this objective or goal a "Do"-objective.

Second, as we can see in the table, the “Understand”-objectives are always articulated as a full sentence beginning with “I want students to understand **that...**” This is important because only by writing out a full “that”-clause we can tap into a deep understanding we would like our students to acquire. If we list separate ideas that are not expressed in full clauses, these goals or objectives turn into “Know”-objectives.

Third, as this teacher demonstrates in an effective way, the objectives listed in the table contain both *significant* language AND content objectives. The only way for ESL teachers to assist their students in successful second language acquisition and academic learning in school is to carefully plan and implement lessons, whatever the ESL teaching context, that are focused on teaching and learning substantive language components that are directly embedded in rich academic content that requires the effective use of higher level thinking and learning strategies.

The last and possibly the most important point about quality curriculum and learning goals and objectives that we would like to make is that when differentiating instruction, we do NOT differentiate learning goals. The notion that we shoot for the middle and then differentiate up and down is misinformed. What the philosophy behind Differentiated Instruction advocates is setting high goals and standards for ALL learners. The differentiation comes into play when we provide varying levels of scaffolding to students with varying needs so that they all can work toward the same high goals. This scaffolding might include varied use of materials (differentiating content), classroom activities (differentiating process) or assessment tasks (differentiating product), but all students are working toward the same essential learner outcomes (key components) expressed in the goals.

2. Knowing exactly what our students need: Assessing student readiness, interest and learning profile

In addition to ensuring the richness and meaningfulness of the curriculum, another key principle of Differentiated Instruction is its focus on effective assessment. The same way that we cannot differentiate curriculum that is not well-defined, we cannot differentiate instruction that is not directly based on the careful identification of learner outcomes that correlate with the needs of the learners. Experienced teachers develop good instincts about what is best for their students and make decisions based on these instincts, adjusting these decisions through observation and reflection. Differentiated Instruction offers tools for teachers to “refine” these good instincts (Tomlinson, 2001, p. 45) and maximizes teachers’ confidence in making thoughtful decisions about student learning experiences.

Formative assessment

A key Differentiated Instruction tool used for better understanding student needs is the use of formative assessment. It emphasizes the importance of focusing on understanding and improving student learning instead of merely measuring student learning (Wiggins, 2004). Thus, we should concentrate on designing tasks that provide

us with meaningful data about all aspects of their learning (readiness, interest, and learning profile), and not limit ourselves by solely thinking about effective assessment as the degree of mastery in a final, formal evaluation. It is this notion of meaningful assessment, i.e., collecting meaningful data consistently throughout the learning process that reveals a holistic picture of the learner (including affective variables) that is at the heart of Differentiated Instruction. Formative assessment does not focus on ranking students or comparing them but rather on developing an understanding of students within the context of the students' own backgrounds.

This diagnostic prescriptive mode of teaching identifies the gaps between what students currently know and what they will need to know for a final assessment. This is especially important for ELLs who may not have been exposed to large amounts of a district's curriculum. It includes any or all of the following: pre-assessment activities, ongoing informal assessments, observation, checklists, student reflection and self-assessments, exit slips and collaborative analysis of student work. All of these provide information to the teacher to fine-tune instructional opportunities prior to the final formal summative assessments. The importance of formative assessment lies in the fact that "diagnostic thinking gives teachers information that will help them think about timing, materials, depth of thinking, and methods on the upcoming unit" (Gregory & Kuzmich, 2004, p. 10).

Formative assessment begins with pre-assessment, and occurs on an ongoing basis throughout the unit and ends with a culminating authentic task (summative evaluation) that is used to measure student learning in relation to the carefully drafted learning goals and objectives.

Feedback and guidance

Feedback plays a key role in formative assessment. The feedback received from formative assessment is shared with all stakeholders and used (optimally by all stakeholders) to inform future teaching practice. In essence, assessment becomes a roadmap that drives instruction. Assessment information helps the teacher map next steps for varied learners and the class as a whole. For the student, this feedback is crucial in understanding the desired outcomes (behaviors and knowledge) that are the components of successful learning. In addition, formative assessment and the feedback stemming from it offer opportunities for the learner to self-assess and self-regulate effectively (Wiggins, 2004).

The notion of feedback is part of the act of communication between the instructor and the learner, which plays a crucial role in learning. Communicating feedback effectively to the learner is a special pedagogic skill that needs to be practiced in order to be mastered. This skill is called guidance. Wiggins (2004) emphasizes that the learner needs both feedback and guidance to be able to learn effectively. He describes this important distinction between feedback, guidance and evaluation in the following:

"Feedback is information about what happened, the result or effect of our actions. The environment or other people "feed back" to us the impact of our behavior, be that upshot intended or unintended. Guidance, on the other hand, gives future direction: what should I do, in light of what just happened? And evaluation, finally, judges my overall performance against a standard. Feedback tells me whether I am on course. Guidance tells me the most likely ways to achieve my goal. Evaluation tells me whether I am or have been sufficiently on course to be deemed competent or successful."

Pre-assessment

Pre-assessment takes place in the beginning of the school year, a semester or an instructional unit. It serves as the first step in the formative assessment process. Pre-assessment plays an integral role in successfully differentiating our classroom. First, pre-assessment allows the teacher opportunities to truly understand his or her students, their strengths and weaknesses, interests and backgrounds and the differences between students in these areas. Second, the data gathered from pre-assessments, together with formative and summative assessments, will directly inform the teacher in making meaningful decisions about classroom materials (content), activities (process) and end-of-the unit assessments (product). The key benefit of conducting systematic and meaningful pre-assessments is that they enable the teacher to become more *purposeful* about grouping students during class, in assigning materials and designing classroom activities by using data s/he has gathered about students' strengths and weaknesses in regard to the content to be studied. In the following, we will describe ways that pre-assessment can be carried out to find out students' readiness, interests and learning profiles in the ESL classroom.

Assessing readiness, interest and learning profile

Tomlinson (2001) has identified three characteristics of students that are the basis for our differentiation in the classroom. These three categories represent the factors that make our students different from one another and that should be carefully considered when planning and implementing instruction. In the following, we will take a look at these components, readiness, interest and learning profile, as they relate specifically to the ESL context.

Readiness

Readiness has to do with a student's current level of knowledge, understandings and skills related to a specific unit of study. The defined learning goals and objectives (see Tables 1 and 2) determine what components of readiness have been identified as the areas of focus for a given instructional unit. During the pre-assessment of readiness, the teacher will gain important information about students' varying levels of mastery in the knowledge, understandings and skills related to the content to be studied (i.e., the

set learning goals). This information will enable the teacher to design focused learning experiences for students as well as appropriate methods of scaffolding.

What exactly are we assessing when we assess readiness in the ESL classroom during pre-assessment? Table 3 describes some sample categories that the notion of readiness refers to in the ESL classroom. The main principle is that readiness refers to language and content as well as cognitive processes and learning strategies. Also, in the ESL context, cultural competence is also one of the key readiness categories. Note that each of the items can denote either knowledge-, understanding-, or skill/do-level objectives based on how they are articulated.

Table 3. Sample Components of Readiness in the ESL Classroom

Language	§ Communication: Interpretive, interpersonal and presentational skills
	§ Skills: Reading, writing, listening and speaking skills
	§ Fluency/Accuracy
	§ Vocabulary, Forms, Functions
Academic Content	§ Key understandings of content
	§ Key knowledge of content
	§ Key skills in content area
Learning Strategies [1]	§ General Language Learning Strategies
	§ Aural and Oral Strategies
	§ Reading and Writing Strategies
Cognitive Processes	§ Categories in Equalizer: need for structure; processing pace; concrete vs. abstract; number of factors, etc. (Tomlinson, 2001)
	§ Bloom’s Taxonomy of Cognitive Processes
Social/Cultural competencies	§ Pragmatic knowledge
	§ Register
	§ Cultural conventions
	§ Practices, products

Certainly, none of the factors listed in Table 3 are new to ESL teachers. The contribution that Differentiated Instruction makes is that it encourages us to be systematic about identifying, assessing and teaching the factors involved in readiness as well as make informed decisions about prioritizing instructional content to carefully align students’ readiness in the above categories with the learning experiences that are of *most* benefit to students as they work toward the learning goals and objectives.

Examples of quick ways to conduct pre-assessments of readiness include:

- Language and content area tests (provided by publisher or school, e.g., MAP test)
- Anticipation Guide (true/false statements about content or language)

- Confidence Scale (statements with rankings about how confident students feel about certain skills or content areas)
- Entry Cards/Exit Cards (contain quick prompts to tap into skills and knowledge)
- KWL
- 1-minute papers/Quick-writes
- Graphic Organizers
- Yes/No Cards (students respond with either Yes or No card to teacher's verbal prompts)
- Teacher Observation/Checklist
- 3-2-1 Cards (e.g., three things you know, two questions you have, one thing you'd really like to learn...)
- Journal
- Write 10 facts about...

Interest

In addition to assessing readiness, as part of Differentiated Instruction, we assess student interests. Again, we do this to better match instruction with students, in this case with their interests. Assessing student interests is carried out in a more systematic way, and, importantly, the information received from the assessments is used to designing learning experiences that are relevant to students and perhaps to engage them more fully in learning and thus to increase the chance of reaching their potential.

Table 4 describes sample components related to interest that have an effect on students' engagement in the learning content and tasks in the ESL classroom.

Table 4. Sample Features of Student Interest in the ESL Classroom

In general	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Areas of passion § Interests within home vs. target culture § What are students reading? § What are their activities after school? § What do they like? § What are they interested in? § What are their special talents?
In regard to school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Favorite subject/s § Favorite teacher/s § Favorite school functions (sports, arts, music)
Content area/Topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Interests within a content area, e.g., science, math, social studies, physical education, etc..

ESL	§	Interests within a topic (e.g., eco systems, WW2, etc.)
	§	Interests in language (reading, writing...).
	§	Interests in language use situations (giving a speech, writing a journal entry, etc.)
	§	Favorite books.
	§	Favorite language learning activities.

A great, often unintentional, benefit of assessing student interest is that it sends the learner a message that the teacher is genuinely interested in the learner and his/her interests. Naturally, we cannot incorporate each and every interest of our students into our classroom activities, but strategically including some of them can make a significant difference in learning outcomes. Some of these strategic decisions might involve the following:

- § Integrating the interest area of a reluctant learner.
- § Integrating an interest area that is shared by many learners.
- § Integrating an interest area especially when the concepts and skills to be learned are difficult.
- § Identifying interest areas across student group and clustering students based on these.
- § Building in choice by using interest areas to increase motivation and engagement.

Some quick ways to find out about student interests are the following:

- Interest Surveys (many available on the Internet)
- Teacher Observation/Checklist
- Peer Interviews
- Brainstorm/webs
- Questionnaires (select topics of interest)
- Conversations/dialogue
- Discussions
- Journals
- Provide choices for activities and materials

Learning Profile

In addition to readiness and interests, a third characteristic that makes our students unique is learning profile. Learning profile refers to how students learn the best. Students' learning is affected by a) their preferred learning style and b) their backgrounds. Learning style includes such factors as:

- Visual/auditory, tactile, or kinesthetic
- Analytic/practical/creative
- Multiple intelligences
- Grouping preferences (i.e., individual, small group, or large group)

- Learning environment preferences (i.e., lots of space or a quiet area to work)

In an ESL context, we often focus so hard on students' language learning needs, in other words *what* they need to learn, that we don't pay sufficient attention to their learning styles, the factors related to *how* they learn best.

Student background is an especially important factor in the ESL context. Some of the student issues related to student background that have a significant effect on student learning in the ESL context are the following:

- Cultural Background ("who they are as people beyond ethnic and racial categories")
- Amount and quality of exposure to the English language and mainstream culture outside of schools
- Amount of/Feelings toward home culture vs. school culture
- Affect toward school, language and culture
- Stage of acculturation
- Questions re: identity
- Status of first language
- Experiences with school culture/language
- Features of interaction with peers
- Family factors

Again, it is important that a teacher prioritize when collecting information about student backgrounds. What is it that is most critical for the teacher to know and take into consideration in regard to student background when designing instruction? Some sample background factors that ESL teachers often present thinking about unique student needs:

- A student's lack of exposure to academic English outside of school
- A student's background as limited formal schooling
- A student who assumes the responsibility of tending to younger siblings at home
- An undocumented student
- A student who does not share a language of his/her parents

What can a teacher do upon discovering these, often complex and yet so significant, background factors of his/her students? Our advice in our work with many schools and school districts is to build connections and channels for communication between individuals within a school or district, or with other districts dealing with similar student characteristics or profiles. The connections can be created through Professional Learning Communities within schools/districts, site visits to other schools or districts, contacts with the ELL division of the Department of Education or professional gatherings, such as workshops and conferences.

3. Designing Differentiated Strategies: What do we do with pre-assessment data?

There are several reasons teachers must gather pre-assessment data prior to differentiating instruction. The teacher must be aware of the students' readiness, interests and learning profiles, all of which may either enhance or hinder student learning. Armed with this information the teacher will plan meaningful activities and group students in a variety of ways to capitalize on all students' knowledge, abilities and interests. The key here is for the teacher to be very selective when analyzing pre-assessment data; the teacher's task is to identify students' strengths and their most significant learning blocks and differentiate instruction by supporting students' in their greatest weaknesses and drawing from their biggest areas of strength. Upon identifying the most critical characteristics of students, the teacher will design a learning environment that will maximize student learning by increasing time for meaningful and relevant time on task.

What are the best instructional strategies to use in the Differentiated Instruction classroom? There's nothing inherently good or bad about instructional strategies. They are in essence the "buckets" teachers can use to deliver content (materials), process (activities) or products (assessments). Yet some "buckets" are better suited to achieving one type of goal more than another. The "buckets" can be used artfully or clumsily as part of well-conceived or poorly conceived lesson plans and delivery. In addition, virtually all "buckets" can be used in ways that ignore student learning differences, or they can become part of a larger system that appropriately responds to these differences (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 61). In the following, we will describe strategies that one often sees utilized in a classroom where the teacher is successfully differentiating instruction for his/her students. Again, we want to emphasize that one should begin implementing Differentiated Instruction with small, manageable and consistently applied steps.

Classroom Routines

Classroom routines are essential in a differentiated classroom because multiple transitions can be confusing or distracting particularly for ELLs. Routines help both the teacher and student focus as well as understand mutual expectations and responsibilities. Classroom instruction will often begin with large group instruction that focuses on the day's goals as well as the essential learner outcomes for the unit of instruction. There will usually be time for small group as well as paired or individual practice. Learners who satisfactorily complete tasks may be able to spend time on anchor activities that might include ongoing assignments or long range projects of interest to the student that can be worked on independently throughout a unit, grading period or longer and that assist students in moving independently from one assignment to another without needing teacher direction. Important routines will include:

- § Classroom agreements
- § Classroom cues
- § Home base seating
- § Moving into groups

- § Materials distribution and turn in
- § Anchor activities
- § Opening activities
- § Exit activities

Establishing classroom routines allows the teacher time to gather formative assessment data, for example during an opening activity (questions about studied material) or at end of the lesson, through an exit activity (students need to answer a question or do task as their ticket out the door). In addition, classroom routines build in predictability and structure, which are essential in creating a constructive Differentiated Instruction environment. Even though Differentiated Instruction involves varied tasks and multiple group formats, it is NEVER a chaotic or unorganized setting. It is exactly due to the multiple flexible variables of the Differentiated Instruction context that the classroom routines become so crucial.

Furthermore, Differentiated Instruction is all about independent learners. By setting clear classroom routines, we can facilitate students' independent working habits and assist them in assuming an increasing share of responsibility for their own learning.

Flexible Grouping

A classroom where differentiated instruction is being implemented may, at first glance, appear to be noisy and very active. However, closer observation will reveal a well-planned orchestration of instruction that flows meaningfully from one activity to the next. There will be cycles of large group, small group, paired and individual tasks and learning opportunities. This will fit within the framework of routines and expectations that guide the entire classroom.

A differentiated classroom is marked by a repeated rhythm of whole-class preparation, review, and sharing, followed by opportunity for individual or small-group exploration, sense-making, extension, and production (Tomlinson, 2001, p. 6).

As we pointed out earlier, Differentiated Instruction does not attempt to address each student's every need during every single class period. Instead, it is the aim that through flexible grouping we can meet the needs of many learners and over time will teach to students' strengths as well as assist students in performing better in their areas of weakness. The basis for grouping varies between responding to student readiness, interest, or learning style. Sometimes the groups are teacher-selected and heterogeneous or homogeneous, based on readiness level or interest. Sometimes students select their own work groups; sometimes they are randomly assigned.

A useful tool for making purposeful decisions about how to group students is TAPS, an acronym used to refer to four different options for groupings: Total group (T), alone (A), in partners (P), and in small groups (S). Table 5 illustrates the features of each of these groupings as well as provides suggestions for situations that lend themselves especially appropriately for utilizing each.

Table 5. TAPS Grouping Options and their Uses (Modified from Gregory & Kuzmich 2004, p. 125)

GROUPING STRATEGY	Works well for these strategies
TOTAL Whole class instruction	Presenting new information Pre-assessment Modeling new skills Videos, guest speakers, presentations, demonstrations
ALONE Students work on a variety of tasks based on readiness or interest	Pre-assessment Self assessment Reflection Journaling Projects/independent study Individual reading Note taking; summarizing; study skills Practice and mastery of skills
PAIRED Students work with a partner based on based on task or interest	Brainstorming Think, pair, share Checking for understanding; processing of information Checking homework or daily work Peer editing; peer evaluation Researching Planning Practice and mastery of skills
SMALL GROUPS Homogeneous for skill development-based on readiness	Practice and mastery of skills Re-teaching (with teacher while other classmates practice skills) Reading partners
SMALL GROUPS Heterogeneous for cooperative groups based on task or interest	Brainstorming Problem solving Interest centers Cooperative learning assignments Group investigation

In a differentiated classroom, students belong to more than one instructional group during a unit, and these groups will change over time based on informal assessment and learner needs. It is this latter point that is of utmost importance in Differentiated Instruction; namely, it is the fact that membership in a group remains flexible. This distinguishes flexible groups based on readiness from ability groups that are less responsive to ever-changing student needs. A true flexible group responds to a wide

range of learner characteristics, related to readiness, interest and learning profile and allows ongoing adjustments to group assignments based on formative assessment.

A question we often get from teachers is whether or not we should assign students to homogeneous groups. Frequently ESL teachers try to group students with similar needs together. While this is important for some instructional tasks, it is neither practical nor desirable for all instruction. Using cooperative learning groups where tasks, such as a jigsaw activity, are differentiated by complexity and quantity (categories of readiness), all students will engage in meaningful learning as well as contribute to the success of the group. When students read different materials, each of them is able to provide information that is essential to the overall group understanding. A cooperative learning task is the optimal tool for making use of the unique backgrounds of students, beyond readiness:

Certainly it's easier to put students achieving at an advanced level in the same cooperative group and give them more challenging material. With homogeneity, however, we lose the potential to harness students' diverse intelligences and perspectives to create a synergistic learning experience where the sum is greater than any of its parts (Schneidewind & Davidson, 2000, p. 24).

A wonderful classroom routine regarding grouping that saves the teacher a great deal of time is using pre-assigned standing groups. These are groups that have previously determined membership and that serve various functions. The teacher simply directs the students to form one of these types of groups based on the nature of the task; some of the groups are mixed ability, some designed for generating ideas, others are mini groups for meeting with the teacher. The key to the usefulness of these groups lies in the fact that transitioning into groups will take very little time and that the consistency of the group members has been planned ahead of time to be optimal for the nature of the task. Table 6 describes some of the possible pre-assigned standing group options.

Table 6. Types of Pre-assigned Standing Groups (Adapted from Tomlinson, 2003)

Text Teams

Similar readiness
Reading pairs

Teacher talkers

Groups of 5-7 with similar learning needs with whom the teacher will meet to extend and support growth

Peer Partners

Student selected
Groups of 3 or 4

Think tanks

Mixed Readiness
Idea Generator
Groups of 4 or 5

Dip sticks

Groups of six with varied profiles used by teacher to do "dip stick", cross-section checks of progress, understanding

Synthesis squads

Sets of 4 with visual, performance, writing, metaphorical (etc., based on learning profile) preferences

Another example of a pre-assigned group is clock groups where students switch groups at regular intervals to serve as members of groups with varying functions and consistencies. For example, at ten o'clock a student might be part of a group assigned by interest or strength and working in pairs. Then at eleven o'clock this student might be working in a mixed ability quad and so on.

Tiered Activities

We know from brain research that learning occurs when students receive challenging but achievable goals (Caine & Caine, 1994). Also in the context of ESL, we know that students need comprehensible input, which is language input/material that is one level higher than the learners' current level of proficiency (Krashen, 1981). Tiered activities enable the teacher to create tasks that target students' varying levels of readiness and thus allow for the appropriate level of challenge for the learners.

The process of creating tiered activities entails creating assignments that target various components of readiness (see sample components in Table 3) at various levels of difficulty. For example, the ESL teacher who created the 4th grade Sheltered Science unit, designed tiered activities using Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive skills as the basis for differentiating for readiness (Table 7). In this case, the tasks vary in the degree of difficulty of thinking skills as well as by the complexity of the language load. These tasks address the variability in students' knowledge, understandings and skills related to the unit (see the unit goals targeting these competencies in Table 2).

Table 7. 4th Grade Sheltered Science Unit: Tiered Activities

Activities Based on Readiness

1. (Application) Construct a graph or chart using the data you've collected from these experiments.
2. (Analysis) Evaluate the relevancy of data. [Are you using a broad range of objects? Are the objects affected by something (plastic coating, wood, e.g.)?]
3. (Synthesis)
 - a. Propose a plan for a new experiment using magnets.
 - b. Conduct the experiment and record the data.
 - c. Formulate a new scheme for classifying objects affected by magnets.
 - d. Solve a common everyday problem by using the knowledge you have learned about magnets.
4. (Evaluation) Judge the logical consistency of the results of the experiments. Based on this information, what do you expect to happen with future experiments?

Flexibility is again the key in designing and implementing meaningful tiered assignments. By varying the focus of the task and the composition of groups, students

will be less likely to focus on who is in what group or working on which task at which level of difficulty. When *all* students work on meaningful tasks, students are less likely to complain about what other students are doing. Thus, it is important that the most basic-level task is as engaging and interesting as higher-level tasks. Table 8 illustrates the use of a combination of tasks that utilizes flexible grouping.

Table 8. 4th Grade Sheltered Instruction Unit: Flexible Grouping and Tiered Assignment

Task I: Learning Centers (individual, pairs, or small groups)

Four experiments:

- experiment 1: Floating magnets on pencil
- experiment 2: Suspended paperclip
- experiment 3: Tray of objects
- experiment 4: Marbles in water

Class Extension Activity (Tiered Assignment)

- **level 1:** pictures of nine objects in the classroom; put a check on the line by the objects that stick to a magnet.
- **level 2:** same as above, plus pick four of the objects above to write four complete sentences. e.g. A metal door handle sticks to the magnet. A pencil does not stick to the magnet.
- **level 3:** write your predictions first before using your magnet on the nine objects; do the same as #2; draw a conclusion about your results

The nature of the activities you plan for students should reflect the amount of scaffolding they need to understand and complete a task. Students whose level of language and/or whose readiness is at a beginning level will need more concrete activities to support their learning. A guiding principal of Differentiated Instruction is "The Equalizer" which is described in detail on pages 120-124 in Tomlinson's (1999) work *The Differentiated Classroom*. She likens the planning process to the buttons on a stereo which would not provide a quality sound if every button was set to its full capacity. When several of the "buttons" are set higher, others should be adjusted lower.

Choices

One of the most effective strategies in the differentiated classroom is the use of choices. Giving students choices about materials, activities and assessments gives students a sense of empowerment and naturally increases students' motivation and engagement. Choices support differentiation in that they enable students to make selections about what mode to use for a task (e.g., visual, kinesthetic, or auditory) or what multiple intelligence preference to utilize in a given activity (e.g., musical, linguistic, etc.). One strategy that allows the learner choices about tasks, assessments or materials is the

learning menu. This is a simple list of “dishes” that students select from, including appetizers and desserts. The teacher can set certain conditions for picking items off the menu, such as “you need to have more than one item from the main dishes and only one of the desserts.”

Students love having choices. Table 9 illustrates the effect of choices on learning processes, based on brain research.

Table 9. Choices in Learning (Modified from Jensen, 1998)

Choices Content, process, product Use of groups, rich resources Attention to affect	Vs.	Required No student choice Restricted resources Assigned work
Relevant Meaningful Connected to learner Deep understanding	Vs.	Irrelevant Impersonal Out of context Only to pass a test
Engaging Emotional Energetic Hands on Learner engagement	Vs.	Passive Low interaction External Lecture seatwork
Increased intrinsic Motivation		Increased apathy and resentment

Conclusion

It is important to remember that Differentiated Instruction is foremost a philosophy and not merely a collection of instructional tools. Without focusing on creating a supportive learning environment and truly believing in the potential of all of one’s students, little improvement can be made. The aim of this paper was to share the main principles of Differentiated Instruction, as they relate to the ESL classroom and to equip the readers with several classroom strategies that will hopefully prove useful in implementing Differentiated Instruction in the classroom.

Implementing Differentiated Instruction can seem overwhelming at first, which is why it is important to “think big but begin small.” Rather than try to revamp an entire curriculum, focus on one unit that has proven troublesome to students and that lends

itself to a variety of teaching strategies. Small successes will provide the encouragement to continue to provide your students with a variety of learning options. Most teachers already have the knowledge base for successful differentiation but have simply lacked a clear focus of how and where to begin. By starting with one area of your curriculum, your knowledge, confidence and repertoire of skills will grow over time and will be easily transferred to other curricular areas.

When there is a clear and meaningful focus for instruction, when the teacher is well aware of students' strengths and weaknesses, and subsequently when students are given the right tools for learning, in the form of interesting materials and tasks that support their preferred learning styles, learning turns into magic. Instead of struggling and being unmotivated, students turn into self-efficacious learners unleashing their natural quest for discovering and exploration.

REFERENCES

Boyd-Batstone, P. (2006). *Differentiated early literacy for English language learners: Practical strategies*. Boston, MA: Pearson, Allyn and Bacon.

Caine, R. and N. Caine (1994). *Making connections: Teaching and the human brain*. Somerset, NJ: Addison Wesley.

Echevarria, J., Voft, M. E., & Short, D. (2007). *Making Content Comprehensible for English Learners: The SIOP[®] Model* (3rd Ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson, Allyn and Bacon.

Gregory, G. & Kuzmich, L. (2004). *Data driven differentiation in the Standards-based classroom*. Corwin Press.

Hoffman, P., & Dahlman, A. (2007). Making decisions about ESL curriculum. *MinneWITESOL Journal*, 24.

Jensen, E. (1998). *Teaching with the Brain in Mind*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development.

Krashen, S. (1981). *Second language acquisition and second language learning*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Met, M. (1994). "Teaching Content Through a Second Language." In Genesee, F. (ed.) *Educating Second Language Children: The Whole Child, the Whole Curriculum, the Whole Community*. Cambridge University Press; pp. 159-167.

Scherer, M. (2006). Celebrate strengths, nurture affinities: A conversation with Mel

Levine. *Educational Leadership*, 64(1), 8-15.

Schneidewind, N. & Davidson, E. (2000). Differentiating cooperative learning. *Educational Leadership*, 58(1), 24-27.

Snow, M. (Ed.) (2000). *Implementing the ESL standards for pre-K-12 students through teacher education*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL.

Tomlinson, C. (2003). *Fulfilling the promise of the differentiated classroom: Strategies and tools for responsive teaching*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Tomlinson, C. (2001). *How to differentiate instruction in mixed-ability classrooms*. 2nd ed. Alexandria, VA. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Tomlinson, C. (1999). *The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, Merrill, Prentice-Hall.

Wiggins, G. & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design, 2nd ed.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Wiggins, G. (2004). Assessment as feedback. Retrieved on January 15, 2008 online at <http://www.newhorizons.org/strategies/assess/wiggins.htm>.

MinneWITESOL Journal www.minnewitesoljournal.org Volume 25, 2008

[1] Full description of categories available at (http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Learning_Support/English_Language_Learners/Standards/index.html)

**TEACHING CONTENT TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS STRATEGIES
FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL SUCCESS BY JODY REISS**

Reiss, Jodi (2005). *Teaching Content to English Language Learners: Strategies for Secondary School Success*. White Plains: Pearson Education. \$29.99

**Reviewed by
Kathryn Huebsch**

As the author, Jodi Reiss, indicates in her preface, this book was written with secondary teachers in mind. Unlike other books written about teaching content to English Language Learners, Reiss acknowledges and understands that content-area teachers are experts in their own fields and often lack training on how to teach their content areas to students with limited language proficiency. She promises that "Its purpose is to provide you with practical, easy-to-incorporate ideas that fit right in with the techniques and activities you currently use in your classrooms" (viii), a promise she does an admirable job of fulfilling.

Reiss' user-friendly book begins with a Contents Page that is clearly organized. The book is broken down in a way that content area teachers will find especially useful and applicable to their practices. In particular, Part II: "Strategies for Instruction" and Part III: "Strategies for Assessment," appeal to teachers struggling to address the needs of their ELLs in a mainstream classroom.

The author's introduction to English Language Learners is basic and informative and refrains from using a lot of technical jargon. Reiss puts teachers of social studies, math and science at ease by acknowledging that ELLs in those subjects are learning a new language in addition to learning the content of the course as opposed to the experience of English teachers whose content *is* the language. The strategies that she offers are almost all easily incorporated into the classroom. Ways to modify the curriculum including the use of graphic organizers, matrices and Venn Diagrams are introduced and then built upon by Reiss as ways with which to teach the subject while building language. By encouraging teachers to become proficient at the basic level of modification, she encourages the reader to attempt more complicated strategies of lesson adaptation.

Reiss' suggestions for increasing success on both classroom and high-stakes tests take on a special importance in today's world of state and federally mandated assessments. She offers strategies to make school tests more authentic and valid for ELLs. She also offers suggestions for

teaching students strategies that will aid their performance on high-stakes tests.

Although the strategies offered by Reiss are extremely helpful and an asset to any teacher who takes the time to read the book, the author does not adequately address how to teach immigrant students who have little or no formal schooling. These students need special attention and assistance in order to function in a school environment. The school skills that this group of students often lacks are skills that secondary teachers frequently do not know how to teach, let alone incorporate into a subject-specific classroom.

Overall, the strategies offered by Jodi Reiss in *Teaching Content to English Language Learners: Strategies for Secondary School Success* can help all students, not just English Language Learners. Indeed, her strategies for differentiation, textbooks adaptations and suggestions for assessments are great adaptations for teachers in the mainstream classroom. Furthermore, the wealth of information that ESL teachers have about the learning needs of their students is clearly evident in this book. Reiss' book would be a great resource to classrooms teachers; it is a strong first step in helping mainstream teachers to better meet the needs of their English Language Learners.

REVIEWER

Kathryn Huebsch has been a secondary social studies teacher for six years. She is currently working on a Master's in Education with a special interest in learning more about English as a Second Language.

MinneWITESOL Journal
2008

www.minnewitesoljournal.org

Volume 25,