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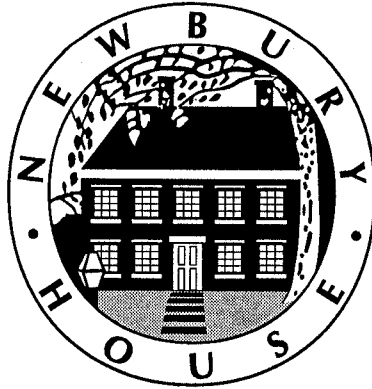
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**TESOL** is an international professional organization for those concerned with the teaching of English as a second or foreign language and of standard English as a second dialect. TESOL's mission is to strengthen the effective teaching and learning of English around the world while respecting individuals' language rights.

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## ***Editor's Note***

■ With this Editor's Note, I announce several transitions. TESOL's Executive Board has appointed current Associate Editor Sandra McKay to a 3-year term as Editor of the *TESOL Quarterly* beginning with the Summer 1994 issue. I will introduce Sandy at greater length in the next issue. Effective November 1, 1993, all article-length manuscripts should be sent directly to her at the following address:

Sandra McKay  
Department of English  
San Francisco State University  
1600 Holloway Avenue  
San Francisco, CA 94132

The editorship of the Reviews and Book Notices sections of the *Quarterly* will also be moving to San Francisco State University. I thank Heidi Riggensch of the University of Washington for her years of fine service as Review Editor. H. Douglas Brown has accepted Sandra McKay's invitation to serve as Heidi Riggensch's successor. All inquiries and submissions regarding these sections should now be sent to his address, listed in the Information to Contributors.

Finally, Sandra McKay has invited Bonny Norton Peirce of the University of the Witwatersrand and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education to replace her as Editor of the Teaching Issues section. Readers wishing to submit topic suggestions and/or make known their availability as contributors should write directly to Bonny Peirce at the address listed in the Information to Contributors.

This issue of the *TESOL Quarterly* comprises a special-topic treatment of the complex area of adult literacies ably guest edited by Gail Weinstein-Shr. The issue is designed to present international perspectives and diverse voices. I have enjoyed working closely with Gail, Sandra McKay, and the authors on this important topic. Readers will find a general description

## ***In this Issue***

■ Articles in this issue are grouped with respect to three themes: (a) language policies, language use; (b) programs and practices; and (c) teachers, learners and directions for the future. For each theme, there are two articles followed by a discussion intended to provide a framework for reflection and to ensure a multiplicity of voices.

The first section, Language Policies, Language Use, includes a Canadian perspective, a U.S. perspective, and a discussion that looks at language policies in historical context.

- Cecil Klassen and Barbara Burnaby combine qualitative with quantitative approaches to examine the language and literacy needs of immigrants to Canada. Description of a Toronto-based case study conducted by Klassen portrays a group of Latin American adults and their uses of English and Spanish in their daily lives. The larger scale view of available statistics illustrates what is known and what needs to be known to meet the needs of this and similar groups.
- Sandra McKay and Gail Weinstein-Shr also explore the macrocontext for language and immigration policy on a national level in contrast to the microlevel consequences for individuals. Our discussion of language and literacy in the U.S. considers the role of literacy as a gatekeeper in immigration history as well as the role of language and literacy in intergenerational relationships in immigrant and refugee families. We argue for policies that strengthen families and communities by supporting both native and second language literacy resources.
- Terrence Wiley discusses Klassen and Burnaby as well as McKay and Weinstein-Shr, using the material they present to examine literacy policies and practices in what he calls a historical-structural approach. Wiley suggests being vigilant regarding policies which reflect “assimilationist” remedies associated with language and culture loss. He warns against policies that “see English literacy as the sole remedy for economic and social inequities.”

Programs and Practices draws on the experiences of scholars in the U. S., South Africa, and Canada as they report what they have observed as well as what they themselves have experienced as teachers and learners.

- Heide Wrigley draws on her experience during the Aguirre International study, in which she traveled across the U.S. to look at promising practices in adult ESL programs. Wrigley grapples with definitions of literacy and proposes a typology of orientations to ESL teaching which may help readers examine the philosophies of their own programs. Wrigley recognizes circumstances that encourage or constrain particular orientations and advocates a “dynamic framework that allows for negotiation and discussion among the various stakeholders” in a field that serves diverse learners under changing circumstances.
- Caroline Kerfoot brings readers to Mowbray, South Africa, where the struggles against apartheid and its vestiges give special poignancy to the work of the literacy organization USWE (Use, Speak and Write English). Kerfoot describes the attempts of program staff to design and implement a participatory curriculum, illustrating the contradictions inherent in preparing local materials for use on a wider scale. While this article looks at one program’s dilemmas and decisions, it also points out the degree to which our work is both constrained and given meaning by the social and political context within which we operate.
- Jill Bell discusses the work of Wrigley and Kerfoot while drawing on her own experiences as a learner of Chinese in Canada. Bell examines the role of the teacher as the link between programs and learners, arguing that many practices are not consciously selected but rather are shaped by cultural background and experiences with language and literacy. Bell suggests that ESL teachers can derive enormous benefits from becoming “reflective practitioners” aware of our practices.

Teachers, Learners, and Directions for the Future looks at issues raised by teacher education; the final discussion provides an overview of these and the previous articles.

- Jerri Willett and Mary Jeannot describe an ESL teacher preparation class at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. They focus on the role of facilitator, a position filled by students themselves in their small-group work. Through examination of this role, Willett and Jeannot illustrate the resistance of graduate student learners to taking a critical stance within their own education. They explore, in particular, the “language of care” and the “language of critique” as discourses crucial to any community that wishes to challenge the existing order. Willett and Jeannot end with provocative questions inviting comparison of the experiences of these graduate students with those of adult ESL literacy learners.
- JoAnn Crandall’s article describes the adverse working conditions in which ESL professionals must operate as a backdrop to examining possibilities for professionalization and professional development.



Crandall suggests that professionalism in adult ESL literacy is high: Teachers who are underpaid, underemployed, and offered little financial incentive nonetheless manage to participate in professional development activities. Crandall argues that while there is a need for professionalization through credentialing or certification, it will also be important to provide alternative routes of access to the profession for community members or others with special background and knowledge that is valuable in serving adult ESL learners.

- My overview discussion draws on all of the articles and discussions in this issue to reflect on current and future directions in adult ESL literacy. I look at three emerging themes in adult ESL work: the shift in focus from individuals and institutions to families and communities, the role of traditional knowledge in constructing new knowledge, and the power of collaboration at all levels. I use these themes to explore the contexts for adult ESL literacy work in the arenas of research, teaching/learning, and program planning/policy. The discussion concludes with an invitation, suggesting that the time has come for all of us to create, through dialogue, a collective vision such that the experiences and insights of teachers and learners become part of our advocacy for sensible policy.

Also in this issue:

- profiles: In place of Brief Reports and Summaries, three brief profiles focus on adult ESL literacy learners, literacy programs, and teacher education programs: Marilyn Gillespie examines the perspectives of learners as they become writers of English; Gloria Guth draws on the Aguirre International study to look at models of adult ESL literacy programs; Dennis Terdy examines models for adult ESL teacher preparation using examples from the U.S.
- Wolves in Sheep's Clothing: In place of The Forum, distinguished colleagues explore the meanings of fashionable terms whose meanings are contested. The following scholars and terms are included: *participatory* (Elsa Auerbach); *critical thinking* (Sarah Benesch); *whole language* (Carole Edelsky); *family literacy* (Denny Taylor); *workplace literacy* (Judith Alamprese); *competency-based education* (Lynn Savage); *alternative assessment* (Lenore Balliro).
- Review Article: Mary McGroarty and Suzanne Scott look at the roles of learners reflected in current textbooks. They specify promising directions for the future.
- Book Notices: Professional books recommended for our own professional development are the focus of this issue's Book Notices section, for which Loren McGrail has been the guest editor.

It has been a pleasure working on this volume. I am grateful to Sandra Silberstein and my colleagues on the Editorial Advisory Board of the *TESOL Quarterly* for this opportunity.

Gail Weinstein-Shr, Guest Editor

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## ***“Those Who Know”: Views on Literacy Among Adult Immigrants in Canada***

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**CECIL KLASSEN**

*Douglas College*

**BARBARA BURNABY**

*The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education*

Two approaches (quantitative and qualitative) are used to explore the topic of Canadian adult immigrants who are new users of English and who have little literacy experience. First, available statistics from a number of sources are used to provide an overview of this group. Second, a Toronto-based case study is used as an example of the kind of qualitative study which is needed for a richer understanding of the issue at hand. The study explores the everyday uses that a group of Latin American adults have for reading and writing. The results suggest that literacy needs exist in both Spanish and English. The article concludes by drawing attention to the contradiction, on the one hand, of government commitments to immigration, multiculturalism, and training and, on the other hand, of the lack of appropriate services provided for the special needs of immigrants.

**I**n Canada, as elsewhere, the topic of literacy among adult immigrants tends to generate more questions than answers. Part of the difficulty is the wide range of situations which are classified as literacy related, from college-level literacy problems at one end of the spectrum to basic-level literacy at the other end. The population we will primarily be referring to here are those individuals who have significant difficulties with reading and writing even at a basic level in English and, as is often but not always the case, in their first languages as well.

Much work remains to be done both to describe literacy issues among adult immigrants and to propose the kinds of services that are appropriate to meet their needs. This discussion, therefore, does not presume to provide a comprehensive overview of the topic for the Canadian context. Rather, we will explore some of the issues through two approaches. First, we will look at what available statistics suggest about larger, national trends related to literacy among adult immigrants in

Canada and to point out the limitations of such data. Then, through a case study, we will explore the place of both L 1 and English literacy in the lives of one specific group of learners. (Both English and French are official languages in Canada. However, in this paper, we will refer primarily to the situations of immigrants who live in anglophone parts of Canada.) This case study is provided as an example of the many group-specific studies that we believe are needed if we are to significantly improve our understanding of the complexity and variety of literacy-related needs exhibited by adult immigrants.

## WHAT THE NUMBERS SUGGEST

Large-scale statistical information gathering has many associated problems. One problem has to do with defining literacy and language proficiency (Bell, 1991; Guthrie & Kirsch, 1987) and its political dimensions (Darville, 1989; Hautecoeur, 1989; Olson, 1988). Also, most national statistical data is gathered by the government, presumably for its own purposes and those of its obvious clients. Finally, large-scale information gathering is limited to factors that are easily identifiable and quantifiable, such as years of schooling and self-reports of language proficiency. With these limitations in mind, we provide an overview of what available national statistics suggest in relation to adults who speak very little of either official language and who have little schooling experience. Below we will consider data on immigrants in relation to proficiency in (a) official languages and (b) literacy, first separately and then combined. (We note that the work of Borjas, 1990, suggests that the Canadian experience in this regard has close parallels to those of the U.S. and Australia. In citing Borjas, we appreciate his data but do not align ourselves with his conclusions.)

Census material is a source of data that provides a certain amount of language- and education-related information which offers the possibility for correlations on a range of personal characteristics between immigrants and other Canadian residents. According to the 1986 census (the most recent census from which extensive information is available), of the Canadian adult population aged 15 or older, almost 20% (or 3,719,055 people) were born outside of Canada. When discussing this population, we will use the term *immigrants* to comprise legal and practical distinctions made between various legal entrance categories under which citizens of other countries are admitted to Canada. Five

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<sup>1</sup>Employment and Immigration Canada reports that in 1991, the 12 largest groups of immigrants, by countries of last permanent residence, in descending order were Hong Kong, Poland, China, India, the Philippines, Lebanon, Vietnam, the U. K., El Salvador, Sri Lanka, the U. S., and Portugal.

percent of all immigrants responding to the census (regardless of how long they had lived in Canada) reported speaking neither official language (Pendakur, 1989). From 1971 to 1986, census figures indicate that the numbers of recent immigrants (those who had immigrated within 29 months of the census date) who reported that they could not speak either official language increased from 16% of all recent immigrants in 1971 to 21% in 1986 (Employment and Immigration Canada, 1992). Such figures indicate that in the neighborhood of 5% of all immigrants and 20% of recent arrivals report not speaking either official language, the latter percentage growing.

According to available census figures, country of origin, age, gender, unskilled and unprotected labour, and poverty emerge as important factors in relation to those who speak neither official language. Considering ethnicity as a factor in the 1981 census figures, Beaujot, Basavarajappa, and Verma (1988) indicate that immigrants who were born in southern Europe, Southeast Asia, and East Asia were somewhat more likely than other groups to speak neither official language. In terms of age, Pendakur's (1992) study of the 1986 census indicates that immigrants reporting that they spoke neither official language were older than the general population with about 35% over the age of 65 and only about 4% between the ages of 15 and 24. However, among those who immigrated between 1981 and 1986 (the more recent arrivals), the age spread was much more evenly distributed than was the case for those who had arrived earlier. Unemployment tends to be another characteristic of this group. Pendakur (1992) explains that "half the males [not proficient in either official language] and almost three quarters of the females did not participate in the labour market" (p. 163). In 1986, the average total income of immigrants who arrived between 1978 and 1986 and who did not speak an official language was about one third of the national average. Compared to both those who had arrived earlier and those who were able to speak an official language, their average income was the lowest (Employment and Immigration, 1992). With respect to gender and employment in the no-official-language group, Pendakur (1992) says:

With females comprising two thirds of this group, the gender split is extreme, yet the gender split for those active in the labour market is almost equal. Further, those who do work tend to be concentrated in very specific occupational niches. For example . . . one half of working females unable to speak an official language are employed in the manufacturing sector, and over a quarter are concentrated in the needle trades. The jobs in these manufacturing niches are generally non-unionized, poorly paid and offer few benefits while the industries themselves are considered "sunset" industries because they are in decline. Males within this group are somewhat more evenly distributed across the job market, nevertheless, almost one fifth

work in construction trades and about a quarter work in service industries.  
(p. 160)

The figures given above provide a sense of the size and general characteristics of the population that speaks neither official language. What can be said about expected patterns for their learning English or French? Cumming (1991) cites academic studies which indicate that: (a) under the best conditions, it takes people from 2 to 7 years to develop fluency in second language skills, depending on the target level they aspire to; and (b) before seeking language training, immigrants, particularly women, may take from 3 to 10 years to establish themselves in other ways in Canada. Indeed, as Pendakur (1992) points out, a number apparently never learn an official language:

Roughly half of the immigrants unable to speak English or French [according to the 1986 census] arrived in Canada prior to 1980; almost one third arrived prior to 1970 . . . . Thus, it appears that *a large proportion of the no "official language" . . . speaking population has learned to survive without a knowledge of English or French* [italics added]. (p. 161)

Setting aside for the moment the question of official language proficiency, we turn to the matter of literacy levels among immigrants. The most accessible (albeit limited) operational definition for literacy is the number of years of schooling completed.<sup>2</sup> Census data about levels of schooling indicate that, although the educational levels of immigrants as a group are slightly higher overall compared to the levels of education attained by the Canadian-born, there is a much more pronounced gap in the immigrant in contrast to the Canadian-born population between the highly educated and the least educated. Employment and Immigration Canada (1992) statistics show that immigrants with lower levels of education are found in much greater proportions in certain categories, such as in family and refugee categories. Categories include family, assisted relative, refugee and designated (similar to refugee), business and self-employed, retired, and other independents. Beaujot et al. (1988) suggest that differences in requirements for different immigration categories (e.g., prospective business and self-employed immigrants are screened much more strongly than are family category immigrants for characteristics such as education and language proficiency) can explain some of the variance among levels of education and countries of origin of immigrants.

In addition, the numbers of recently arrived immigrants with little experience of schooling seem to have increased since 1971 while educa-

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<sup>2</sup>As an indication of the value of using numbers of years of education completed as a proxy for literacy skill, the Survey of Language Skills Used in Daily Activities (LSUDA) findings showed a strong and positive relationship between literacy performance and schooling. However, the relationship was not perfect. (Statistics Canada 1991)

tional levels for the Canadian-born have risen.<sup>3</sup> According to the 1981 census, compared with their Canadian-born counterparts, slightly more immigrant men and considerably more immigrant women had only elementary education. In sum, these figures suggest that the proportion of people with few years of schooling is greater among immigrants in Canada, and especially among immigrant women, than among the Canadian-born, and that the gap is widening.

Another statistical measure which provides some useful but rough information about literacy skill levels among immigrants is the Survey of Language Skills Used in Daily Activities (LSUDA) (Statistics Canada, 1991). LSUDA was a survey of functional (rather than advanced or academic) adult literacy proficiency conducted in 1989 (Statistics Canada, 1991). The survey consisted of the administration of a test of functional literacy (in English or French, depending on the location) to a sample of 9,455 adults.<sup>4</sup> Thus, unlike the census data reported above, it represents data on performance rather than self-reporting of proficiency. The sample included 18% immigrants, many of whose L1s were neither English nor French. It is revealing that immigrant participants were almost five times more likely than the Canadian-born to be represented at the lowest level of literacy (Level 1) and were also significantly less likely to be represented at the highest level (Level 4). Among the immigrants, those who immigrated between 1980 and 1989 scored lower than those who had arrived earlier (pp. 31–34). Boyd's (1991) analysis of these data indicates that, while gender differences among Canadian-born participants' scores were minimal: "Nearly one-third (32%) of foreign-born women have extreme difficulty dealing with printed materials or can use printed words only for limited purposes . . . compared to over one-fifth (24%) of foreign-born men and approximately one-tenth Canadian-born men and women" (p. 86). Even when only those participants who had completed secondary school were compared, gender differences persisted between immigrant men and women but not between Canadian-born men and women (p. 87).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>On the 1971 census, the numbers of immigrants with less than a Grade 5 education who had been in Canada for 29 months or less and the numbers of Canadian-born with less than Grade 5 were almost the same, at just less than 6%. However, by 1986, the recent immigrant group with less than Grade 5 had risen to 7.4%, while that of the Canadian-born had fallen to 2.5% (Employment and Immigration Canada, 1992).

<sup>4</sup>Because this test was conducted in English and French only, 104 potential participants who spoke neither language well enough to be tested were excluded. Because this group would likely have contained people who are the primary focus of this paper, an L1 component to the survey would have yielded pertinent information for our purposes here.

<sup>5</sup>For a more detailed analysis of the LSUDA data, see Jones (1992). Pendakur (1992) finds similar patterns in the census data: When the separate measures of language proficiency and levels of schooling are combined, 72.2% of the men and 81.5% of the women immigrants who reported that they spoke neither English nor French had fewer than 9 years of

In sum, the rough picture that emerges from these available statistics is that the adult ESL literacy population tends to include more women than men, they tend to be older, and to be outside of the labour force or employed in marginal sectors of the economy. The difference in level of education attained is growing in comparison to that of the Canadian-born population.

## THE NEED FOR QUALITATIVE STUDY

Given the limitations (both practical and political) on the gathering of national-level statistics, Statistics Canada will not likely gather data on additional factors that would shed new light on the adult immigrant population in relation to ESL and L1 literacy. More important, however, is that statistics show only such factors as the size of the population, its relationship to other factors, and trends over time. They say very little about the realities and the needs of the individuals themselves, especially for those who do not fit the profile above, for example, men of working age who are reasonably proficient in oral English but not in written English. The numbers are silent on why individuals have or have not learned English, the personal experience of barriers, and the individual agendas which affect a range of issues related to effective participation in education, employment, and other areas of everyday life.

Qualitative approaches have increasingly been employed to explore these more personal and experiential aspects of language and language learning. Researchers from a variety of the social sciences have focused on the social context of literacy (e.g., Graff, 1979; Heath, 1983; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984); they have devoted attention to the functions and uses for literacy in the everyday lives of members of different societies and of different groups within societies. This work has demonstrated that the ways in which literacy is actually used and valued contributes to and in turn is influenced by a given social context. Perhaps more importantly, it shows that literacy can be structured very differently from one social or cultural context to another.

Various authors such as Szwed (1981) and Heath (1983) have expressed a need for descriptions of how literacy operates in the everyday contexts of a wide variety of English-speaking minority groups and majority culture subgroups within North America. As Szwed (1981) comments, "it is not enough to know what a language looks like . . .

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education, and more than half had fewer than 6 years. By comparison, only 21% of the men and 22.4% of the women immigrants who could speak an official language had fewer than 9 years of education.

one must also know what it means to its users and how it is used by them" (p. 14). There is a need, he says, "to look at reading and writing as activities having consequences in (and being affected by) family life, work patterns, economic conditions, patterns of leisure, and a complex of other factors" (p. 21). In this vein, important work has recently been done specifically in relation to biliteracy and second language learning (see Hornberger, 1989; Spener, in press). Some research that has relevance to the field of ESL for adults has been conducted for a variety of minority language groups in North America, for example, Auerbach (1990, Haitians in Boston); Burnaby and MacKenzie (1985, Cree Natives in Quebec); Cumming and Gill (1991, Punjabi women, Vancouver); Fleming (1989, Vietnamese in Vancouver); Rockhill (1990, Latin American women in Los Angeles); Weinstein-Shr (1990, Hmong in Philadelphia). (See Spener, in press, and Ferdman & Weber, in press, for additional recent work in this area.) Much, however, remains to be learned about different groups of minority language adults in Canada to attain a deeper understanding of adult literacy uses and learning needs among immigrants.

## **A TORONTO CASE STUDY**

As an example of the kind of information such investigation yields, in this article, we discuss a study conducted by Klassen (1987). The study explored the uses of literacy for 9 Latin American adults living in Toronto who had in common limited Spanish and English literacy skills. Klassen conducted a series of interviews in Spanish with each participant to probe experiences of and uses for both Spanish and English literacy in their everyday lives. What follows is a brief look at some of the main themes that emerged from the interviews.

### **ESL Literacy and Participation in Everyday Life in Toronto**

The "functional literacy" outlook, despite controversy, holds sway in the way many literacy and ESL instructors view their mandate—to help non- or semifunctional people become more "functional."<sup>6</sup> The interviews Klassen conducted, however, revealed that the problems facing immigrants cannot be so easily defined. Despite minimal to no

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<sup>6</sup>For critiques of the concept of functional literacy, see Graff (1979) and Levine (1986). Note that the phrase *functional literacy* emerged mainly from the context of international UNESCO literacy conferences and literacy campaigns. The phrase should not be confused or conflated with the phrase *functions of literacy*, which is used in sociolinguistic analyses of written language use in social contexts.



English literacy (4 of the 9 interviewees had virtually no L1 literacy skills either), the 9 participants in the study, without exception, manage to participate reasonably effectively in the majority of the contexts they enter on a daily basis. This is not to say that English would not help them participate even better, but their lack of English (written, and to various degrees, oral) did not keep them from participating in most contexts of everyday life. María (pseudonyms are used), for example, a Guatemalan in her 30s who has never gone to school, can slowly and shakily copy her own name and address from a little notebook she carries with her for situations in Toronto which require that she sign her name or leave her address. She cannot read back what she so painstakingly copies. In fact, she can identify by name only three letters in the Spanish alphabet. Nevertheless, she pays her family's household bills and cashes cheques at a bank, takes care of the family's official paperwork at the immigration offices, and does the household shopping for food, prescriptions, and other household needs.

María and the others, it became clear from the interviews, manage many literacy-dependent tasks through a number of strategies. One strategy is to ask friends, relatives, or officials for help with directions, with reading and writing in either Spanish or English, and with oral English when necessary. Letter writing is a case in point. Doña Ana, an exuberant, friendly Venezuelan senior citizen, is always inviting friends to her apartment. She explains how, when her friends arrive, she immediately says to them:

“Look, these letters arrived,” and then they read them to me. And if my son doesn't have time to write a letter for me, I say to my friend, “Look, write this for me because I'm going to send it.” So then she writes it for me. I have many good friends [who help me]. . . . I have some good friends from Chile, I have them from Ecuador, marvelous people, and from El Salvador. (Translations of interview data by Klassen)

For some literacy and language needs, however, friends and family are sometimes considered to be poor choices as helpers. Consequently, other trusted contacts are developed where reliable help can be gotten unobtrusively. Particularly important is the need to establish relationships with the clerks and officials in business, government, or medical offices. María referred to the counselors at the newcomer reception offices by name and talked about going to see them in terms of “asking for favours.” In the same way, banking becomes manageable once relationships are established with specific tellers. Carlos, for example, says, “When I go to take out money, no? There's a Canadian woman, no? We get along well. She knows some Spanish. . . . I always ask for her when I'm at the bank.”

Because it can be embarrassing to always ask for help, each of the

participants has learned ways to manage without help as well. Doña Ana described how she learned to recognize a telephone bill by the logo on the envelope, and Rebeca, a young El Salvadorian refugee whose husband was killed in the war, said that she recognizes the brand of pasta she buys by the drawing on the package: "I know the brand I buy there. The one I buy is the one that has several heads of wheat. I forget what it's called. I can't remember the name. It's the drawing." María uses her own marks to help her remember important items. For example, she remembers when to give medicine to her children by making marks on the bottle. She says, "Only in that way have I managed to get along. . . . 'Okay,' I say, and I write [the mark] on the front [of the bottle]." In the same way, with her husband's help, she makes marks on the calendar that match marks on appointment cards from doctors' offices or from the immigration officials, and she uses a small notebook to mark down the numbers of buses she should take. In this way, she manages by matching numbers and arbitrary marks which have no sound-symbol correspondence or any other meaning except as memory aids.

Surprisingly, one context in which all 9 people in the study expressed particular confidence about their abilities to manage is the workplace. Without exception, each person's story revealed how hard work has defined their lives, starting in childhood. Angela, an Ecuadorian, is a case in point. After spending her childhood and adolescence on the streets of Quito, Ecuador, as a food vendor, she spent 30 years in the port city of Guayaquil, working her way up from street vending to owning a market stall and finally to owning a restaurant. In the process, she helped organize a drive to establish a municipal market in order to get her and her companions off the streets and into an officially recognized market. She originally came to Toronto to visit her daughters and grandchildren, but she decided to stay when she discovered that one of her daughters was in desperate straights trying to hold down a job while raising a newborn child as a single mother. As a result, Angela arranged to see the immigration officer and told him that she refused to have her family live on welfare and that she needed a job to help get her daughter back on her feet. She has worked as a cafeteria helper ever since in Toronto.

Those of the participants who had work (Angela, Pedro, Juan, Carlos, and Manuel) each said that they face few problems at work. Pedro, for example, found a job with the help of the church organization which assisted him in getting to Toronto. He works at a medical building in a department which cleans and sterilizes containers. He insists that he encounters no important reading and writing problems at work because he needs simply to recognize a number of coloured labels on boxes and bottles to perform his job properly. He said that he some-

times asks other Latin American co-workers to help him understand posters and want ads on the bulletin boards (rentals, car sales, company notices), but he needs no help to do his job.

Although those who have jobs feel very capable of doing the work, they described being blocked from more challenging or better paying work by the training/credentialing system. They do not feel they lack the abilities to be productive workers; rather, they feel they lack the school-based knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in English classes that must be passed in order to get into training programs which provide the credentials needed to gain access to better paying jobs. Rebeca, for example, said that, in spite of the 5 years of experience she had in the food catering industry in the U. S., the restaurants in Toronto which would pay her enough to allow her to get off welfare require that she have food preparation training credentials. However, she cannot get through the ESL system far enough to get into training programs.

### **Inability to Manage Language Classes**

The interviews made it clear that, unlike most other everyday contexts, the ESL classroom is one of the few contexts which is difficult to manage effectively. Angela simply stopped going to class because it was a context where she experienced too much embarrassment at not knowing what she thought she was supposed to know. Doña Ana stopped trying to attend classes because she was referred out of one program to another program which in turn referred her to another program because she could not read and write in her own language. Carlos and Pedro stopped going because they said they were not learning. Maria said that, after spending her time in classes "drawing" English words that she did not understand, "*Me quedo igual,*" translated loosely as "I might as well not be there because I don't learn anything."

The repertoire of strategies that each individual uses to manage outside of the classroom does not seem effective in the ESL classes they have attended. But strategies were still employed in the classroom for other purposes. Perhaps the primary function of ESL classes for many of the participants interviewed is that the classroom provides a good place to make Spanish-speaking friends who can help each other. The women in particular, even those who quit attending, use ESL classes to more effectively manage their new environment, not by significantly improving their English, but by extending their network of contacts (see Fingeret, 1983, for parallels in North American-born people with low levels of literacy). Rebeca, for example, remarked about the Colombian and Ecuadorian women in her class, "They help me and I help them, because in that way we make an exchange." It is

important to note that, even in the classroom, Spanish rather than English is used to develop networks of contacts for managing both Spanish and English language needs.

### **Ways of Learning for Themselves**

Difficulty learning in classroom situations does not suggest that these individuals are not good learners. Most of what Angela learned, for example, she learned out of school. As with so many women in Latin America, she went to work vending food in the streets as a young girl. Later, she built on what little Spanish reading and writing skills she had learned in her brief school experience by reading the comics from newspapers and magazines she found on the streets and, in her younger days, by trying her hand at love poetry. Learning becomes particularly important in the new environment of Toronto. The participants in the study related how they learned to manage life in the new environment through experimenting, watching others, and by building on previous experience. They learned what products to buy, which subway stations to get off at, which floor a given office was on, how to use new recipes, and how to perform their responsibilities at work. Pedro, for example, explained that he learns by experimenting. To solve the problem of reading and understanding menus and the writing on package labels, he first experiments with small quantities, and after finding what he likes in this way, he then remembers what to choose the next time.

Doña Ana revealed how she depends on her memory. She likes to learn new recipes, especially for North American foods, because she loves to impress friends with her cooking. She has spent most of her life cooking, first for migrant workers on plantations in Venezuela, and later, as a single mother, selling food on the streets of a Venezuelan city as a way to support her family. One day at a literacy class, in the simple Spanish block print she had just been learning to read and write, she painstakingly copied down a recipe for a carrot cake. The next day she brought a delicious carrot cake to class. When asked how she used the recipe, she said that she had lost the piece of paper on her way home, but she had remembered everything in her head from talking about it in class the day before. When Doña Ana described how she gets around the city, she said she learned to use the subway system “by remembering and counting the stops. . . . Friends would need to show me only once, because then I would concentrate on doing it by myself.”

Similarly, Rebeca says she learned from an early age to run errands and shop for her father’s farm, and “everything had to stay with me from memory” because she could not write anything down. Rebeca

also explained how numbers help her (she learned to use numbers on her father's farm). The example she gave was how she learned to use expiration dates on milk cartons because once, when she got home from shopping, she discovered that a week's supply of milk was sour.

### **Cultural Ways of Framing Language, Literacy, Schooling, and Learning**

What emerged from the interviews as a particularly significant theme was the value attached to schooling in Spanish. Pedro came with his brother from El Salvador to escape the war which had destroyed the family farm. Pedro had virtually no schooling while he was growing up. Before they came to Canada, the brothers learned to speak some English in the U.S. in an ESL program that emphasized listening and speaking. However, now, in ESL classes in Toronto, Pedro finds that whenever discussion of any kind of reading and writing or grammar is introduced, he cannot benefit from the teaching. The surprising explanation he gave (in Spanish) for his difficulty in the classroom was that he does not "know" Spanish. The examples he gave of not knowing Spanish included not knowing the order of the letters in the Spanish alphabet or Spanish grammar. His example of problems he encounters from this lack of school-based knowledge was his frustration with trying to use a Spanish-English dictionary, something that all of the other schooled students use even though it is not encouraged by teachers. Because he has not yet mastered alphabetical order, he skims the entire dictionary, starting with the first letter, then moving to the second letter. Even more serious, he says, is that because he does not know Spanish grammar, he does not know for any given word if it is standard Spanish or his own rural dialect, or whether the word is the root form that can be found in the dictionary or some derivation of the root form. Consequently, he has a difficult time with activities and exercises which require standard classroom knowledge. What he also missed, he feels, from not having Spanish schooling is that, even though he can use numbers to count and pay money, he doesn't know how to do the kinds of mathematical calculations learned in school, something he would be required to know in addition to English in order to get training for a trade.

Others also revealed that they placed a high value on schooling in Spanish. One reason was that Spanish schooling was considered to be an essential means for effectively learning English. Rebeca, Doña Ana, and Maria all described how ESL students "who knew [how to read and write in Spanish]" would learn quickly and then go on to higher levels of ESL. Rebeca described how she often saw new students who

had had previous schooling come into the beginners' class and because they "knew," they quickly progressed to higher levels. Doña Ana told me, "It's that [when learning English] nothing stays with me. I just sit and listen. All the others [who know how to read and write in their own languages] write what they're hearing. I write nothing. I just hear it, and nothing stays." María and Rebeca also both mentioned that, without Spanish literacy, home study was not possible. Rebeca explained, "Those who know can write—like, above it's in English and below, at the end of the word, they write it in Spanish. . . . And when they get home, they can study."

The women in particular suggested other reasons why Spanish language schooling, along with Spanish literacy, has both practical and cultural importance in Toronto. The participants with the fewest Spanish literacy skills believed that they should learn Spanish literacy before learning English because Spanish literacy provides a more easily attainable means of coping with the English print that they encounter in Toronto. They feel for the immediate present that English literacy is much too difficult to learn. María explained:

It's that I need to know how to read Spanish as well, as know a bit of [oral] English in the supermarket. . . . But what happens, because I don't know how to read, not even in Spanish, I can't even try to decipher the letters in English words, because knowing how to read in Spanish, I could manage to follow the letters that are written in English, even if it's the wrong pronunciation, but one at least would understand.

But Spanish literacy has many more uses in this second language context than just to deal with an English environment. It became clear from the interviews that the women in particular considered it essential to become literate in Spanish in order to participate more fully in those contexts where Spanish is the language of communication. Angela said that she reads Spanish storybooks to her granddaughter and María said she wishes she could do the same for her younger children. All the women wanted to be able to read the two Spanish-language newspapers in Toronto because it gave them useful information about cultural events, ads, and other announcements for sales, rentals, Spanish-speaking doctors, lawyers, and businesses. In addition, particularly important was the need to learn to read and write in Spanish because of correspondence needs. María remarked once that she needs to learn to write in Spanish because "if I need to send letters from up here, I won't be sending them in English [to friends and relatives in Guatemala]. . . . I have no one to write English letters to." Rebeca wanted to learn to read and write in Spanish to benefit from the Spanish church services and Bible studies she attended. She remarked:

It's important to know one's language because many places you can see others writing it that way, and I'd like to do that. It was in order to learn more about the Bible. And then in your own house you could also do that.

Reasons for learning to read and write in Spanish, however, went much deeper than functional and pragmatic uses for Spanish literacy. Comments often revealed that the participants in the study share an ideology of literacy which has overtones of Spanish cultural supremacy. This ideology tends to equate lack of schooling and illiteracy with being tribal (aboriginal, Amerindian), and it matches Spanish schooling and literacy with Spanish civilizing power and culture. Many times in the interviews references were made to the differences between "those who know" and those who do not know as a way of distinguishing between those who have schooling, and who therefore have culture, and those who do not, and who are therefore uncultured, uncivilized, of a low class. (See Giltrow & Calhoun, 1992, for a study of Guatemala Mayan refugees who, unlike the Spanish as a first language participants in the Klassen study, perceive indigenous languages and their own native Indian culture and history as something to affirm.) The unschooled, the participants of the study suggested, "do not know Spanish," which can include the proper cultured ways of speaking, proper vocabulary, and even cultured penmanship. Rebeca remarked that the style of a person's handwriting marks him or her as "one who knows" so she wanted to quickly get beyond the block print she was learning to the longhand penmanship characteristic of schooled Latin Americans, of people "who know." These comments revealed a sense of stigma and ostracism that was reinforced by other Latin Americans. For example, Rebeca explained that she stopped going to a particular Spanish-language church because of the disapproval she and another unschooled friend experienced from some of the educated, more affluent members of the congregation.

The strongest indications of shame, however, emerged when the women spoke of the way their children treated them. Rebeca and María, who are not Indian and are monolingual Spanish speakers, were teased mercilessly by their children about being Indian or about coming from the mountains because of their lack of schooling and their rural Spanish. In the same vein, both María's and Rebeca's children used their mother's illiteracy to lie about homework (because the women could not read the homework to know whether or not it was done) and to get away with any number of tricks at home and at school. These mothers believed that their children's disrespect and their resulting powerlessness to control their children stemmed primarily from their own lack of schooling. These comments reveal a marked contradiction between the way the participants described effectively participating in many everyday Toronto contexts and their very negative

view of themselves as culturally deficient. It becomes clear that for this group of Latin Americans, it is the experience of feeling stigmatized that defines illiteracy, not any inability to “function” in English.

The experiences and life situations of these 9 individuals match, to a large extent, the trends suggested by the statistical information presented earlier. The unemployed are primarily women; all have immigrated under the refugee or family categories; and those employed (primarily men) do low-skill jobs with little hope of upward mobility. But the additional information provided by the interviews about the ways in which literacy operates in their lives is perhaps even more crucial. Clearly, these 9 people have effective, if not entirely efficient, strategies and talents for dealing with various literacy demands in their lives in Canada. Their most important resources are their good memory, networks of helpers, and accumulated experiences in their personal and work lives. The stigma and limitations that they feel as a result of their lack of literacy skills are much more pronounced in the area of literacy in Spanish than in English. They understand their lack of Spanish language and literacy skills to be holding them back as English language learners (in school and at home), in their religious observances, and in contacts with people in their home countries and to mark them as second-class citizens among compatriots in their ethnic community in Canada, especially their children.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL AND SERVICE PROVISIONS**

Space constraints prevent us from detailing the implications for identifying and providing outreach to ESL literacy learners and for designing programs and services for them. These stories suggest that these individuals have language and literacy learning needs in English that are not being met by present programs and that they believe that language and literacy learning in their native tongue is an important vehicle for reaching their personal goals as well as for learning English. It also becomes clear that learning English, while useful, is not the sole or even the main problem that they face. They need access to good jobs, which within the present system implies running the daunting and next to impossible gauntlet of gaining access to credentializing training, which, in turn, requires a combination of English language and formal classroom coping skills that few will have the time or the opportunity to acquire.

On the national scale, these stories exemplify problematic aspects of current Canadian government policy, which accepts immigrants pating in many everyday Toronto contexts and their very negative



access to the formal Canadian systems possible. There has been a long history of calls for more and better services, especially language training, that have yet to receive much attention (e.g., Canadian Employment and Immigration Advisory Council, 1991; National Action Committee on Immigrant and Visible Minority Women, 1985; Staff, 1982). The contradiction which exists is that whereas immigration policy stresses the value of immigrants as consumers, taxpayers, parents, and holders of hard-to-fill jobs (both at the top and the bottom of the scale) in addition to the humanitarian reasons for accepting refugees and reunifying families (Cumming, 1989), there is not the willingness to support much of the effort to help immigrants adjust to the Canadian situation.

This lack of services could seem callous on the part of the government if it were not for the existence of federal laws and programs which purport to support the social and cultural integration of all ethnic and racial groups in the country as well as programs promoting equity in the workplace and other spheres. Yet, to the extent that access to an official language is important to the accomplishment of these goals, lack of language training services to immigrants is an issue. Similarly, at the federal and provincial levels, a high level of debate is currently taking place in Canada, as it is in many countries, about the need to raise the level of skills in the labour force. With its focus on national economic interests, the debate has centred around the need for new, reorganized, and more effective training strategies. That the federal government, for example, would establish a National Literacy Secretariat in the mid-1980s is a strong indicator of concern about skills. Other nongovernmental bodies have reinforced this concern (e.g., DesLauriers, 1990; Drouin, 1990; Economic Council of Canada, 1990). Significantly, however, the language learning and other adjustment needs of immigrants are not addressed either by the National Literacy Secretariat or in the cited reports.

In this context, it is perhaps symptomatic that we know very little about the actual range of service provision to immigrants in Canada. Burnaby (1992a) outlines policies in place on ESL training circa 1989, but the only current statistical data available is on ESL programs in British Columbia (Cumming, 1991). A serious concern about ESL training is that it is not structured to meet the variety of needs of specific groups of immigrants, for example, women (Boyd, 1990), that programs tend to be broadly focused so that immigrants have to make the best of what is offered regardless of their specific needs (Abella, 1984; Burnaby, 1992a; Burnaby, Holt, Steltzer, & Collins, 1987; Cumming, 1989).

However, as argued earlier, it is important to point out that ESL training alone is not the full picture. Needed services extend far beyond

the provision simply of English language learning opportunities. An additional policy contradiction can be seen in Canada's official depiction of itself as "multicultural." On the surface, we celebrate the many cultures represented by the immigrants who come to live in Canada, but many of the basic structures, institutions, and policies which frame our lives are far from multicultural, leading some to charge that Canada's official image is, to a large extent, "a myth" (Sauvé, 1990, p. 64). (See Kalantzis, Cope, & Slade, 1989, for an extended critique of multiculturalism as national policy in Australia and the U. S.) And language policy is perhaps one of the primary issues which displays this contradiction. The language reality for our multicultural population is that English (or in Quebec, French) primarily determines the formal means of access to most opportunities, public systems, or institutions. The result is an assimilationist policy towards immigrants which renders their needs simplistically, namely, that the primary need and responsibility of most nonmajority-language adults in English Canada is to learn English. (See Tollefson, 1991, for a comparative analysis of language and immigration policies which contain similar expectations of immigrants in such countries as Australia, the U. K., and the U. S.) This simplistic analysis of the problems which immigrants face obscures the range both of non-English-dependent needs and of non-English-dependent training, service, and community participation alternatives that could be encouraged in immigrants' first languages. Such issues become particularly important for those immigrants who lack the education or literacy requirements to benefit from the already overtaxed classroom-based English language training programs.

A range of other non-ESL-specific issues, such as recognition of foreign credentials, impact on the integration of immigrants into Canadian society. For example, a study of "mainstream" social service agencies in Toronto (the Canadian city with the highest concentration of immigrants) (Doyle & Visano, 1987) found mainstream service institutions largely unaffected by the special needs of immigrants and visible minorities. The authors described the relationship between mainstream social agencies and those dedicated to serving immigrants as "two solitudes." In the same vein, Burnaby (1992b) has discussed the political difficulties involved in coordinating various immigrant settlement services.

These issues raise two primary questions: (a) What immigration, employment, and training plans and expectations does Canada have for ESL literacy immigrants? and (b) What do ESL literacy immigrants require from their Canadian environment? In this paper, we have primarily suggested some elements in response to the second question for one group in particular. The response even for this group needs further elaboration. The responses for many other immigrant groups

in Canada desperately need study. Our guess is that most ESL literacy-level adult immigrants would very much like to participate in training programs of many types both in their first languages and in English, regardless of how long they have lived in Canada. However, many are currently blocked from available training because it does not accommodate their specific needs. In our view, it would not cost substantially more to offer ESL training programs that suit the needs of a wider range of immigrants and to provide better educational brokerage to place students in appropriate learning situations that range from L1 training to bilingual training to strictly ESL training. Indeed, there might be savings in terms of efficiency. However, it is clear that, until Canada addresses the first question concerning its intentions for immigration, policy will not be forthcoming that will provide the resources and structures which would allow a more focused response to ESL literacy immigrants.

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## ***English Literacy in the U.S.: National Policies, Personal Consequences***

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This article examines the relationship between U.S. national policies on literacy, available literacy programs, and individual lives. Beginning with a discussion of the expanding role of English literacy in U.S. immigration policies, this article examines the pressures to become literate in English with consideration given to the resources that are available to do so. In the second section, language use in immigrant families is discussed with a focus on native language loss and the consequences of this loss for intergenerational relationships. The article concludes with suggestions for an approach to literacy in which the links between national policies and personal lives are, made explicit. The authors make recommendations for policy and practice that take into account the plurality of literacies and the possibilities for nurturing families and communities through the development of native and second language literacy resources.

*I have ears but I am deaf! I have a tongue but I am mute! (Chinese refugee on life in his English-speaking neighborhood)*

**I**n many ways, the feelings of this refugee are the result of policies and practices of the country that is now his home. He is deaf to the sounds around him because despite the pressure to learn English, oftentimes problems in availability, accessibility, and appropriateness of English classes make it difficult for him to develop proficiency in English. Furthermore, the fact that the sounds of his native tongue are muted arises from a lack of social and educational support for L1 language and literacy development in his community. The purpose of this paper is to examine how pressure to learn English, coupled with insufficient resources for either developing English or for maintaining the L1 within the community, has dramatic consequences for uprooted adults. We assume that without sufficient resources for lan-



guage learning in general, it will be more difficult to develop English literacy.

In order to provide a framework for examining the consequences of U.S. language/literacy policies and programs for immigrants' lives, we begin by demonstrating that historically, the role of English literacy in the U.S. has been expanding. To the extent that language minorities desire participation in the political and educational process, today such individuals will need to know how to read and write English for more and more purposes. To demonstrate, we examine the history of English literacy in the U.S. in its role as gatekeeper for citizenship and permanent residency. Next, by looking at the experience of adults who try to gain access to English instruction, we discuss the degree to which adequate English language educational programs are available to address the increasing role of English literacy. Third, we examine the consequences of patterns of language use for immigrant families. Finally, we suggest directions for future literacy policies and educational programs.

We believe it is essential to examine the links between national policies and personal lives because they so heavily impact each other. Because language minorities are often asked to meet literacy agendas set by policy decisions, it is important to consider whether or not they share these agendas and whether or not they are provided with the means to meet them. In order to explore these questions, we begin with a discussion of the expanding role of English literacy in U.S. immigration and naturalization policy.

## **ENGLISH LITERACY AS AN EXPANDING GATEKEEPER**

Even before the founding of the Republic, U.S. national attitude toward multilingualism has been ambivalent. As Leibowitz (1984) points out, this ambivalence is reflected in the fact that

on the one hand, the U.S. Constitution makes no mention of language. This is somewhat unusual since the designation of an official language is quite common in constitutional documents, not only in multilingual countries, but also in countries where only one language is generally used. On the other hand, John Jay in the *Federalist Papers* saw the English language as the tie that bound the federal structure. (p. 25)

According to Heath (1992), the absence of a designation of an official language reflects "both the notions of language which the peculiar historical events of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries shaped for England and the diversity of settlement motivations which drew

widely differing social, linguistic, and ethnic groups to America” (p. 20). As Heath notes, whereas many other colonial powers used language policies for unification and assimilation, British policy makers did not include language policies in the New World colonies. Most settlers came to pursue their own interests and not to extend the Old World political system. Furthermore, policy makers often associated language decisions with monarchies; thus, antimonarchical forces resisted national language choices. Finally, multiple languages played an important role in the political and social life of the nation leading to encouragement for the use of languages other than English. In keeping with these beliefs, U.S. immigration policies up until the fourth quarter of the 19th century did not use the English language, spoken or written, as a requirement for entry or naturalization.

Beginning in the late 19th century, however, the idea of using a language requirement as a condition for immigration and naturalization started to be discussed. In 1905, due to charges of bribery and fraud in naturalization procedures, President Roosevelt commissioned a major study of naturalization procedures and requirements. This committee recommended an English literacy requirement for naturalization because it was their belief “that knowledge of English made fraud less likely and resulted in greater understanding and support of existing institutions” (Leibowitz, 1984, p. 35). Two years later, a Federal Immigration Commission, the Dillingham Commission, recommended that a literacy test be required even for immigration. What is significant is that this test could be taken in any language, not just English. Thus, in the early 20th century whereas language began to be considered for controlling immigration, the language was not restricted to English.

At the basis of the Dillingham Commission’s recommendation to include a literacy requirement for immigration was the belief that the current immigrant population was very different from former immigrants who had quickly become assimilated. In contrast, the new immigrants were thought to be less intelligent and willing to learn English, a conclusion that clearly reflects the racial bias of the commission. As the commission put it:

The new immigration as a class is far less intelligent than the old, approximately *one third of all those over 14 years of age when admitted being illiterate*. Racially, they are for the most part essentially unlike the British, German and other peoples who came during the period prior to 1880, and generally speaking they are actuated in coming by different ideals, for the old immigrants came to be part of the country, while the new, in large measure, comes with the intention of profiting, in a pecuniary way, by the superior advantages of the new world and then returning to the old country. (as cited in Leibowitz, 1984, p. 36)

Literacy requirements, then, were to serve as a means for keeping those who were considered to be undesirable immigrants from entering the country.

In 1913 and again in 1915, the Dillingham Commission's recommendation resulted in passage of legislation requiring literacy tests in any language as a requirement for immigration. However, both of these bills were vetoed by Presidents Taft and Wilson who emphasized the racial impact of such legislation. It was not until 1917 that a similar bill was passed by Congress over Wilson's second veto. According to Leibowitz (1984), the immigration literacy test of 1917 marks a major transition in the development of U.S. immigration policy because its basic intention was to reduce the number of immigrants, particularly those from southeastern Europe, through the use of literacy. In 1924 an immigration act was passed which did not change the literacy test requirement but added quota systems based on the U.S. population as it existed at the time, a policy which was clearly based on racial principles. With this legislation, literacy (although not necessarily English literacy) began to serve a gatekeeper function, excluding particular groups of individuals from immigration.

During the late 19th century and early 20th century, the role of language as a gatekeeper and the emphasis on English began to be expanded through state legislation. Various states began requiring English literacy tests as a precondition for voting. In 1889, the Edwards Law in Illinois and the Bennett Law in Wisconsin required, for the first time, that "parochial as well as public schools teach elementary subjects in the English language" (Leibowitz, 1984, p. 39). Although these initiatives were eventually overturned, they demonstrate the potential of state legislation to expand the role of English literacy. English literacy also became a condition for employment in certain fields through legislation requiring knowledge of English and indirectly through restrictions on jobs that those who were not citizens—and thus had not demonstrated their knowledge of English literacy—could hold.

In subsequent years, various court decisions have overturned some of the literacy test legislation but sustained English literacy as a requirement for naturalization. Today, to qualify for naturalization, there is an English literacy requirement, along with the requirement of demonstrating knowledge of U.S. history and government. More recently, the scope of English as gatekeeper has again expanded as evidenced in the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) which provides the opportunity for undocumented individuals who meet certain requirements to become legal citizens (to gain "amnesty") and specifies sanctions for employers who knowingly hire undocumented workers. Under this legislation, in order to qualify for legal

residence—not citizenship—undocumented workers must demonstrate proficiency in reading English and an understanding of U.S. history and government or show that they are making satisfactory progress in a course of study which is certified to fulfill such requirements. (For a full description of the English language literacy requirements contained in the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, see Terdy & Spener, 1990.)

A number of advocacy groups oppose the literacy requirements in the IRCA pointing out that requiring individuals who seek permanent residence, and not citizenship, to read English and to demonstrate a knowledge of U.S. history and government is not typical of the process leading to permanent residency and in essence discriminates against this population (Wrigley, 1989). Furthermore, such groups believe that the mandatory course of study will cause a hardship for many students. Whereas it is possible for students to waive the course requirement by taking a test, originally the testing procedure was not standardized so that arbitrary questions such as asking for the names of political leaders, their wives, or even their horses could be used (Wrigley, 1988). The test option, however, is not available to a large number of persons seeking amnesty who are not literate in English. For these individuals, the only option available is to attend classes and learn to read and write English in order to receive a certificate of attendance (Wrigley, 1989).

This brief historical overview of immigration and naturalization requirements demonstrates how the role of English literacy in immigration and naturalization has been expanding. Whereas originally language served no function for naturalization, today, as evidenced in current amnesty legislation, English literacy serves a gatekeeper function not just for citizenship but, for some individuals, for permanent residency. In contrast to earlier periods of U.S. history, the literacy that is valued in immigration and naturalization regulations today is English literacy rather than L1 literacy, an attitude that appears to be pervasive in the U.S. In fact, as Wiley (1991) points out, most national surveys and assessments fail to report on L1 literacy because they collect no data on it. This increasing attention to English at the expense of other languages is clearly demonstrated in current state and federal initiatives to make English the official language. The movement itself is another clear indication of how the role of English literacy in national policies is expanding.

In examining the English Only movement, it is important to consider the question posed by Fidel (1990). Drawing on Frost's poem, "Mending Wall," Fidel asks: "What is the goal: What are we walling in, what are we walling out?" (p. 302). Is it English that needs to be "walled in"? Are language minorities failing to learn English? Statistics certainly

do not support the idea that they are failing to do so. As Crawford (1992) points out,

Consider that 98 percent of U.S. residents over the age of four speak English "well" or "very well," according to the 1980 census. . . . After fifteen years in the country, three out of four Hispanic immigrants speak English on a daily basis. More than 85 percent of children from language-minority homes become dominant in English, and their children rarely speak anything else. Under these circumstances, who would assert that "English is under attack" and needs "legal protection" from the ravages of bilingualism? (p. 171)

Hence, it is questionable whether English needs to be "walled in." What then are we "walling out"? Actions of such organizations as U.S. English suggest that the real purpose of the legislation is to restrict the political and economic power of language minorities. "In the past, U.S. English leaders have . . . endorsed English Only rules in the workplace, petitioned to limit broadcasting in other tongues, threatened to boycott businesses that advertise in Spanish, and sought to ban telephone bills in Chinese" (Crawford, 1992, p. 176). Whereas such actions suggest that the real goal of the movement is to eliminate the use of languages other than English, advocates of the movement still contend that their real purpose is to ensure that language minorities do learn English. The assumption seems to be that language minorities do not want to learn the language and that unless they are forced to learn it, they will not voluntarily choose to do so. There is a vast body of evidence that does not support this view. On the contrary, most language minorities want very much to acquire English literacy but various factors limit their ability to do so. In the following section we examine some of these factors.

## **ACCESS TO ENGLISH LITERACY**

As the movement to make English the official language of the United States grows, along with it grows the perception that the "problem" resides in those who are not willing to learn English. This does not resonate with the experience of most immigrants who believe, accurately or not, that English literacy holds the key to their success. Delgado-Gaitan (1987), for example, found that the Mexican families she studied

were grateful to be in the U.S. where conditions were relatively better than those in Mexico. They were aware of sociopolitical and economic limitations, but hoped that their situations would improve once they learned English . . . . Motivation to learn English stemmed from many sources, from per-

sonal embarrassment at not knowing English to a desperate need to obtain steady employment. The adults in this study saw their position in society as oppressed but not necessarily hopeless, since they attributed most of their low socioeconomic condition to their inadequate English literacy skills. (pp. 28-29)

If language minorities, like those described above, are interested in developing their English literacy, what can prevent them from doing so? Below, we briefly review three of the factors that affect development of English literacy: availability of instruction, accessibility of classes offered, and appropriateness of programs. The difficulties that language minorities face in each of these areas is often the direct result of a lack of national and local policies that support the needed educational programs.

### **Availability of Classes**

Imaginative literacy providers scramble for funding from every possible source. Federal and state dollars are used to serve adult ESL learners through ABE (adult basic education), OBEMLA (Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs), workplace programs, and employment training. According to Wrigley and Guth (1992), one program even makes a case for providing literacy classes as a provision of mental health services. Private foundations are another important source of support for classes. Yet, with a myriad of funding sources and a variety of agencies where classes are offered, it is clear that these have not been adequate to serve the adults who need them.

In an investigation of the Hispanic community in the El Paso area, Amastae (1990) found that

very large numbers of non-English speakers are taking advantage of every opportunity to learn English. . . . Despite the variety of programs, the significant problem in El Paso at present seems to be a lack of teaching capacity rather than a lack of demand. (p. 202)

Hence, in contrast to the widespread belief that language minorities are refusing to learn English, Amastae argues that opportunities to learn are grossly inadequate.

The situation of language minorities in Arizona also supports this analysis. Due to lack of funding, the director of the Division of Adult Education for the Arizona State Department of Education estimated that in terms of the ESL program, his office was "able to serve less than 10% of the need in the state for educational services" (Brandt, 1990, p. 219). In addition, although courses in the past that were designed to develop English language and literacy did make use of the L1, such courses are now prohibited. As Brandt (1990) emphasizes,

there is *no* large group of individuals who are adamantly refusing to learn English. In fact, the need for English instruction and the desire for it is paramount among language minority populations. Neither school districts charged with delivering services to the young nor the adult education agencies are currently able to fulfill the demand for such services. (p. 220)

Lack of availability of ESL instruction is not unique to El Paso and Arizona but is mirrored throughout the nation. *Education Week* reports:

thousands of prospective students, many of them recent immigrants are being turned away from adult English classes. . . . Whether in Los Angeles, Houston, New York City or Albuquerque, adult education officials report too few classes for too many students. . . . education officials in Los Angeles were unable to serve roughly 40,000 adults seeking English language instruction in 1986—more than twice the number turned away in 1985. New York City reported that 6,000 were on waiting lists for English and that many more had been lost due to lack of record keeping. (as cited in Bingham, 1990, p. 210)

Whereas it is tempting to attribute limited English proficiency to the motivations of newcomers, the waiting lists tell a different tale about where some of the problems lie. However, even when ESL classes are available, adults are by no means assured access to English literacy,

### **Accessibility of Classes**

One factor that can limit accessibility is the guidelines that exist for admission to a program. Refugees, for example, may be ineligible for support moneys if they are past working age or if they are not the head of the household. Mothers of preschool children may be ineligible if their husbands are enrolled in a program (Miller, 1991). In addition, the definition of a refugee has changed as the budget for refugee resettlement has dwindled. Whereas refugees once had 3 years to prepare themselves for working and supporting their families, adults who arrive now are no longer considered refugees after 18 months.

Some of those adults who need English the most may not only be ineligible but may also be afraid to seek services. For those women who are presently undocumented, gaining access to needed English classes, as with any interaction with “the system,” may seem threatening. Hogeland and Rosen (1990), for example, in their study of undocumented women in the California Bay Area, note:

Fear of deportation permeates all aspects of the undocumented woman's life. In the U.S. without legal status, the undocumented woman is forced to live what has been called an underground existence, measuring her every move in fear of the INS. This fear affects all areas of her help-seeking

behavior. . . . Any interaction that the undocumented woman has with “the system” . . . is overshadowed by this fear. (p. 2)

Thus for those who may need it most, seeking English instruction is not worth the risks involved.

Child care problems, inconvenient class hours, and lack of transportation are common obstacles that can limit the accessibility of classes for language minorities. Isolation in rural areas and dangerous neighborhoods in urban areas compound the difficulties of attending classes. Even when these obstacles can be overcome, however, the confusing bureaucracy surrounding enrollment in classes can be a deterrent for some learners. One native-English-speaking researcher describes her experience of trying to register for a friend at a local community college in the following way:

No one at the main campus could give me adequate information. Having gotten the name of a possible location for the ESL program from a passerby, I was forced to resort to the telephone book to find the address.

At the ESL campus, I stood in a long line. Finally, I talked to a clerk who was a student trainee, had limited English skills, and did not know much about the programs for which she was registering people. The schedule of classes listed a course called “pre-ESL.” The clerk could not elaborate on it. She did not direct me to a counselor or explain testing and placement procedures. I was given a paper and a time that my friend should register and was warned that if she did not get there by 6:00 a.m., the classes would probably be full. (Miller, 1991, pp. 52-53)

This situation is symptomatic of what Fingeret (1992) calls a “crisis” approach to literacy, in which programs come and go with short-term funding (see Crandall, this issue), and no one source can provide centralized information or referrals. Without an infrastructure for the ongoing delivery of services, confusion is likely to be the rule rather than the exception. The National Literacy Act of 1991 authorizes new literacy programs and establishes the National Institute for Literacy whose purpose is to conduct research and disseminate information and assistance to literacy programs. The act, however, focuses on the development of English literacy for native speakers. As the National Literacy Act of 1991 provides resources to states and regions through governor’s offices, it remains to be seen whether these resources will change the current situation for nonnative speakers.

### **Appropriateness of Classes**

Ironically, once learners have “gotten in,” they may remain outsiders for a variety of reasons, even as they physically sit in the classroom. When learners are not separated according to L 1 literacy resources,



the results are predictable. Students who have not had experience with print or with formal schooling are inevitably left behind as their classmates with histories of education benefit from classroom activities and homework assignments that tap their previous experiences. Weinstein (1984) postulates that the literate orientation of the typical ESL classroom denies certain learners the comprehensible input they need to make sense of the new language. Miller (1991) found that Hmong adults in southern California who were not literate in their L1 either fell behind or dropped out of those programs where they were mixed with more highly literate peers. In the two entire counties studied by Miller, only one testing center had any native language tests available for placement purposes. This means that learners who rank as beginners on English placement tests are likely to end up in the same classrooms regardless of differences in native language experience or education. Throughout the U. S., mixed "beginner" classes are the rule rather than the exception.

A second way in which ESL classes may be inappropriate for adult learners is when differences in expectations about classroom behavior are not recognized by teachers or learners. The work of Philips (1972) with Native American children in Oregon and that of Heath (1983) with black and white children in Appalachia were among the groundbreaking studies that brought to public consciousness what can happen in classrooms when styles of language use between children and teachers do not match. For learners from other countries, the contrasts may be striking. Southeast Asians who cast their eyes downward out of respect may be misinterpreted as being disrespectful by teachers who are not familiar with this pattern of interaction. Contrary to a mainstream U.S. teacher's expectation of active class participation, many nonnative-English-speaking students think it is inappropriate to set themselves apart or, as they see it, to "show-off" by volunteering in class. Rezabek (1987) found that teachers unfamiliar with the cultures of their preliterate learners assumed that their students were "shy," "not with it," or "lazy" because of interactional patterns that would have been completely appropriate in these adults' own cultural contexts.

In addition, linguistic and cultural resources which could be tapped may be not only ignored but repressed or actually outlawed. Reactions to use of the L1 in the classroom are an indication of the degree to which an English-only perspective subtly influences beliefs and practices (see Auerbach, 1993). Many students, rather than speaking out in class, ask their peers in their L1 when they don't understand. However, teachers often have ambivalent and inconsistent reactions to such behavior. In one Philadelphia classroom, when the preliterate learners collectively prompted the woman who had been called on, the teacher

assumed that her authority was being defied and consequently expelled one of the women for "sassing" her (Weinstein-Shr, 1986). Use of native language and cooperative problem-solving strategies were seen as threatening and inappropriate in a setting where these may be the best hope for success for the learners involved. Discouraging the use of the native language in such instances is not conducive to the development of biliteracy. Based on a comprehensive review of the literature on biliteracy development, Hornberger (1989) argues that the most productive environments for developing biliteracy exemplify a balance between attention to receptive and productive skills, between oral and written languages, and between the use of L1 and L2.

Finally, literacy classes may fail to meet the needs of learners when the goals of the learners and those of the program administrators or funders are in conflict. Workplace programs funded by employers may have increased productivity as the primary goal, whereas learners may wish to gain literacy to get a better job. (See McKay, 1993, for a discussion of conflicting agendas for second language literacy.) In investigating a job training program for Vietnamese refugees, Rezabek (1987) found that language and literacy acquisition were of primary importance to learners. As one student put it, "I think we know how to work very well. We just don't understand words . . . it is very hard for us." (p. 110). In contrast, some administrators and teachers did not give language and literacy a high priority because job placement rates

constituted the primary criterion for program funding, evaluation of success and accountability, and refunding. . . Program policy relegated language instruction to the lowest possible priority with the program, calling it a factor that had no relationship to job search and maintenance. (Rezabek, 1987, pp. 190-191)

In this situation, as in many other language programs that are embedded in job training, there is enormous pressure on program administrators to place participants in any job. This emphasis sabotages participants' hopes of developing language and literacy skills for better jobs that would enable them to support their families. Such programs also dramatically illustrate the inconsistency that exists between U.S. national policies which support an expanding role of English literacy and nationally sponsored programs that minimize literacy training. Some critics (e.g., Spener, 1988; Tollefson, 1991) argue that inadequate support for language and literacy development is a policy which guarantees an adequate workforce for menial labor.

A source of frustration for participants in job training programs is that the pressure for immediate job placement often precludes drawing on their own previous job and career skills. Tales of immigrants who

practiced law or medicine in their native lands only to work as janitors and restaurant workers are not rare. Programs may inadvertently neglect the resources of participants in other ways as well. In family literacy efforts, for example, the danger of operating on a “deficit model” (see Taylor, this issue) is to be blind to the rich resources newcomers bring. Programs which teach parenting skills, for example, may overlook the appropriate parenting that newcomers have been doing for generations. “Parent circles” (Habana-Hafner, 1990), in contrast, are gatherings of adults who discuss the dilemmas of raising children in a new country, request information about rules and beliefs of the new setting, and struggle together over which of the old or new strategies are appropriate given the new situation. Family literacy efforts can do more than involve parents in their children’s education on the school’s terms (see Auerbach, in press); they can involve tapping traditional knowledge and creating new knowledge together as young and old are connected through literacy (Weinstein-Shr & Quintero, in press).

All of these program factors—lack of availability, accessibility, and appropriateness—are aggravated by a lack of U.S. national policy which would direct resources to the development of literacy programs for adults who are not native speakers of English. Inadequate literacy programs can undermine language minorities’ abilities to develop” their English literacy and thus contribute to their marginalization in the U.S. As Rezabek (1987) comments,

language minorities with limited English proficiency, already a socially marginal population because of their perceived language and cultural differences, face a double marginalization. Dependent upon social programs intended to reduce their marginality, they often discover the services provided by those systems to be inaccessible or of marginal quality or use.  
(p. v)

What are the consequences for language minority families when faced with increasing pressures to acquire English literacy coupled with minimal recognition of their language abilities in their L1? In addition, what are the consequences for multilingual families and communities when educational support is inadequate to develop either English or L1 language and literacy? We explore these questions below.

## **LANGUAGE AND UPROOTED FAMILIES: CHANGING ROLES, CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS**

*If I translate for you when you talk to my mother [at school], Please, don't look at me, look at her when you speak. (Vietnamese teen addressing a group of ESL teachers)*

A group of Southeast Asian youth had just presented a skit at a regional TESOL meeting to illustrate their dilemmas being caught between the worlds of school and home. Afterwards, one teacher invited the players in the skit to give any advice they wanted to their captive audience. The answer of one young man, cited above, illustrates that role reversals between parents and children caused by language use are a cause of discomfort for all involved.

In this section, we look briefly at language use in refugee families. We examine the consequences for families when adults do not have an opportunity to learn English, often for some of the reasons noted above, while at the same time their children are losing their L1. Finally, we invite readers to muse with us about the consequences of patterns of language use when adults can no longer pass on the wisdom of their experience through the generations.

### **Language Use in Refugee Families**

Moving to a new setting entails drastic changes in what Hymes (1972) calls the “communicative economy” as new codes (languages) and new channels (literacy) are introduced into the fabric of daily life and into the “environmental press” (Erickson, 1989) of biliterate contexts in which individuals develop their language and literacy skills and resources (Hornberger, 1989). Because they have more exposure to English, more interaction in English, and more opportunities to study than adults, children of immigrant families acquire English more quickly and extensively than their parents or grandparents. As a result, uprooted adults often have to depend on children to translate documents as well as to interpret encounters with U.S. institutions such as schools, medical centers, or welfare agencies. Some families manage to divide the language labor very efficiently. In one refugee home in Philadelphia, for example, the children read the English mail, the mother reads letters from relatives in the home country aloud to the family, and the eldest daughter, who used her literacy skills to get her driver’s license, has become the family driver. In many homes, every phone call is answered by two people—an adult native-language speaker and a younger English speaker. The superfluous interlocutor then hangs up (Weinstein-Shr, in press). Families manage as interdependent units whose members contribute to the well-being of the whole with complementary skills and resources for making their lives in a new setting.

Early research on multilingual communities tended to focus on how language use *is* related to domain. In a study of Puerto Ricans in Jersey City, for example, Fishman, Cooper, and Ma (1971) found that language use was determined by domains comprised of physical

settings. For most speakers, Spanish was the language of the home and church, whereas English was the language of school. Children tended to use Spanish as soon as they entered their homes. In contrast, several recent studies emphasize how linguistic choice is related to generation. Zentella (1988), for example, in her study of a Puerto Rican community delineates four distinct patterns of communication in Puerto Rican homes. In the majority of families, children hear their parents speak to each other in Spanish and are always spoken to in Spanish by at least one of their parents; children, on the other hand, speak to each other in English. Generational factors of language use also operate outside of the home. In initiating an interaction with a stranger, for example, children tend to greet Latino infants and women of their parents' age and older in Spanish yet use English with young people. In her investigation of Cambodian families, Weinstein-Shr (1992) found that the adults spoke Khmer with one another and to their children. As soon as children started school, the children began to use English with one another and often answered their parents in English. Linguistic choice in the home was thus associated primarily with the generation of the speaker rather than the setting, situation, or even the interlocutor.

One of the most pressing issues for children and adults in refugee families is the negotiation of power and the ascription of authority. Whereas it is clear that new ways of using language both signal and create changes in relationships, little is known about the processes by which roles are renegotiated in immigrant families. In her work with one Cambodian family in western Massachusetts, Bachy (1991) found that English, the language of the schools, was used among children to establish authority over one another in play. In addition, the Khmer-speaking parents themselves began to switch into English using the few phrases they knew to assert authority, with commands like "Go away," "Don't talk," "Sit down," "Be quiet," "Put the toys away." Bachy notes the irony in both parents and children ascribing authority to English, the language over which children have a far superior command.

For some, the reversal of traditional roles associated with language use may be a cause of considerable stress. In one family in Philadelphia, for example, a man did not learn of his son's expulsion from school until 6 months after the fact. The boy left every morning at 8:00 a.m., returned at 4:00 p.m., and was the primary support for translating mail and other English documents. He had successfully intercepted all communications to his father from teachers and administrators. In this case, language use was associated with shifts in power and authority as control over information came into the hands of the child. The loss of control became a source of despair for the man and was surely

equally painful for his troubled son. As recognition grows of the importance of the family unit for the successful adaptation of its members (Sticht & McDonald, 1989), it becomes increasingly critical to understand the processes by which language use contributes to the health and interdependence of the family or to its disintegration.

To what extent has generation become the key feature that defines language use among multilingual communities in the United States? To what extent is the experience of Cambodian and Hmong Americans in Philadelphia and western Massachusetts similar to others in the country? What are the consequences of this pattern of language use? Clearly, more research is needed to explore these questions systematically.

### **Language Loss in Families and Communities**

"I take [English] classes all day, and work at night. When can I teach my children Vietnamese?" This is the complaint of Nghia Thai (1992) in a composition on the topic of families and changes. Alicia Munoz (1992), a young Spanish-speaking woman who is committed to raising her twins bilingually, tells with resignation of her experiences shortly after the twins outgrew their Spanish daycare situation: .

I am observing the process Nicolas and Araceli are following in losing Spanish. . . . As long as the Ninja Turtles and Beauty and the Beast speak English, my children will eventually lose their native tongue.

These are adults who are themselves acquiring English. Despite their own best efforts and intentions, they are watching their children lose their L1, quickly for Thai's preteens, and with slow telltale changes in syntax and lexicon in the speech of Munoz's children.

The consequence of language loss among children is documented in a remarkable survey of 1,100 immigrant and Native American families across the U.S. The No-Cost Study was conducted by the No-Cost Research Group (NCRG), a volunteer effort of over 300 members of the National Association of Bilingual Education (Wong Fillmore, 1991). The aim was to determine the extent to which family language patterns were affected by children's early learning of English in preschool programs. The study included 311 Spanish-speaking families with children in Spanish language preschools who served as a comparison group with families who had children attending English-only or bilingual preschool programs. The preliminary findings indicate that 50% of families with children in L2 preschool programs notice shifts toward English language use at home as opposed to 11% of families in the comparison sample. As Wong Fillmore (1991) notes, "Sad to say, bilingual education does not appear to offer children enough

protection from language shift. . . . 47.2% of the main sample families with children in bilingual preschool programs reported a negative change [i.e., a shift toward English] in family language patterns” (p. 333).

In the families interviewed by the NCRG, like other families described here, parents have minimal if any proficiency in English. Whereas it used to be the case that language loss was a three-generation process, because of early immersion in English settings for children, along with pressures on adults which make it difficult to spend time with their children, in many cases, the process has been accelerated to two generations. Whereas once it might have been grandparents and grandchildren who struggled to communicate, the 1990s are finding increasing numbers of parents and children in the same households who do not share a common tongue.

Wong Fillmore asks, “What do parents do when their children speak mostly English at home, a language that the parents themselves do not know?” (p. 337). The NCRG found that some parents begin to try to switch, despite their minimal command of English. Other parents simply give up. In either case, the situation is difficult. Cambodian parents, baffled by U.S. laws, tell of threats from their children to report them to the police if they hit them (Sun, 1991). One man, after a parenting class on the topic of child abuse, joked bitterly that he would have preferred a session on parent abuse. As adults find that they hold dwindling resources for understanding and guiding their children, a language of connection and the connection itself deteriorate in synchrony.

### **Language and Cultural Transmission**

*I love my grandchildren very much. I am learning English so I can talk to my grandchildren. But I also want them to understand a little Chinese. I think every language is useful!* (Yin, 1992)

Susan Yin, from Burma, was 71 years old when this was written with the help of her tutor. Her sentiments echo those of many refugee elders. Without resort to their native language, they do not have the words they need to tell children what life was like in their country of origin. How can a Hmong child understand the story of her parents’ courtship if she doesn’t have the words for the courtship songs or for the ways in which her father played his courtship serenades on the reed pipe? How can Lao children picture a day planting rice, drawing water, and going to market without the vocabulary for the activities and materials that constituted daily ritual? Moreover, uprooted adults often have riveting stories of narrow escapes, remarkable survival strategies, and terrible losses as they left their homes. To make sense

of experiences that are often puzzling, it is important for these stories to be told and remembered. This is not possible when elders and children do not share a language of telling.

Language is not only the fuel of telling but also for leading. At the Cambodian American Association in Massachusetts, the intergenerational Board of Directors meets to pursue their mission of connecting the Cambodian community with the wider U.S. community while supporting their members in gaining a positive sense of ethnic identity in a U.S. setting (Sun & Edgerly, 1991). In these meetings, which are ostensibly run bilingually, the initiative is clearly in the hands of the younger men who are English speakers. Although the agenda is initially read in both languages, it is written and posted in English. Elders rarely take the floor unless they are invited by a younger member to give an opinion. The meetings are run by the president (a young man), based on principles of U.S. organization. Talk is typically dominated by the youth who may or may not bother to translate the discussion into Khmer for the elders. The input of elders may be sought but usually through private conversation after the meetings are over. Whereas Sun and Edgerly have not explored how decisions are made or the way in which elders may have authority through informal channels, it is their opinion that without the language of the host country, and without knowledge of the rules and norms, the elders have far less "cultural capital" for asserting leadership in mixed-generation groups. The authors suggest that these dynamics bode ill for helping the community strengthen its sense of identity through valuation of traditional wisdom and connections to the past. Ironically, the association itself thus sabotages part of its own mission in its very way of operating. As elders become increasingly marginal, channels for cultural transmission are correspondingly diminished to the detriment, we believe, of elders and children alike.

Adults bring a variety of goals to their quest for native and English language literacies. Among them may be to better manage their material circumstances and to earn a decent living—the goals addressed (to differing degrees of adequacy) by most ESL programs. However, adults have other agendas for literacy which may be equally important if not more pressing to them in the long run: supporting children in their social and moral development as human beings; helping grandchildren know the story of their past; creating circumstances in which their children can succeed without rejecting who they are and where they have come from; ensuring that their children will stay connected enough to take care of them when they grow old. Whereas immediate survival is surely a concern, adults also make meaning both by remembering and telling the past as well as by looking toward the future through the lives of children and grandchildren. The degree to which



there is a shared language will determine the extent to which this is possible.

## **CONCLUSION: SUPPORTING LANGUAGE AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT, SUPPORTING PEOPLE**

In this article, we have examined the expanding role of English using a historical look at immigration and naturalization requirements as one example. In light of the growing importance of English language literacy for access to opportunities in the U. S., we have examined some of the difficulties faced by those adults who wish to develop their English language literacy resources. The difficulties faced by adults in gaining access to English, together with the lack of support for L1 maintenance, creates perplexing problems for intergenerational relationships and transmission of cultural knowledge. We have argued that policies and programs which do not develop L1 language and literacy ignore one of the richest resources held by a community of newcomers, both in terms of individual learning as well as for families and communities in their ability to support their own members.

We have pointed out the basic inconsistency that exists when, on the one hand, various national policies are increasing the role of English while, on the other hand, there is a lack of policy initiatives that would direct resources to develop the needed kinds of literacy programs. In order to remedy this situation, we believe that as a profession, we need to support and advocate policy initiatives that would direct resources to increase the number and kinds of literacy programs offered, making sure that these programs do not deny access to language minorities through obstacles like rigid and arbitrary entry requirements, high costs, or inconvenient hours and locations. Such programs must be educationally sound, employing teachers and administrators who have the training and experience to meet the particular needs of language minorities in terms of their L1 literacy experience as well their cultural background.

We concur with Fingeret (1992) and Crandall (this issue) that there needs to be an infrastructure for literacy instruction which can provide ongoing services that are not constantly disrupted by changes in funding. We believe that this infrastructure will best serve diverse learners if funding is directed toward those organizations that (a) have a history of experience with ESL and literacy and (b) involve participation in both planning and instruction by members of the communities to be served; these organizations need to be given the time and resources to develop creative approaches to the diversity of learner needs. In

this way, learners can find their way to the most appropriate programs, and programs can remain responsive to the goals of those they serve.

We advocate policies, programs, and practices that include a vision of literacy resources as a whole and that take into account the contexts in which the plurality of literacies are and can be used. One logical outcome of this vision is a set of national policies that support the development of native language literacies through L1 literacy classes as well as through the use of L1 literacy as a resource in English classes. Our vision also suggests the need for a more inclusive view of context, where language and literacy use beyond the classroom and workplace are of critical concern. It is through this kind of vision that we can encourage families and communities to develop both English and native literacies as resources for adapting to life in a new setting.

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***Discussion of Klassen & Burnaby  
and McKay & Weinstein-Shr:  
Beyond Assimilationist Literacy  
Policies and Practices***

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**TERRENCE G. WILEY**

*California State University, Long Beach*

**T**he preceding articles by Burnaby and Klassen and by McKay and Weinstein-Shr help point out the disjunction between the assumptions underlying literacy policies and program practices and the experiences of those for whom—but frequently not with whom—they have been developed. These authors demonstrate that the key to understanding language and literacy policies is based upon deconstructing the common assumptions and contradictions which underlie policy formation and program practices. Both articles underscore the importance of ethnographic research as a means of informing policy, particularly regarding those students who would benefit from literacy instruction but who are not enrolled in any program. The examples cited demonstrate that because there is life, language, and literacy beyond the world of English, there are many reasons to acknowledge, maintain, and promote native-language literacy and biliteracy. McKay and Weinstein-Shr's brief historical discussion of language and literacy policies as instruments of gatekeeping offers one example of how these policies have functioned as instruments of social control (Leibowitz, 1974). I will add an interpretive commentary to McKay and Weinstein-Shr's historical discussion, before returning to the articles because an historical-structural approach (see Tollefson, 1991) helps to further understand this function of social control. It also provides a framework for understanding educational remedies as well as the experiences and problems of language minorities.

Historical and contemporary English language and literacy policies can have a number of functions including representing responses of dominant groups to subordinate groups. Official policies and program practices are established through institutions controlled by dominant groups. Thus, the individual experiences of language minorities, as they attempt to acquire literacy and a second language, can also be understood within the context of struggles between groups with un-

equal power and resources. The ability of dominant (or more innocuously “mainstream”) groups to maintain and exercise power depends upon “coercion” and upon “the manufacture of consent” (Herman & Chomsky, 1988, cited in Tollefson, 1991), that is, upon their ability “to gain consent for existing power relationships from those in subordinate positions” (p. 11). Hegemony is achieved when dominant groups create a consensus by convincing others to accept their norms and expectations and when they can convince those who fail within the system to view their failure as a personal problem. In this regard, Lewis (1978) has noted that in the U. S., most people see inequity as being “merely personal, a function of biographical circumstance. They do not perceive their biographies in cultural context, and consequently even their troubles will move them to attempt the reconstruction of that culture which in fact serves them so poorly” (p. 191).

Language and literacy policies have been used coercively by dominant groups to suppress oppositional uses of literacy; to bar or restrict access to education, voting, and economic participation; and even to restrict public speech. However, they have also been used—often under the guise of educational remedy—to promote and to impose the behavioral norms and values of dominant groups. Through such efforts, dominant groups legitimize their own language and cultural practices as well as their economic and political dominance (see Donald, 1991; Leibowitz, 1969, 1971, 1974). Dominant groups operating through the state and influential private institutions as well as through the media can assume a number of postures toward immigrant and minority languages including (a) suppression through the use of external force; (b) repression through either external force or internalized self-restraint; (c) tolerance; (d) accommodation; or even (e) promotion of minority languages (see Kloss, 1971, 1977; Mullard, 1989; Phillipson, 1989).

Historically, decisions to suppress or to restrict minority languages as well as decisions to impose dominant language and literacy policies have been linked to the attitudes of dominant groups toward subordinate groups. In the U. S., language discrimination and the imposition of English requirements have been linked to other types of discrimination as Leibowitz (1969, 1971, 1974) demonstrates in his analysis of the experiences of various language minority groups including immigrant groups (e.g., Germans), indigenous groups (e.g., Native Americans), colonized groups (e.g., Puerto Ricans), and involuntary immigrants (e.g., African Americans). He concludes that the motivation to impose English language and literacy requirements has been based upon the “degree of hostility” of the majority toward the language minority group “usually because of race, color, or religion” (Leibowitz, 1971, p. 4).

Even during periods of relative tolerance toward immigrant languages, for example, from roughly 1789 to 1880, English literacy policies were used to discriminate against both language minority groups and against speakers of English (Leibowitz, 1969, 1974; Weinberg, 1977). To cite just a few examples in the U. S., “compulsory ignorance” laws made it a crime to assist enslaved African Americans in acquiring literacy in most southern states until the Civil War (Weinberg, 1977). Literacy requirements were also used to discriminate against English-speaking immigrants whose ethnicity and religion were considered undesirable. During the 1850s, the Massachusetts and Connecticut legislatures passed English literacy requirements designed to restrict Irish Catholics from voting. After Reconstruction, this practice was used in the South to bar African Americans from voting (Leibowitz, 1974). English-only Indian boarding schools were used as vehicles to eradicate native languages and cultures. The imposition of English and the denial of native language literacy instruction led to a decline in overall Cherokee literacy (Weinberg, 1977).

However, there is not always a consensus among competing powerful groups. From roughly 1880 to the early 1920s, powerful factions within the dominant society took opposing stances with respect to the imposition of immigration-related literacy requirements. Nativists, who sought racial, cultural, and linguistic dominance, battled industrialists, who wanted cheap labor through open immigration policies. Trade unionists, who feared being undercut by a steady flow of cheap foreign labor, found themselves allied with nativists. Through restrictive language and literacy policies, nativists won symbolic victories, first, in 1906, when an oral English requirement for naturalization was imposed, and then again in 1917, when a literacy requirement (which was not limited to English literacy) was passed over President Wilson’s veto (Leibowitz, 1974). However, as these requirements proved inadequate to fulfill their intended purpose, nativists openly advocated an ethnically biased immigration quota system. A preliminary law was passed in 1921, largely as a consequence of the depression of 1920–1921, and then “perfected” as the 1924 Immigration Act, which drastically restricted unacceptable European groups and barred all Japanese immigrants—just as earlier policies had excluded the Chinese. In fact, the precedent for racially biased immigration policies had been established early in U.S. history as the passage of the Naturalization Act of 1790 had restricted naturalization to whites (M. Weinberg, personal communication, 1993). The ethnic quotas of the 1920s achieved what language and literacy policies of the early 20th century had not.

However, in advance of this drastic step, millions of immigrants and their children had entered the country. Nativists sought to ensure the absolute dominance of English and of Anglocentric culture by



attacking both public and private uses of German and other languages (Leibowitz, 1971, 1974; Luebke, 1980). Contemporaneous with these coercive measures, Americanizers put forth educational agendas to manufacture consent under the guise of educational remedy. The nativist program for remedying the societal ills of cultural and linguistic diversity was one of rendering non-English-speaking immigrants more acceptable through English literacy education and Americanization. For the industrialists, the goal of producing compliant workers was to be achieved by minimizing unionism. Through the Americanization movement, nativist and industrialist factions found a common interest by promoting an educational program of behavioral assimilation or acculturation through the acquisition of "the basic habits, attitudes, and life-style of an embracing [dominant] national culture" (Weiss, 1982, p. xii). Americanizers expected immigrants to surrender their first language and culture as payment for their admission. Their loss of language and culture would be compensated for by the promise of acceptability and by the possibility of social mobility if they acquired oral English and English literacy. Then as now, many literacy advocates assumed that "illiteracy" (more specifically, the absence of English literacy) caused unemployment and criminal behavior. Illiteracy, according to Brodkey, was perceived as a "personal misery" with "public consequences" (p. 164) that could only be abrogated through the intervention of language and literacy programs. The ideology of remedy, however, promised more. It offered the lure of structural acculturation or social mobility by "entrance of immigrants and their descendants into the social cliques, organizations, institutional activities, and general civic life of the receiving society" (Weiss, 1982, p. xii). Success in the dominant society was then ideologically attributable to utilizing educational opportunity and to acquiring literacy, or as Collins (1991) explains:

The idea of mobility hinges on the belief that there is equal opportunity in education and through education, opportunity for social mobility and a more equitable society. . . . the germane point is that the idea of mobility through literacy and education remains persuasive, despite . . . the historical experience of most people. . . . By defining the relevant measures of social position narrowly enough, social mobility seems to work: We succeed through our "own" efforts, as represented by the match of education and job. (pp. 234–235)

If English and literacy were seen as the cures for personal and social ills, then the failure to achieve them could be rationalized as individual failure.

In retrospect, Americanization programs had only marginal success in promoting behavioral assimilation (conformity), and they had even

less in the direction of structural assimilation (mobility). Whereas mobility is related to education, it has largely been so intergenerationally. Children have tended to fare slightly better than their parents, but education has tended to follow—or co-occur with—mobility, rather than to precede it. Economic and social gains have been more the results of long-term organized efforts to win better working conditions and benefits than of the acquisition of English language and literacy. Many of these gains occurred as a result of the great expansion of unionism during the 1930s, and many of the new unionists were from the “undesirable” groups who had been targeted by the 1924 immigration Act (M. Weinberg, personal communication, 1993).

What are some of the implications here for the articles at hand? First, the ethnographic descriptions of individual experiences cited in both articles provide a basis from which to critique policy ideologies which see social and economic inequity to be largely the result of individual language and literacy problems. Second, McKay and Weinstein-Shr’s discussion correctly links the language and literacy policy function of gatekeeping to a deeper societal issue, that is, ethnic/racial conflict—to which we may add class conflicts. They aptly note the contradiction between imposing strong requirements and expectations that all must learn English and become English literate while not providing enough classes to meet the high demand of language minorities for this remedy. The authors observe that even when enough classes are available, many students find it difficult to access them because the registration, enrollment, and classroom practices—when not supported by translators and bicultural personnel—seem to presume an expertise in English literacy before it is even taught. Often, important provisions like child care are left out of programs, thus excluding many parents from classroom education. McKay and Weinstein-Shr explain that the culturally learned classroom expectations of some students contradict the competitive expectations of U.S. classrooms. Unwittingly, such classrooms may presume a knowledge of behavioral norms which have not been taught. This failure to accommodate other learning styles, if only to the extent of making norms of the target culture explicit, represents an example of a negative—even if unintentional—institutional response to the student’s native culture. Ignoring the student’s native language and culture may become the functional equivalent of repressing them. From an ideological perspective, McKay and Weinstein-Shr’s discussion suggests that the existence of programs as treatments for language and literacy “problems” masks program insufficiencies and causes students who fail to access or benefit from them to bear blame for their “problems” outside the classroom.

Expanding on the authors’ discussion, I would add that by failing to assess and build upon a student’s L 1 and native cultural resources,

the student's instructional identity and status is defined entirely on the basis of the English language and English literacy. In addition to sound pedagogical reasons for acknowledging these resources (e.g., as means of promoting second language acquisition and literacy), there are other reasons to tolerate, accommodate, incorporate, and promote native language literacy as these authors point out. Maintenance of the native language within the family provides an intergenerational bridge between elders and children. As McKay and Weinstein-Shr observe, traditional family roles are challenged when children assume the role of language and literacy brokers in L2 (see Wong Fillmore, 1991). Here, too, there are lessons from the past. Montalto (1982) concludes that the assimilationist Americanization movement became a victim of its partial success: It succeeded in lowering the status of the home culture in the eyes of children who failed to fully acculturate according to the norms of the dominant society. Failure to accommodate and promote the home culture was noted by social scientists of the 1920s and 1930s who decried the widespread loss of parental authority and the rise of juvenile delinquency among European American immigrant youths (Montalto, 1982).

Burnaby and Klassen challenge common stereotypes within the dominant ideology related to functional illiteracy and demonstrate the limitations of program prescriptions that seem unable to accommodate those most in need. Their findings can be used to challenge the efficacy of programs that seem to offer only behavioral conformity (i.e., of only basic oral English and minimal English literacy) to those who lack prior schooling. Moreover, their examples illustrate that many who are presumed to be functionally illiterate nevertheless can operate at marginally acceptable levels within the economy. These Canadian immigrants, like their counterparts in the U.S. and in several European countries, survive by finding niches in the economy doing the work that members of the dominant society find unacceptable because of low pay, low job status, and/or poor working conditions. Burnaby and Klassen's examples give reason for pause and point to the need for a reconsideration of dominant views about the fundamental educational needs of marginalized language minorities. Their examples of students who find classroom content and instructional processes irrelevant to their needs parallel the experiences of students during the high tide of the Americanization movement in the U.S. when "the foreign-born voted with their feet every time they decided whether or not to go to class" (McClymer, 1982, p. 103).

The examples also suggest the persistence of native-country attitudes within the ESL classroom as a contributing factor to the dropout rate. Here, inappropriate placement and grouping only intensify alienation. Classroom competition between "those who know" and those who do

not, aggravates former social class and racial inequities. Native-country class and racial attitudes can resurface within the host country ESL classroom. Placement policies contribute to competitive inequity by treating both the schooled and the unschooled as if they were members of the same group just because they come from the same country or region. In the jargon of daily practice, they are all treated as “beginners,” “level ones,” or even “zeroes,” as they are all too frequently placed together in mixed beginner classes (McKay & Weinstein-Shr).

Adding to Burnaby and Klassen’s discussion, I offer the following analysis. In most ESL contexts, assessment and placement practices are solely based on L2 language proficiency. Assessment all too frequently ignores a student’s prior educational history in L1. Ignoring information about the L1 is functionally equivalent to repressing it. Also, ignoring information about lack of prior schooling disadvantages unschooled students when familiarity with classroom practices is expected. Because language proficiency is normally measured by school-based or schoollike tests, entry L2 proficiency is largely a function of prior schooling—even more so if the student has formally studied EFL. Beyond these issues, there may also be additional residual L1 social dialect biases in assessment because many immigrants are speakers of nondominant varieties of their L1. Beyond this, some students may not even be native speakers of their presumed L1. Some students from Central and South America and from Mexico are native speakers of Indian languages rather than of Spanish. Speakers of nondominant varieties in L1 and nonnative speakers of a presumed L1 (that is not really their native language) are thus faced with a double stigma from both the host (L2) and the native (L1) societies. Students’ prior social class and their ethnic and racial status contribute to what takes place in class. Thus, there is a need to examine whether assessment and placement practices in some cases actually promote failure and perpetuate native-country social inequities under the appearance of remedy. Specifically, there is a need to rethink assessment procedures which focus only on L2 proficiencies, and there is a need to abandon stigmatizing constructs such as “semilingualism” that confuse prior educational opportunity and school-based literacy in a standard language with language proficiency. Broader learner profiles are needed to take these factors into consideration.

Burnaby and Klassen make an important observation in noting that some immigrants with little prior schooling have learned to cope with their language and literacy problems by developing relationships with trusted contacts in “business, government, and medical offices,” by “asking for favors.” Thus, so-called functional illiterates can be functional within an extended community of support. Similarly, when the more privileged, educated members of the dominant society require

technical knowledge and professional assistance within specialized domains of literacy, such as law or accounting, they use their networks. They retain highly specialized professionals who act as their literacy surrogates and who assist them with their literacy problems. The obvious difference is that the wealthy pay for their voice to be heard, whereas the nonliterate poor can only seek favors. Because both the privileged and those lacking privileges must rely on literacy networks to have their voices heard, there is a need to acknowledge that literacy problems can be accommodated by developing community networks of support even as literacy programs are provided for them.

Both McKay and Weinstein-Shr and Burnaby and Klassen also point to the value and positive functions of native language literacy in language minority communities. Beyond their roles in these communities, native language newspapers, media, advertising, and bilingual ballots provide vehicles for participation and voice in the larger society. Thus, beyond the issue of English literacy, there is the issue of literacy in general. In this regard, Arturo Madrid of the Tomás Rivera Center in Claremont, California, in an interview with commentator Bill Moyers, noted that the majority of illiterates are monolingual who speak only English. He reasoned that their "problem" is not one of the language of instruction but rather one of literacy—literacy not for its own sake, but literacy which gives one "a public voice" and empowerment, that is, the "feeling that your vote makes a difference, that you have the same legal protections that everybody else does, that you have similar economic opportunities, and that you can go into a space in America and be treated appropriately" (Moyers, 1989, p. 217). Thus, to promote voice both in native language communities and in the larger society, we must think more broadly than in terms of the behavioral and structural assimilationist remedies of the past which have restricted literacy only to English" literacy. Nations such as India, which are far more linguistically diverse than the U. S., have seen the positive value of promoting many literacies for participation and national unity (Pat-tanayak, 1989).

Assimilationist remedies of the dominant ideology unnecessarily dichotomize the language situation and language choices of language minorities. We must consider the positive roles that native language literacy can play without assuming that a total linguistic and cultural assimilation into the dominant group is desirable, necessary, or inevitable. We must consider, with McKay and Weinstein-Shr, the positive intergenerational functions that literacy within the family can play. And with Burnaby and Klassen, we must recognize the practical and personal functions native language literacy plays within language minority communities. We must think beyond the confines of a monolingual English ideology that confuses English oral language proficiency

with English literacy (Vargas, 1986) and that equates the lack of English literacy with illiteracy, even when the so-called illiterate read and write other languages. We must think about literacy as both a community and individual resource. And, we must be wary of the language and literacy policies that see English literacy as the sole remedy for economic and social inequities.

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## ***Participator Education in a South African Context: Contradictions and Challenges***

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**CAROLINE KERFOOT**

*Use, Speak and Write English*

This paper describes and critiques a participatory ESL curriculum development project within a South African nongovernmental organisation. It locates this project within the political and economic context as South Africa moves from apartheid towards democracy. The contradictions inherent in developing participatory curricula and materials for large-scale use are described, and the choices made to reconcile them discussed. The paper ends with a discussion of the challenges facing adult basic education (ABE) in the future and suggests some directions for development.

I was born in Zwelethemba Location in Worcester. There when I was seven years I start at school. And I carry on. Till up to Standard 5. My mother didn't have money for me to carry on at school. Because my father was just disappear when we still sapouse to go to school. Then I had to leave school and go to work on the grapes farm, and I carry on until I'm 16 years. Then my aunt find me a job in Cape Town. There they start to pay me R15,00 [\$6] per week, but my aunt didn't have rights to live in Cape Town. We were living in Modderdam Bush. Sometimes we have to getup about 4:30 a.m. because we don't have rights to live in Cape Town. We must run away every day like that and the police charge us every day. Then they decide to demolish all the shacks in that bush. Then we sleep in the open grounds for about two weeks. One of the church fathers came to the camp one evening to fetch us to the church hall in Rondebosch because it was raining. There we live for two weeks again, then one morning the police soround the church to arrest us and then they take us to Pollsmoor Prison. There we were fine R30 [\$12] each. We moved to another location what's called Crossroad. There the setuwation was still the same, we also get arrested. (Cynthia Bushwana, 1987, Cape Town. Reproduced with permission.)

**T**he author of this text, a literacy learner, is just one of millions of South Africans caught in a reality that is not of their making.



Improved English and/or literacy skills would have made no difference to her experience. Words are no use against bulldozers and police batons: "Literacy as empowerment" is an illusion in any society where deeply entrenched structural inequalities are enforced by institutionalized violence.

Although several progressive literacy organisations have worked alongside the liberation movements in the struggle for freedom, their scope has been restricted by minimal funding, scant human and material resources, and in some cases, state harassment. Altogether, these organisations reached perhaps 5,000 learners a year, a fraction of the 15 million in need of literacy and English language skills (French, 1992; National Education Policy Investigation, 1992). A shift in the balance of power in South Africa was finally achieved after sustained assaults on the economic and political structures of apartheid, using tools such as mass action, boycotts, and pressure for international sanctions. It would seem therefore that it is the power system in force, rather than any value inherent in literacy itself, that determines the power literacy has in any society (Rogers, 1991).

## **THE ROLE OF ENGLISH**

The term *literacy*, already fraught with ambiguities, is complicated in South Africa by the fact that competence in a second language, usually English, is often more necessary for survival than the ability to read and write in an African language. Although the hegemony of English in political spheres may be reduced by a policy of regional bilingualism, English will still hold the key to economic advancement (Clifford & Kerfoot, 1992; Lyster, 1992).

However, the role of English during the years of apartheid has been controversial. For the majority of South Africans, the experience of English as an official language has been one of poverty, low wages, selective justice, and biased media (Ndebele, 1987). On the other hand, during the last decade, English has become the carrier for discourses of democracy and freedom and a way of achieving solidarity across different language groups in the liberation struggle.

In this article, after a brief outline of the current status of adult basic education (ABE), I will examine one organisation's attempt to develop participatory curricula and materials for large-scale use. I will describe some of the contradictions encountered and discuss the choices made to reconcile them. Finally, I will look at the future of ESL/literacy work in South Africa and the major challenges it faces.

## **ADULT BASIC EDUCATION IN 1993: RHETORIC AND REALITY**

Literacy for all has always been on the agenda of the liberation movements and is listed as a goal of "People's Education for People's Power" as drafted by the National Education Crisis Committee (SASPU National, 1987, p. 29). The African National Congress (1992) recently committed itself to "the development and provision of adult education (including general education, literacy, and numeracy) to a level equivalent to a school-leaving certificate" (p. 57). However, it is not clear whether a new government will have the funds to implement such a system (Bird, 1991; Economic Policy Study Group, 1991). Redressing the ravages of apartheid is a monumental task and ABE is not yet a prominent feature of reconstruction discourse. As one learner remarked with a tinge of bitterness, "People are marching for many things, but no one marches for adult education."

The position today is one in which the literacy leadership in the country is roughly equal to the staff of a large high school and in which all the providers in the country, including the state and industry, reach exactly 1% of those in need of basic education (French, 1992). The infrastructure for an effective ABE system is nonexistent with only a handful of night schools, perhaps two community colleges, no recognised training for teachers, no pool of skilled teachers on which to draw, no coherent accreditation for learners, and a dire shortage of sound learning materials.

As South Africa gears itself for democracy, literacy organisations have been seeking ways to make the skills and experience gained over the past decade available on a wider scale. The next section describes and critiques the attempts of one such organisation to prepare for large-scale initiatives while retaining as many as possible of the advantages of small-scale, local projects.

### **THE USWE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PROJECT**

Use, Speak and Write English (USWE) is a nongovernmental education project. Until 1990, funding was provided by overseas development agencies and churches. More recently, funds have come largely from the European Economic Community and the South African Independent Development Trust. USWE was set up in 1981 in response to a request from black workers for help with English language skills. These workers were well aware of how lack of proficiency in English

effectively silenced them and prevented them from obtaining information, claiming rights, or resisting exploitation.

Accordingly, USWE's main aim became to help adults with little or no formal schooling acquire the skills and knowledge they need to play an active part in the process of social and political change. The organisation strove to be a project in the sense discussed by Simon (1987), as "an activity determined by both real and present conditions, *and* certain conditions still to come which it is trying to bring into being" (p. 372).

A second and related aim was to research and develop effective ways of teaching and learning in situations characterised by a complete lack of resources, inexperienced teachers, and difficult learning contexts. Action research, as a way of linking theory and practice, became the working mode of the project.

The legacy of apartheid has meant that people with appropriate skills and qualifications are scarce, and the project has had to train its own staff at all levels in order to respond to the needs of increasingly varied learning groups. Organisations for which USWE provides classes in 1993 include trade unions, community health workers, media workers, "squatter" communities, and cooperatives.

Most classes take place in the vast shanty towns which have sprung up outside Cape Town, as they have around all South African cities. Class discussions continually reflect the contradictory voices of learners, shaped by a racist and patriarchal society, facing new difficulties daily, and yet grappling creatively with the issues of our time. As indicated in these examples from class discussions, reasons for coming to class have as much to do with political powerlessness as with economic imperatives:

1. If liberation is there, we must have say to the government. If we are not educated, how can we say something to these people? . . . If we are not educated, we will suffer until we die.
2. People have become wild, they are not afraid to kill. The educated oppress the uneducated, they suck their strength and lives. We are oppressed not only by whites, but by educated blacks.

Despite these harsh realities, the joy of learning is a constant feature:

3. Education is a spice of life.

Teachers are usually drawn from these communities and offered in-service education over the course of a year. Most have not completed high school and have no previous teaching experience. However, they have the crucial advantage of a sensitive understanding of the needs and concerns of learners and are able to provide the scaffolding necessary for effective learning (Crandall, this issue). Classes are held wher-

ever possible, in church halls or learners' shacks. Disruptions are frequent, through marches, boycotts, funerals, or personal factors, such as seasonal work or illness. Children and noise are a constant feature. Yet people come, and against all odds, they learn.

In most cases, the need for literacy or language skills has grown out of community initiatives to act for change. Literacy becomes a means through which people can develop their own potential and that of their organisations. For example, in the Philani weaving project, situated in the Khayelitsha and Crossroads "squatter camps" outside Cape Town, the need for English and numeracy skills arose when the women involved decided to sell their mats at markets outside their own communities. Women who attend the ESL/literacy classes frequently go on to take up organisational positions within Philani structures. Learners in other contexts have become literacy teachers, child care workers, secretaries, and shop stewards. Learning groups have fought evictions, wrongful arrests, and unfair dismissals; they have participated in strike actions and protests over land, "squatter" rights, and working conditions.

Nonetheless, although participatory education methods have led to growth and change, these changes are limited to the individual or group level. Literacy and language skills cannot of themselves bring about the massive social change needed at this time. If learners have no structured access to economic, social, and political resources, they have little hope of using their literacy skills to real effect (Miller, 1985; Swift & Levin, 1987).

## **RATIONALE FOR THE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PROJECT**

In all the above contexts, learning goals and content were negotiated with each group and control over the process rested largely with the learners. However, given the enormity of the demand for ABE in a situation characterised by an almost total lack of suitable resources and skilled teachers, such a learner-centred approach is not feasible on a wider scale. The challenge USWE faces is to remain true to deeply held beliefs about the process of adult education and language learning, and yet to begin to address some of the overwhelming difficulties facing adult educators in South Africa.

Our aims are twofold:

1. To research and develop alternative (i.e., counterhegemonic) curricula that embody the ideals of "People's Education for People's Power" (Gardiner, 1987; Peirce, 1989; SASPU National, 1987) while providing access to further education or training

2. To challenge current processes of curriculum development by working from the grassroots level upwards to ensure that learners' voices and needs are heard

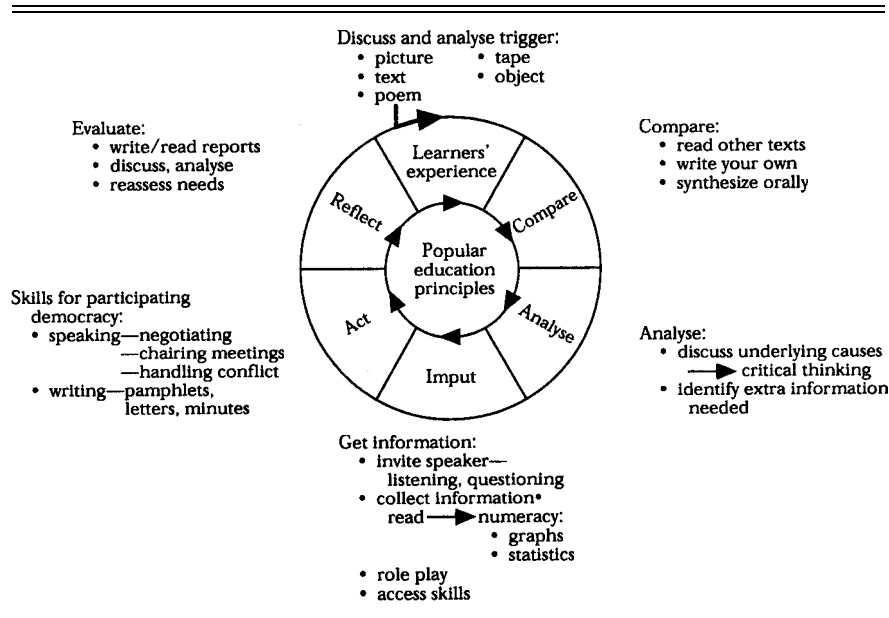
The rationale therefore draws on current thinking about the economic and political value of critical and lateral thinking skills (Lloyd, in press; National Education Crisis Committee, 1986) as well as aspects of postmodern thought, which comprehends the world holistically as a "network of interconnections" (Giroux, 1981, p. 45), sees knowledge as personal and transformative rather than absolute and cumulative (Doll, 1987; Macdonald, 1988), and promotes a more integrative approach to subject matter (Doll, 1987; Lankshear, 1987). Integral to this approach is an awareness of the relationship between language and power, of how "power precedes and invades speech" (Cherryholmes, 1988, p. 48). The theoretical framework is a critical constructivist one which aims to explore how personal life choices, or the lack of them, are brokered through systems of power and control and then, on the basis of this understanding, to investigate ways of bringing about changes.

## **DEVELOPING A CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK**

Figure 1 was originally a conceptual model developed to facilitate day-to-day planning within a learner-centred approach. It was not an inflexible sequence but intended as a guide for a multidirectional, context-dependent process. It illustrates three key curriculum principles: the meshing of problem-posing and adult education principles with second language teaching principles, the integration of content and process, and the combining of the four language skills in the service of particular tasks or purposes. When we began to look at ways of transforming this process into a set of materials that could be made more widely available, we reexamined the model as a possible curriculum framework.

Popular education principles form the organizing framework (within the circle), beginning with learners' own lives and experiences, then reflecting these experiences back to them for critical analysis. This analysis forms the basis for identifying needed skills and for careful planning for change. The writing around the periphery shows how language learning tasks can be integrated with a popular education approach. Each list of sample language learning tasks around the periphery corresponds to a stage in the popular education cycle within the circle.

**FIGURE 1**  
**A Curriculum Framework for Participatory ESL Education**



Second language learning built around this process assumes a discourse-based approach where each task is generated by a wider social reality. Learning English is thus far more than learning a language. It is a powerful vehicle for acquiring conceptual tools and learning strategies which can be transferred to a variety of contexts.

**MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT**

There is an obvious and fundamental tension between the ideals of popular education and critical literacy and specifying, let alone sequencing, learning materials. However, a middle way had to be found. In the two sections that follow, I examine USWE's attempt to translate its curriculum framework into workable materials. In analyzing to what extent these materials are really developed through participatory practice, I describe some of the contradictions that arise and discuss the choices we have made so far to try and reconcile them. The twin concepts of voice and ownership are the tools used in this analysis.

## **Voice**

There are two major contradictions that immediately confront anyone attempting to develop participatory curricula for large-scale use. The first has to do with needs, the second with content.

### ***Whose needs?***

A participatory curriculum should begin with the learners' needs and be continually renegotiated. However, learners' needs cannot always be the sole measure of what is necessary. People's needs are shaped by their circumstances as well as by what they perceive the options to be (Lovett, Clarke, & Kilmurray, 1983).

In addition, Lovett et al. have pointed out that adult educators must face the need to "specify definite bodies of knowledge and principles of inquiry which fit in with the political aspirations of the educational project" (p. 143). A community planning project, for example, can require an understanding of economic and environmental issues as well as basic research and map-reading skills. As it is, most communities are forced to rely heavily on representatives to negotiate for them. If we are serious about informed participation, then learners must have the opportunity to acquire concepts in a range of interconnected fields.

Who defines the needed knowledge and on what grounds? In the long run, the content of a curriculum for ABE needs to be a product of broad consensus among key players in the country and those who will experience it. However, it is unlikely that new materials produced on the basis of consensus will be available for at least 5 years. The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has recently begun a participatory research project which, however, represents only about 10% of those in need of ABE (Kraak, 1992). The National Literacy Co-operation (NLC), of which USWE is a founding member, is a coordinating body set up in 1988 to represent the interests of progressive literacy organisations. Over the past 2 years, it has attempted to set up working groups around core curricula, but lack of funding and vast distances have so far made progress difficult.

The themes which form the content in the USWE curriculum were drawn from those that have emerged repeatedly over the years in a wide variety of groups, from unionised workers to women in development projects. These were then discussed with teachers and learners and a core negotiated. At this stage, the themes are knowledge and education, living conditions, geography and environment, history, and economics. Science and technology have been added for obvious reasons.

### ***Whose issues?***

In a participatory curriculum, learners are engaged in the curriculum development at every stage of the process. Learning content will thus differ from group to group. The curriculum is generated lesson by lesson, based on the issues that arise, the reactions of the group, and the learning tasks that flow from these. Learners in different communities or contexts will shape very different curricula from an identical starting point.

However, as soon as materials created with one group are given to another, the potential for silencing exists. For example, materials developed out of conditions in overcrowded, single-sex hostels are unlikely to reflect the lived reality of farmworkers in isolated areas. We have attempted to address this contradiction between the local and the general in two ways: first, through a participatory process of materials development and second, through a methodology based on critical thinking.

In developing materials, writers working on a particular theme look at all the material filed by US WE over the years. A draft outline of a unit is drawn up and discussed with teachers. Where necessary, experts in the content field are consulted. Checklists of key concepts and learning skills are drawn up to guide writers in their creation of tasks. Although the process is consultative, many teachers lack the broad general knowledge to be able to assess the logic of the outline or to pinpoint its weaknesses. These tend to emerge through practice.

The participatory process is strongest at the next phase of development: All USWE teachers meet once a week to comment on proposed texts and tasks. Small groups of teachers who are piloting the materials try out various texts in class and give feedback. The whole group then makes the final choice of texts. Learners' comments or writings are incorporated into the materials to ensure that learner concerns and views are represented and feed into the next lesson. Learners' remarks are often used to offer comment on a text. For example, commenting on an official speech about "Native Education," a learner remarked: "They have called us many things: Bantu, Native, Plural, but we are Africans. They didn't want us to really belong to Africa." This was incorporated into the materials to open up the issue of naming for exploration.

Teachers' suggestions, difficulties, and misunderstandings are used to guide the writing of the teachers' notes. Each new lesson shows gaps or weaknesses in the content, sequencing, or logic of previous lessons: Once a whole unit has been piloted, all lessons are rewritten to try and improve the overall flow. The next draft is piloted by fellow



members of the National Literacy Co-operation around the country to evaluate appropriacy and effectiveness in different contexts.

Whereas this participatory development process ensures that content included is representative of a range of interests, there will always be groups for whom the experience and concerns reflected in the materials are alien. I believe, however, that this does not have to be a stumbling block but can become an avenue for creative exploration. Consider, for example, the following text taken from a collection of writings by migrant workers attending literacy classes:

4. I am a woman.  
I come from the Orange Free State.  
I attend the Methodist Church.  
I am a member of Manyano.  
I am the mother of my daughter.  
I am the father of my daughter.  
I am the grandmother of my grandchild.  
I am the grandfather of my grandchild.  
All I want is a house of my own, in the homelands or any other place.  
(Jane Hoko, cited in Kerfoot, 1985, p. 2)

Behind the apparently straightforward construction of an identity, lies the whole distorted fabric of South African society: forced migrant labour which tore families apart and left women to care for their families alone and in poverty; the consequent drift of young women to the cities in search of jobs, leaving grandparents to look after children; the role of the church, often conservative, but offering much-needed support; the laws preventing ownership of land by blacks outside certain areas, and so on.

Learner writings such as these form an ideal basis for social analysis, for examining the link between the personal and the political. Our methodology encourages learners to discuss and analyze their own experiences in the light of that portrayed in the text, to look for patterns of similarity and difference and to seek underlying causes. In this way, personal troubles are seen in a broader context as public issues (Mills, cited in Lankshear, 1987), and change becomes objectively possible.

This approach has two further advantages. First, it eliminates the danger of learners uncritically accepting or reproducing the relations of inequality embedded in people's consciousness by years of apartheid and traditional role relationships. Whereas there is a need to affirm life histories and validate knowledge, if this affirmation is not critically understood, it may be reinforced in other learners. A quote from a group discussion such as "the girls is for inside, not outside" works very well as a trigger for debate but cannot be reproduced in this form in materials. The materials themselves must provide the evidence on

which to judge, reflect a variety of opinions, and explicitly challenge traditional views on race/gender/class by showing that there are other ways to be.

An additional advantage of a critical questioning approach to learning is that, in moving beyond their own personal experience, learners can build a sense of community with other learners across the country. They can share common meanings and encounter new ideas or arguments in a spirit of enquiry (Williams, cited in Gregory, 1991). The voice reflected in the materials then becomes just one of many possible voices to be accepted or contested in the continuing development of one's own voice.

Although teachers consistently report a high level of emotional and intellectual engagement with the materials, both learners and teachers sometimes express concern that the need to explore issues in depth in the first language may prejudice the development of grammatical competency in English. However, this need not be a contradiction. Engaging learners in discussion and critical analysis in their first language accelerates the acquisition of unfamiliar concepts and new learning skills and ensures that subsequent English language learning is well contextualized and can be put to purposeful use.

One contradiction remains: Although every attempt is made to place the locus of control in the hands of the learners and teachers, to let them direct and shape the curriculum, in the final analysis it is the writer's instinct, insight, and reasoning which dictates the final form of the materials. It is the writer who must judge the possible relevance of material, developed with 30 odd learning groups, for widely differing groups in a variety of contexts. The writer's ideological bias will be implicit in the texts selected, the questions raised, the kinds of tasks included. Whereas this can be a form of political affirmation (Popkewitz, cited in Giroux, 1981), it raises the question of whose values and beliefs are represented. Whose voice is it really? This problem is compounded when, as in South Africa, most language teaching materials are still written by whites for blacks. Although in the USWE materials, every attempt is made to use texts created by learners or their communities, to use these texts to interrogate "official" texts, to build in open-ended discussion questions, evaluation and negotiation, to adhere to the principles and processes of People's Education, the question of voice remains ambivalent.

### **Ownership**

Ownership is greatest where learners have a sense of control over the process of learning. Commenting on USWE's work, a British Council adviser has written:

The initiatives in question appear to be characterised by a co-operative and collaborative principle. All those involved appear to contribute to the development of the programme; there is . . . an ongoing and formative needs analysis in process. This strategy would have the effect of promoting a sense of ownership of the program among the members of the learning group, a prerequisite for success in this field. (Nuttall, cited in USWE, 1989)

However, once the materials move outside the context of production, other methods of promoting ownership must be sought. USWE materials try to link learners constantly to an outside world of language and print, to refer them to other options and other materials, to build in the right to question or challenge the teacher, and to negotiate other goals, but this will always remain within an imposed framework. However participatory the process of development, once materials are in print, they tend to become fixed. Although it is possible to make the materials interactive and open-ended, there is a danger that materials will become a new "regime of truth" that will determine "what can be said and what must remain unsaid" (Popkewitz, 1987, p. 4).

The only way of countering this closure is through a methodology that encourages critical thinking, and the key to this process is the teacher. It may well be that on this factor alone the curriculum could fail. For example, brainstorming the reasons why people did not go to school as children produces a range of responses from parents' attitudes toward education, poverty, having to help at home, and laziness. An untrained and insensitive teacher might not think to explore the self-applied label of "lazy." If she did, she would find that lazy meant not being able to face a 10-mile walk in freezing temperatures with no shoes. However, if the discussion is not pushed to these deeper levels of analysis, learners' sense that they or their families were somehow at fault will not be dispelled. The link between the personal and the social will not be made and the goal of the materials will not be met.

Teacher development is thus crucial to curriculum innovation (Bartlett, 1990; Stenhouse, 1975). However, for the next few years and probably well beyond, most teachers will have no access to training and will not have completed high school. This knowledge led us to question whether the pedagogical process could be built in so that it became an integral part of the materials and yet left scope for flexibility. Where teachers have no access to any other resources, suggesting that the teacher encourage critical analysis by asking *why is* pointless if she cannot get beyond the catch-all "because of apartheid." Learners must be able to analyze graphs and statistics, examine a variety of texts written from different perspectives, and draw their own conclusions. The teacher's role is to push learners to think, to question assumptions, and to resist impositions.

Despite our efforts, we have to accept that many teachers will ignore

tasks and modes of working that are unfamiliar (Marshall, 1990) or assimilate them to traditional ways of relating to students (Rudy, cited in White, 1988). To a large extent, we will be imposing a methodology that may not be owned by the teachers in what we perceive to be, perhaps mistakenly, in the learners' best interests.

Although the short-term prospect appears difficult, the curriculum has been developed with a clear vision of future provision in mind. The materials are being developed in conjunction with an in-service teacher education course that aims to provide guidance and support for reflective teaching. In the long-term, a system of regional centres will be able to offer such training and to ensure that these, or any other materials, can be used selectively and creatively.

### **Assessment**

The final contradiction concerns the need for nationally recognised standards in order for courses to articulate with other education and training initiatives. Although this need is undeniable, there is an obvious tension between national standards and emancipator practice, between product and process. Progress made in a curriculum which focuses on how to think, not what to think, and on the deepening of metacognitive skills often lies beneath the surface (Auerbach, 1986; Clifford, 1992).

The curriculum development process outlined above offers a unique opportunity for curriculum to drive assessment (McKeon, 1992). Others, though, believe the curriculum design effort should "centre around research into standards and levels" (E. French, personal communication, November 29, 1991). This approach has validity given the urgent need to create a coherent framework for the provision of ABE in South Africa. However, if we accept the principle of People's Education that "not only should future syllabi be reconceptualised; they must proceed from different principles" (Gardiner, 1987, p. 6), it is hard to see how the standards and levels by which to assess these syllabi can be drawn up in advance. Working from the bottom up, we can gain a good sense of what skills can be developed, in what time frame, and under what conditions. Although much research into appropriate assessment is needed, what will count in the long run is the extent to which learners are equipped to overcome a legacy of powerlessness and to cope with an unpredictable future.

### **CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE**

5. When USWE classes started at Philani, I was not interested because I thought it is for people who are illiterate and those who cannot speak

English at all. Until I heard from a friend what they learn and how they learn. I decided to join them. I could not believe what I saw, and I learned how adults are helped to see things in a better way and to challenge life without violence. . . . I know now that everyone has a right to say his or her feelings. I see that I can change things. I know that in meetings I, as a woman, have the same right to speak as the men. I have the confidence to question what happens in my organisation and in my community. I see how life can be challenged to make things easy for everyone. (Nompiliso Matyeni; translated from Xhosa, from a USWE written learner evaluation)

The USWE curriculum project is a small contribution to the debate around appropriate forms and practices for People's Education. We realise only too well that what we are creating is "temporal, fallible, limited, compromised, negotiated, and incomplete or contradictory" (Cherryholmes, 1988, p. 143). However, we had to try now, before new structures and systems are in place. If no alternative materials or training exist when a new government comes to power, then the moment is lost: We risk changing the wrapping while the package remains the same.

The creation of these materials is an attempt to provide a tentative beginning, in the full knowledge that one set of materials cannot possibly reflect the realities of all sectors or communities. Nonetheless, it seems inevitable that some core curriculum must be produced if large-scale provision of ABE is ever to become a reality. Although, in the light of current thinking around multiple "literacies" (Street, 1986; Willinsky, 1990), this might seem like several steps backward, it is probably the only way to prepare for the giant leap forward the country has to take.

I have argued that while participatory literacy/ESL education should equip learners to effect change, until now, even highly educated individuals have been unable to bring about social change except through political action. The challenge facing a new government is to create an economic and political system where literacy and language skills can be used to real effect.

The challenge facing educators is to meet the two greatest needs in the country: education for democratic participation and education for economic growth. I believe that these needs are not incompatible, that the national need for skilled workers can be reconciled with the goals of participatory education, and that it is crucial not to allow labour policy objectives alone to control curriculum design (Tollefson, 1992). I agree with Mathews (1988) that curricula which draw on learners' critical and lateral thinking skills can equip them to "cope with the coming firestorm of technological change, skills upheavals *and* [italics added] radical social and economic transformation" (p. 498). Such

skills are also crucial for successful community initiatives and for those on the economic periphery who may be forced to enter or are already engaged in the nonformal sector.

In order to make an impact of any magnitude on the abysmal state of ABE in South Africa, educators will have to draw heavily on their own critical and lateral thinking skills. Far-reaching changes could be achieved fairly rapidly by addressing the following key needs:

1. The development of a coherent theoretical model which incorporates literacy, English language teaching, and ABE. Such a model, based on common understandings of the broad goals of adult education, the nature of literacy, and the nature of learning, could consolidate a fragmented field while remaining flexible enough to accommodate multiple learning needs and contexts.
2. The creation of an infrastructure to support these multiple learning needs and to avoid the skewed allocation of resources to the core manufacturing workforce at the expense of the vast majority of other workers (Kraak, 1992).
3. The strengthening of the couplings between small-scale action research projects and national initiatives (Candlin, 1991). This would offer greater scope for participatory curriculum development and ensure that well-monitored and properly evaluated innovations in curriculum and instruction can flow from below (Nunan, 1988).

Although the enormity of the task facing ABE workers is often daunting, policies and practices developed now have the potential to create new agendas for literacy and English language skills that can become a powerful part of a new social order.

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## ***One Size Does Not Fit All: Educational Perspectives and Program Practices in the U.S.***

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**HEIDE SPRUCK WRIGLEY**

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Literacy education for adults who speak English as a second or additional language is shaped by many factors, including funding mandates, teacher preferences, learner goals, and the definitions of literacy that the program supports. Educational philosophies play a role as well, particularly in the area of curriculum. In the 11 innovative programs that were examined as part of a U.S. study on adult ESL literacy, the philosophies that informed the ESL curricula ranged from literacy that encouraged personal growth or individual empowerment to literacy for social adaptation or assimilation, to literacy for social change. Whereas these orientations appear quite distinct when considered in their strong form, in practice, various approaches become intertwined as a result of program realities. However, such syntheses may offer advantages, especially in programs where complementary approaches are linked through a broader conceptual framework that reflects a program's overall goals in serving language minority adults who are new to English and new to literacy.

**A**dult ESL literacy is a relatively new field that holds great promise for language and literacy teaching. Combining ideas from applied linguistics, anthropology, and cognitive science, the field reflects many of the recent shifts that have taken place in second language teaching and in adult literacy education. These shifts include a greater emphasis on communication and "meaning making" and an examination of the way language and literacy are used in various social contexts. There is an increased awareness in the literature of the complexity of language learning and a recognition that literacy is multidimensional. Finally, after years of focusing primarily on teaching techniques, there is now a greater emphasis on approaches that reflect the broader social aims of language and literacy teaching.

This paper briefly discusses changing literacy definitions, then out-

lines the educational philosophies or orientations that help shape the larger goals of ESL literacy education. These orientations are presented from the point of view of those who support them as well as those who critique their shortcomings. To what extent these orientations are implemented in the field is also examined. Finally, there is a discussion of the need to combine various orientations in ways that help guide program mission and reflect learner needs and goals.

The ideas presented here are based in large part on a national study of effective and innovative practices in adult ESL literacy. Funded by the U.S. Department of Education and carried out by Aguirre International, the study focused on programs that serve learners who speak English as a second or an additional language and who have not had the opportunity to develop strong literacy skills in English or in the native language. Project activities included a review of the literature in adult education, applied linguistics, and language and literacy development. We reviewed 123 program descriptions submitted as part of the nomination process and conducted site visits to 11 ESL literacy programs across the U.S. (2 field test sites in California and 9 case study sites). The sites included programs which emphasized native language literacy (in Hmong, Spanish, and Haitian Creole) as well as those which taught ESL literacy. Whereas some of the programs we studied presented literacy within personal or community contexts, others focused on workplace or family literacy. Although all programs we studied assured us that they taught literacy within the contexts of learners' lives, they differed in the approaches they used in bringing literacy to life for the learners who came to their programs. (For a full description of the study, see Guth & Wrigley, 1992.)

## **DEFINING ESL LITERACY**

The Aguirre study showed that although we have no universally accepted definition of literacy, there is a growing consensus that to be literate means different things in different situations or social contexts. Thus, L2 speakers may have the literacy skills necessary to get medical help, secure housing, and enroll their children in school, but feel illiterate when confronted with census forms. Similarly, workers who have the skills necessary to read a manufacturing order may be overwhelmed when the company introduces computer-based manufacturing and they are asked to chart machine output and interpret the graphs generated through statistical process control. Given the complexities of literacy in general, defining ESL literacy as merely the ability to read and write in English appears simplistic and reductionist. In order to judge how literate an L2 speaker is requires knowledge

of several factors: the person's overall understanding and use of English, his/her ability to communicate ideas face-to-face and over the phone, the ability to interpret and use printed information, and an understanding of the cultural concepts that are encoded in the target language. As national surveys of literacy skills in the U.S. get under way, researchers (Macias, in press) are cautioning us to keep in mind that literacy in English should not be the only literacy that is recognized. After all, L2 speakers have varying degrees of literacy in their native tongue, abilities that should be counted along with literacy levels in English so that we can gain a richer picture of the language resources of the country. Unfortunately, the National Survey of Adult Literacy, to be completed in 1993, will provide only a very sketchy picture of the reading and writing abilities of adults who are not fully proficient in English. Although the survey will provide some background information on those who can be interviewed in Spanish, it is not likely to provide the data policy makers need to adequately fund programs that serve immigrant adults who are still struggling with English. As a result, local programs may not receive the support they need to provide services to ESL literacy learners.

Today, many educators are starting to recognize that perspectives on literacy and illiteracy are shaped by economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions. As a result, literacy is no longer defined as a single construct but rather as a plurality of literacies which are shaped by various social contexts and defined individually as well as collectively. Whereas there is some agreement that a certain threshold level of English literacy is needed before most learners can access print independently, the field is moving away from a belief in the great divide between literate and illiterate. Instead, many literacy educators now support the notion of a literacy continuum that grows and expands as a person gains experience with different types of literacies (Crandall & Imel, 1991; Gillespie, 1990). As learners gain confidence and skills, this continuum may expand along several dimensions, including functional literacy (using literacy to accomplish everyday tasks), sociocultural literacy (understanding how literacy practices differ among groups and adapting the use of literacy to various purposes), expressive literacy (using literacy to express ideas, thoughts, and feelings related to personal experience or reflections on life), and critical literacy (using literacy to critically examine and comment on the circumstances of one's life). (For a discussion of these dimensions, see Wrigley & Guth, 1992). As our definitions of literacy expand so do the aims that we set for literacy education overall. For ESL literacy, this means that although we may have been content in the past with increasing the basic language skills of our students, we now see a greater need to link language teaching with much broader aims of education. These

aims are explored as part of six major educational orientations outlined in the next section.

## **THE PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF ESL LITERACY CURRICULA**

As more and more ESL literacy programs explicitly acknowledge the social nature of literacy, teachers are seeking to develop a literacy curriculum that allows them to integrate the various student goals and teacher interests with the social, academic, and/or economic ends the program has chosen to support. In a field in which curriculum has often been defined as a list of topics, grammar points, and functions to be taught, this signals a significant change. It means that issues related to the planning, implementation, and evaluation of literacy activities are now seen within a larger framework that links definitions of literacy and educational philosophies with program development, curriculum, and teaching. Whereas many programs still focus on teaching techniques, more and more literacy educators are starting to explore the philosophies and educational orientations which inform literacy education for immigrant adults.

In designing a conceptual framework for the curriculum component of the Aguirre study, we delineated six major curriculum orientations that would allow us to classify the larger social aims that literacy education seeks to attain. These orientations comprised basic skills, with an emphasis on a common educational core; social and economic adaptation; development of cognitive and academic skills; personal relevance; social change; and technological management of education. These orientations are described as perceived by both advocates and critics, followed by comments on actual practice in the ESL programs we studied.

### **Common Educational Core**

The common educational core orientation is based in large part on academic rationalism, one of the oldest and most basic orientations to the curriculum. It is grounded in the tradition of 18th-century liberal education that was designed to offer the best for the best, a goal supported by modern-day writers on cultural literacy such as Bloom (1987) and Hirsch (1987). This orientation is designed to provide for all students a common set of educational experiences, including the development of basic literacy skills, a command of standard English, and an understanding of common cultural knowledge. The knowledge and skills transmitted are seen as the shared intellectual base necessary

for advancement through the academic ranks and entry into the mainstream.

ESL literacy programs that emphasize this orientation often take a “basic skills” approach. These programs tend to emphasize the established standards in reading and writing that should be acquired by all (e.g., a sound basis in phonics, proper spelling and punctuation, and “correct” interpretation of a reading passage). Reading sections in basic skills texts tend to avoid controversial subjects such as AIDS, domestic violence, or workers’ rights, focusing instead on discussions of cultural values, holidays, and other shared traditions.

Advocates of this perspective believe that immigrant and minority students must be taught the values of the mainstream society along with the language skills needed to succeed academically and professionally. In this view, learners must be made aware of the standards by which their literacy efforts will be measured at various gatekeeping thresholds, such as the Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED) test or entry into training programs. To do less, these advocates maintain, might deny language minority students access to better jobs and higher education.

Critics of the common core orientation (e.g., Aronowitz & Giroux, 1988; Delpit, 1988; Eisner & Vallance, 1974) regard this perspective as elitist and accuse its advocates of ethnocentrism and disregard for the language, literacies, and social interactions of those outside the circle of power. They charge that this orientation tends to promote a deficit model of literacy in which language minority adults and their families are seen as culturally inferior, educationally deprived, and linguistically impoverished.

How popular is the common core curriculum in the field? In reviewing 123 program nominations, we found that a great many programs support basic skills and cultural literacy. Most ESL literacy programs start with a basic skills approach to literacy by asking learners to practice the letters of the alphabet and complete practice sheets that help them to spell common words correctly. A cultural literacy focus tends to appear in those programs that hope to move students beyond certain gatekeeping thresholds. It is most strongly represented in courses that prepare learners for the GED or for the U.S. citizenship exam. Both types of courses are designed to familiarize language minority adults with the knowledge and literacy skills that educated U.S. citizens presumably have acquired. Cultural literacy also dominates the ESL and civics classes that were first introduced as part of the U.S.

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<sup>1</sup>Our case study sites, for the most part, took a different approach. They introduced literacy through meaningful units, such as learner’s names and the names of their children and home countries. The letters of the alphabet were introduced as they appeared in the words that learners wanted to write.

government-sponsored program for immigrants who were legalizing their status under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (Wrigley, 1993).

### **Social and Economic Adaptation**

This orientation sees the functions of school as helping to meet the critical economic needs of the learners, the community, and the society at large. It is designed to help adults acquire the skills and knowledge needed to be self-sufficient, to function effectively in society, to access services, and to integrate into the mainstream culture. Some aspects of the social and economic adaptation are rooted in the social efficiency education movement of the early 1900s, which aimed to prepare young adults for the roles they were to occupy later in life. In the U. S., this orientation gained prominence in the 1970s after the Applied Performance Level Study, an adult literacy survey, was conducted. Based in part on the functional life skills identified by this study, competency-based approaches to ESL and to literacy were developed and took hold in the field (see Crandall & Imel, 1991). The competencies outlined in the survival skills curriculum that was developed with federal dollars during the 1980s reflect strong aspects of social and economic adaptation. The functional context curriculum mandated for federally funded workplace programs reflects a similar philosophy: It limits workplace programs to teaching the skills needed for improved job performance. The social adaptation perspective also underlies the notional/functional ESL curriculum first developed in England and popularized through the Council of Europe (Sheils, 1988).

Social and economic adaptation has powerful critics. Whereas most acknowledge that newcomers need to know the language associated with finding jobs, housing, and health care, they question the underlying assumptions of the functional curriculum as it is taught in ESL programs. These critics point toward the "hidden curriculum" of life skills teaching, which appears to train refugees and immigrants to be obedient and accept a limited role in the social order (see Auerbach & Burgess, 1987). Critics charge that the hidden agenda operating in the survival curriculum implies that a lack of economic success on the part of language minorities is due to their inadequate English or their failure to follow social rules (such as dressing appropriately for a job interview) when, in reality, it is the social structures of a class-based society that mitigates against the success of language minority adults (Tollefson, 1985, 1986, 1989, 1991). From the critics' perspective, an orientation geared toward social and economic adaptation serves to reproduce the social and economic inequalities between the U.S. mainstream and language minorities.

How common are programs focused on social and economic adaptation? In studying program descriptions and visiting sites, we found that most ESL literacy programs support some form of life skills, survival skills, or functional context curriculum designed to help immigrants adjust to life in the U.S. and prepare them to deal with literacy tasks they face in daily life. This emphasis is not surprising given the adjustment barriers that newcomers face and the goal of economic self-sufficiency stressed by U.S. government programs such as the National Workplace Literacy Program, the Refugee Resettlement Programs and the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) programs for welfare recipients.

### **Development of Cognitive and Academic Skills**

This orientation focuses on the development of cognitive and academic skills, emphasizing learning how to learn as its goal. It stresses process over content, strategies over skills, and understanding over memorization. In encouraging adults to make their own meaning by interacting with each other as well as with the text, it recognizes both the social context and the social construction of knowledge. Originally influenced by the early work of John Dewey and the scientific approach of developmentalists like Piaget, this perspective now relies on the works of cognitive psychologists and psycholinguists, such as de Beaugrande (1980), Neisser (1976), Rumelhart (1985), and Smith (1982). In ESL literacy, the cognitive and academic skills orientation is reflected in the interactive reading approach, reading for academic purposes, and some aspects of the whole language curriculum.

ESL literacy programs that emphasize this orientation tend to use approaches that focus on the development of cognitive and linguistic strategies. These may include predicting meaning from context, confirming predictions, using one's knowledge of the world to express ideas in writing, and learning to identify word patterns and recognize letters. Literacy programs that stress metacognition (learning how to learn), problem solving, and language awareness also fall into this category.

Some educational writers criticize this orientation as part of an ideology that sees meaning as primarily psychological and person centered. They charge that the content presented and the experiences provided through this approach ignore the conflicts of the wider society and thus divorce learning from social action. Critics further suggest that this orientation has shown little concern for the class, race, and gender-related history of different groups of students. In Giroux's (1981) view, for example, the emphasis on individual meaning making ignores the fact that the language practices used in school carry political, economic, and cultural significance.



We saw little evidence in the Aguirre study of an orientation that emphasizes cognitive skills development. We found this rather surprising, given the discussions in the field of the need to teach learners how to learn and the emphasis on cognitive and metacognitive skills inherent in many of the approaches associated with whole language. Yet in observing classes and reviewing curricula submitted by programs, there was little attention given to process approaches to literacy, in which learners discuss strategies such as predicting meaning from context (along with double-checking such predictions) or linking background knowledge to new information. Although a number of programs reported using a process approach to writing, strategies for brainstorming ideas, devising drafts, and revising them were seldom made explicit, even in programs in which learners used their L1 to discuss language issues.

However, a variation of the cognitive and academic skills orientation appears across program types as learners seek to develop greater language awareness. We found that as learners try to shape their ideas into acceptable written English, they often express interest in the rules that govern language and sometimes form hypotheses about how English works. We heard learners ask questions about morphology (e.g., "Why do you sometimes say *Russia* and sometimes say *Russian*?") and about word order or sentence structure (e.g., "*He wear a hat black* is wrong, no? Is *black hat*, no?"). Whereas all of the programs we observed emphasize communication and meaning making over acquisition of standard English forms and structures, students nevertheless remain concerned about issues of correctness. They frequently ask for the rules and are disappointed when teachers tell them not to worry about grammar or explain that a certain form is correct because it sounds right. In response to learners' concern about how English works, a few programs are introducing inquiry procedures that invite learners to focus on particular language patterns as they read. Others give learners contact assignments that encourage them to investigate the social rules that govern language use among native English speakers in the U.S. (e.g., What do people say to each other when they meet after the weekend? What do greeting cards sent to someone who is sick usually say?) Whereas investigative learning of this type can help learners develop a balance between fluency and accuracy, none of the curricula we studied encouraged the systematic use of metacognitive and metalinguistics strategies.

### **Personal Relevance**

The personal relevance orientation emphasizes the primacy of personal meaning and the school's responsibility to develop literacy pro-

grams that make such meaning possible. Its major focus is on the educational development of the individual and the psychological freedom that results from experiencing a personally relevant curriculum within a noncoercive environment.

Grounded in the humanism of Carl Rogers (1969) and Abraham Maslow (1954), this orientation supports learner initiatives and self-directed learning. It maintains that adults are able to assess their own learning needs and goals and, if given the right tools, are capable of evaluating appropriate learning strategies and assessing their own progress (Knowles, 1980).

In ESL literacy, programs that focus on personal relevance emphasize the affective dimensions of the reading and writing process. Personal growth and self-actualization through literacy are the principal goals. An ESL literacy curriculum that focuses largely on autobiographies and personal accounts (e.g., the language experience approach) is also representative of this orientation.

Critics point out that defining literacy solely in terms of helping students to achieve their personal goals does not address the public's need to measure literacy attainment in quantifiable form (Lytle, Marmor, & Penner, 1986). As the accountability movement gains momentum, policy makers increasingly want to see evidence that the self-esteem and self-worth gained through ESL literacy have resulted in significant changes in learners' lives. Others, such as Diekhoff (1988), find lifestyle changes alone suspect as measures of success for literacy programs, preferring instead evidence that the reading and writing skills of the participants have increased.

In the ESL literacy programs reviewed by the Aguirre study, personal relevance emerged as the strongest orientation inasmuch as some aspects of this philosophy appeared in virtually all program descriptions. Indeed, all the programs that we visited used some form of personal relevance such as having students describe pictures they selected, recount important events in their lives, or share aspects of their personal history. Personal relevance in the form of language experience stories appears to be particularly popular in the very beginning classes where learners often bring in pictures of their families or of their country and try to communicate their stories to the rest of the class.

Our experience showed that personal relevance forms the starting point in most ESL literacy programs with the exception of certain business and government-sponsored programs such as employer-sponsored workplace programs, GED classes, or citizenship programs. It is most commonly found in programs that support a whole language orientation but is also an integral part of life skills programs. In addition, personal relevance frequently appears in programs that designate

themselves as participatory. Whereas some Freirean-inspired (e.g., 1970, 1980) teachers use pictures that show common economic and political concerns (e.g., children begging in the streets), others start their lessons with photographs that depict personal or social events such as birthday or holiday celebrations. Differences in philosophy emerge in follow-up discussions when teachers supporting a social change orientation may invite learners to examine the materialism that often lies at the basis of gift giving.

### **Social Change**

Issues of culture and power lie at the heart of the social change, social reconstruction, or liberationist orientation. Theorists like Apple (1979) and Giroux (1983) see schools not only as cultural agents but also as political sites. Proponents of this perspective seek an examination of the hidden curriculum and criticize an educational system in which certain forms of literacy and language are legitimated while others are devalued (Auerbach & Burgess, 1987; Tollefson, 1989). This orientation sees illiteracy not as a cause of poverty or underemployment, but rather as a result of inequitable social conditions. Adherents of this orientation also stress that although literacy can be used as one of the tools of empowerment, literacy in itself does not confer power and control. The social change orientation finds its strongest implementation in "participatory" program designs.

ESL literacy programs that emphasize this orientation tend to address the issues of power and control on both the classroom and program levels. In an effort to equalize the power differential that exists between teachers and students, liberationist programs attempt to set up educational opportunities that put adults in charge of their own learning. Teachers see themselves not so much as experts from whom all knowledge emanates but rather as facilitators and colearners with different kinds of experiences and different resources at their disposal. Increasingly, these programs go beyond sharing power in the classroom toward sharing control of the entire program, making it possible for participants to become active in designing, implementing, and evaluating educational offerings.

The social change perspective has given rise to many participatory, Freirean-inspired literacy programs. These programs are based on the philosophy that traditional literacy approaches ignore the culture, language, and social issues that inform and dignify the everyday life of the poor. In this view, traditional teaching is not only repressive and alienating but it also reinforces the dominant view of language minority adults as inferior and responsible for their location in the power structure.

The social change orientation itself is sometimes critiqued by mainstream scholars as a paternalistic approach that works under the assumption that all language minority students feel oppressed and want to work toward changing the society (Delpit, 1988). Drawing on experience with their own students, many teachers maintain that their students want to develop the language, knowledge, and skills that will help them to move beyond the gatekeeping thresholds that society has set up so that they can gain access to the mainstream society.

The participatory, dialogical model common to Freirean pedagogy has also been critiqued as one in which the teacher, by becoming a colearner, abdicates the role of the expert that students come to expect. As Delpit (1988) points out in discussing resistance to a process model of teaching literacy, using this approach may give students the impression “that there are secrets being kept, that time is being wasted, that the teacher is abdicating his or her duty to teach” (p. 85). Because many learners desperately want access to the kind of English that educated individuals speak (and have very definite ideas regarding how such English should be acquired), negotiating progressive teacher perspectives with learner expectations of traditional schooling has remained an important challenge for participatory programs.

The social change orientation is perhaps the most problematic philosophy when explored in the context of program realities. The Aguirre study found that most programs see themselves as participatory in some sense. All the staff we interviewed supported some form of learner empowerment through education, including those who felt that grammar study empowers learners to gain access to mainstream academic programs. Yet the degree to which participatory education is realized differs greatly from program to program and open discussions of the need for social, political and economic change are rare. However, we did find that sociopolitical issues, such as AIDS education in the schools, the pressure on teenagers to join immigrant youth gangs, and sexual harassment in the workplace, increasingly find their way into the ESL literacy curriculum, even in programs where a life skills focus predominates. The differences appear to lie less in the overall approach that the program supports (e.g., life skills vs. participatory) than in the interests that learners show in social issues. A second factor relates to the expertise of teachers in guiding meaningful discussions on topics that are complex and controversial and can make some students uncomfortable. Not surprisingly, the social change orientation found its strongest manifestation in Freirean-inspired native language literacy programs where students use their native tongue to discuss issues, explore ideas, and give opinions.

## Technological Management of Education

Technological management of education, like the economic and social adaptation orientation, can be traced to the social efficiency movement. Yet unlike many workplace models that clearly have increased productivity as their goal, this orientation professes to be value free. It claims to be useful and adaptable to any educational undertaking, be it literacy for academic preparation, for daily life, or for the workplace. Many curriculum technologists have built their materials on the curriculum model championed by Tyler (1949), stressing predetermined objectives, purposeful activities, scope and sequence, and pre- and posttests to ensure that objectives have been met. Much of this orientation employs models and language borrowed from industry, using terms such as *diagnostic testing*, *literacy audits*, *behavioral objectives*, *training modules*, *teacher training*, and *learning outcomes*. It is often linked to individualized instruction in which students are pretested, given assignments to complete, and then assessed to determine whether they have mastered the required concepts.

The technology-managed orientation has many critics. Some object to what they see as an ahistorical, apolitical, unethical, and atheoretical stance of curriculum design in its "scientific" mode. Others see the behavioral objectives and standardized assessment procedures used in these packages as a form of social control that makes it easy to manipulate teachers and students alike. Still others argue that this orientation ignores the cultural background of many immigrant students because it runs counter to their preferred cultural learning mode and may deprive the learners of opportunities to draw on the strength of their collectivity with other students (Auerbach, 1986; Collins, 1983).

Teacher educators have voiced additional concerns (see Turner, 1993). They contend that at a time when many teachers involved in the education of language minority students are concerned with their lack of status and professionalism, a technologically designed curriculum, prepackaged for education management, will only further contribute to what has been called the de-skilling of teachers. They feel that curriculum orientations that stifle the creativity and enthusiasm of teachers will, in turn, stifle the creativity of students, making literacy education an experience to be endured rather than appreciated and enjoyed.

## NEGOTIATED AGENDAS

Educational philosophies and curriculum orientations to language and literacy seldom appear in practice as they do in theory. Program

realities often mitigate against implementing the strong form of a particular approach because funding mandates, along with differences in teacher preferences and learner interests, often require that various perspectives be negotiated. The result may be compromises that can work in the learners' favor since they provide exposure to a variety of approaches.

How do programs decide on a particular orientation? Funding mandates, as well as available resources, may be the strongest factors in determining the philosophical orientations that a program reflects. For example, both federally funded workplace programs and family literacy programs favor an approach geared toward social adaptation, focusing, in turn, on the skills needed for effective communication in the workplace or on developing effective ways of supporting the school achievement of children. Social adaptation is also strongly favored by states such as California and Florida, where State Departments of Education favor a competency-based approach to ESL. Available funds also influence to what extent programs support a technology-based orientation because in many areas it is easier to get monies for computer-related purchases than for print materials or field visits.

Teacher preference is also a factor in selecting a particular orientation or combination of approaches. Teachers often have strong opinions concerning what it takes to become fluent in a second language, and these views help determine how they teach. This tends to be particularly true of teachers who learned English as a second language themselves and who have experienced success with traditional approaches. As a result, we often find a mismatch between the overall orientation evident in a program and the approach used by a particular teacher. For example, even in programs that support a strong focus on cognitive development or a social change orientation, we find teachers who believe that what learners really need are basic skills, which they quietly provide in the form of explicit phonics and grammar instruction.

"Subversive teaching" takes all forms, however. The amnesty programs saw many excellent practitioners redefine the civics instruction that the Immigration and Naturalization Service had envisioned. These teachers emphasized civic participation over memorizing the biobdata of dead white male political leaders, helping learners develop the strategies needed to make it through the legalization process. In addition, many amnesty teachers joined with immigrant rights groups to fight for fair implementation of the law (see Wrigley, 1993).

Learner resistance to and support for various orientations also shape the dynamics of the classroom. As practitioners know, ESL literacy learners are not easily separated into neat categories, and an orientation that might excite one group will not appeal to another. Thus we

find that some learners are ready to examine political realities and fight for their rights, whereas others may wish nothing more than to figure out ways to make a better living. Clearly, the first group will be more ready to discuss economic inequities and the need for social change than the second. In some cases, learners may share the political concerns of their teachers but feel that the classroom is not the most appropriate place to address these issues. In employer-sponsored workplace literacy programs, in particular, learners sometimes resist exploring ways to fight the system, especially if the fight is led by teachers with little experience in the realities of the low-wage workplace.

We also find a great many differences in the way students conceptualize learning in general, and language and literacy development in particular. For many learners, literacy means practicing phonics and copying words and sentences from the blackboard, just as L2 learning means making vocabulary lists and studying grammar rules. These learners sometimes report feeling cheated when confronted with approaches that stress cognitive development over the acquisition of standard English (see Delpit, 1988). Similarly, learners who are new to English but have fairly strong educational backgrounds might be frustrated by a personal relevance orientation that asks them to explore their feelings and thoughts when they would prefer to discuss more academic topics.

Finally, learners are attracted to and ready for various philosophies at different points in their lives. Sometimes a particular incident or event results in increased interest in a particular perspective. We have seen an individual learner's encounter with the police spark great interest in the class in discussing police relations in their area and lead to an examination of the role that police-community boards can play in immigrant neighborhoods. Practitioners frequently find that learners ready to go on job interviews are quite anxious to hear how they can meet an employer's expectations of a good job candidate, and those eligible to receive financial aid for college are often much more eager to access and take advantage of the system than to change it. Thus where learners "stand" on a particular issue and the interest they have in supporting a particular educational philosophy is often influenced by where they "sit," that is, by the social and political contexts in which they find themselves as they enter our programs.

## **TOWARD A SYNTHESIS**

How do programs in the field negotiate various agendas? Many competency-based programs have started incorporating reading and

writing projects based on a language experience approach. Others have added social issues such as AIDS to the traditional survival topic of health. Most Freirean-based programs spend some of their time teaching “accessing skills” (using the phone book to find information) that resemble traditional competencies. In addition, a certain amount of basic skills practice appears in programs that focus on whole language.

The EL Paso Community College workplace literacy program is a good example of a synthesis of approaches. Because the program receives federal funds, the staff is mandated to provide a functional context curriculum that focuses on the language and literacy skills needed for improved job performance and mobility in the workplace. Rather than using a narrow definition of a functional context, focusing on reading pay checks or manufacturing orders, for example, the program has chosen to focus on workplace themes that affect garment workers. Using videos as a starting point for discussion, learners examine issues such as the use of technology in the workplace and changes in the global marketplace (Levi Strauss, the industry partner in the program, has international production facilities). Participants in the program watch videos and discuss related readings. They learn to listen for key words and try to capture the major points that appear in both. They then go on to link their personal experiences in the plant with the broader topics of videos and texts. Writing is introduced through a language experience approach and later writing is used to make recommendations for dealing with workplace challenges. Thus, whereas the federal funding mandate clearly emphasizes social and economic adaptation, the program itself stresses personal and cognitive development as part of a whole language curriculum.

Given the variety of orientations that shape educational practice and the complexity of program realities, how can we choose among competing philosophies? Given funding realities, teacher preferences, and learner goals, no one philosophy will meet all needs. Yet, whereas we need to take into account the diversity and complexity of ESL literacy programs, we must also guard against mindless eclecticism or a “whatever works” philosophy that engulfs learners in an endless variety of activities. Trying to be all things to all people can result in a smorgasbord of educational offerings that serves to absolve teachers from examining their own philosophies and keeps them from exploring the perspectives that students bring to class. Achieving an overall understanding of what the mission of a program should be, seeking funding that supports that mission, choosing complementary approaches and adhering to the principles of sound language and literacy teaching can be a starting point for creating a philosophy that is flexible enough to encompass teacher preferences as well as learner expectations.



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## ***Discussion of Kerfoot and Wrigley: The Teacher as Bridge Between Program and Practice***

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**I**n recent years, the literature on ESL literacy has tended to stress the needs and interests of the learners in our classes—and deservedly so because few teachers work with learners from such widely varied backgrounds as we do. And yet, this focus on learners has downplayed the very critical role the teacher fulfills in the classroom, as if we were a neutral delivery system rather than a key participant in the interaction. The teacher is, of course, the direct link between the program and the practice because the actions taken by the teacher determine whether or not the philosophy of education put forth by the program is implemented.

The articles by Kerfoot and Wrigley make rather different assumptions about the role of the teacher. Wrigley writes in a North American context in which teachers are well educated, largely well trained, and in this current economic climate, often quite experienced. Wrigley does not anticipate teachers having difficulty in implementing any given approach to teaching. Rather, her aim is to make teachers aware of all the possible ways in which they might address their practice. She describes her article as an invitation to find out more about learners and to explore teaching models that might best serve them. The underlying assumption is that teachers are capable of identifying the teaching model which can best serve learners and that once identified, such a model can be delivered. Wrigley further indicates that teachers have not only the ability but the responsibility to shape practice according to their understanding of what is best for the students. The challenge to educators for Wrigley is to delineate the contexts in which immigrant adults may need English and explore literacy uses within each. Is this a valid assumption about ESL teachers—that once informed about the range of options available to us, we can determine the appropriate philosophical approach and implement that approach successfully?

Kerfoot's account seems to suggest that this is not such a straightforward process. To begin with, she does not see the decision-making

process as being the prerogative of the teacher. Rather, learners themselves should delineate their contexts of literacy use. Kerfoot also stresses the difficulties teachers may have implementing the desired model. In the programs she describes, the vast majority of teachers have not completed high school. They have had no direct pedagogical training and have minimal prior classroom experience. As Kerfoot points out, teachers with so little education and experience do not find it easy to analyze the logic of their classes or to pinpoint the weaknesses of materials. They are inexperienced at developing lessons or authoring materials and they lack the experience to use others' materials very creatively. What these teachers do bring to their classes, however, may more than compensate for any lack of experience. Raised in the squatter communities from which their learners come, they have "the crucial advantage of a sensitive understanding of the needs and concerns of learners." By contrast, the few experienced, educated literacy workers currently developing materials in South Africa have a good grasp of the pedagogical principles but often have very limited understanding of the reality of the learners' lives or the learners' needs. As Kerfoot notes, despite every effort to write materials which encompass the learners' viewpoints, the writer's ideological bias will be implicit in the tasks selected, the questions raised, the kind of tasks included. This problem, she says, is compounded when most language teaching materials are still written by whites for blacks.

The situation Kerfoot describes is more difficult than that faced by those of us in North America where teacher education is a prerequisite for hiring. Nonetheless, with the exception of those who work in bilingual programs, a significant difference in cultural background between teacher and learner is inevitable in ESL programs. As teachers, we come into the classroom with our own experiences and understandings of education and our own notions of what constitutes learning, literacy, progress, appropriate classroom relations, and so on. Inevitably these experiences shape the way in which we interact in the classroom and the way in which we make decisions as to what is best for learners. If we are to understand and improve what happens in our classrooms, it is as important to become aware of the kinds of expectations which we teachers have about the classroom as it is to explore what the learners need.

In her review of program realities, Wrigley points out that "educational philosophies and curriculum orientations seldom appear in practice as they do in theory." I would suggest that we can identify a number of reasons why a teacher's practice might diverge quite significantly from the stated program philosophy. Sometimes such a divergence will be an explicit demonstration of the teacher's own philosophical position, consciously applied in opposition to the program intention

and based on what the teacher feels is a superior understanding of the class needs. For example, a teacher might be hired by a factory to teach ESL literacy to the line workers on the assumption that the classes will focus on the completion of certain company forms and reports. Instead, the teacher might make the decision to focus on encouraging the workers to look critically at their own situation. Such decisions are generally well thought out and reflect the kind of understanding of learner needs and awareness of programmatic options which Wrigley documents so thoroughly.

Not all the influences on practice are so consciously selected, however. Inexperienced teachers may be urged by program administrators to develop activities suited to the particular needs of learners but may simply lack the expertise to create such materials. As MacIntyre (1981) points out, the first resort of the inexperienced is the primer, which in ESL terms means the step-by-step textbook in which decisions on planning, sequencing, presentation, and integration of skills and content are all made for the teacher. Burnaby (1990), in her discussion of ESL literacy materials, explores the need expressed by beginning teachers to have a prescriptive set of teaching materials. As Kerfoot describes, there is an obvious tension between the need of inexperienced teachers for a clearly delineated set of tasks to follow and the need for learners to have activities which grow out of their specific interests and concerns. A key feature to be taken into account in planning for programs and practices is the degree of experience and expertise available on the part of teachers.

Can it be assumed that teachers who have considerable experience can necessarily work effectively in any type of program? Do we really have a range of options available to us from which we need merely select the appropriate one for students? Or do we as teachers bring into the classroom the same type of preconceptions we notice in learners? For instance, Kerfoot notes the inherent problems in white writers creating materials for black learners. She is not, of course, suggesting that these are racist or poor teachers. On the contrary, they are usually keen political activists who struggle hard to work collaboratively with learners and to treat them with respect. Why then does it matter that one is black and one is white? Should we be concerned that the situation is paralleled in North America, where poorly educated immigrant workers are taught largely by middle-class mainstream teachers?

My own recent research (Bell, 1991) suggests that the way we teach is determined by very deeply held notions of learning which are not normally available to conscious scrutiny. It is something of a truism in teacher education that one of the most powerful influences on our teaching is our years in the classroom as pupils. Why is this? Why do we reproduce the same kind of patterns in our classrooms that we

were raised with? The answer seems to be that we have formed deep notions of the proper way for a classroom to run. We have a script, or as I prefer to call it, a story, which determines those things that seem right to us in the classroom. Our stories include such things as how much of the time it is appropriate for the teacher to talk, what kinds of topics are suitable for the classroom, how we respond to questions from the learners, who we see as being in control of the learning, the way in which we think it is appropriate to give praise, and how we conceptualize knowledge.

Where do these stories come from? Narrative inquiry research (Bruner & Weisser, 1990; Clandinin & Connelly, 1986, 1991; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Elbaz 1983) suggests that these stories took shape in our heads many years ago as we heard our older siblings talk about their school experiences, as we struggled to make sense of the first classrooms we studied in, as we read storybooks about schools, as we listened to our parents talking to and about teachers, and so on. Some of what we absorbed derived from our community story, which suggested whether working for an education would earn us respect, dollars, or scorn. As teachers work within a particular community and have their practice guided by that community's expectations and beliefs, there will be commonalities among the teachers of a community. Those commonalities become absorbed into a child's understanding of what learning is all about, and they blend with the child's individual experiences. If that child goes on to become a teacher, these will be the assumptions that are carried into the classroom. The story is unspoken, so these assumptions normally go unchallenged. They are not seen as beliefs to be discussed or amended but simply as "the way things are."

I would like to report briefly on a study of how one teacher understood literacy and education in two very different cultural contexts. As part of a larger study of my own attempt to become literate in Chinese and, as such, to discover something about the relationship between literacy in the two languages (Bell, 1991), I was fascinated to discover that my Chinese tutor was able to simultaneously hold two different stories of literacy in the two languages.

I was very fortunate to have Cindy Lam, a highly experienced ESL colleague, for my tutor. Cindy is truly bilingual and bicultural, having been born in Hong Kong and having had all her early schooling there, in Cantonese. She came to Canada as an 11 year old, where she completed high school, university, and teacher education. Despite her considerable ESL teaching experience, Cindy had never before taught Chinese literacy. In our discussions prior to beginning tutorials, it was evident that she and I shared the assumption that literacy in the two languages could be taught and learned in similar ways. Our initial

planning reflected our training as ESL literacy teachers as we argued the merits of different methodologies such as the Language Experience Approach (LEA) or Total Physical Response (TPR). For our first lesson, Cindy planned a variety of learner-centered activities, including teaching me my name in Chinese, playing Cantonese pop songs, and consulting me on my preferences as a learner.

However, once Cindy actually began to teach me Chinese, she began to think in Chinese about literacy, and largely to her surprise, she found herself teaching in accordance with her understanding of Chinese literacy rather than in the way she usually teaches ESL. She had learned to be literate largely through a pattern of imitation of samples. In contrast to the geometrical circle and line approach to the alphabet so common in North American kindergartens, in her Hong Kong school, there had been little analysis of the component parts of the characters or discussions of the relationship between one character and another. The result was that she knew the characters not as sets of lines joined at specified points but as whole units, and she taught them accordingly. A typical introduction would be for her to present a model character in a book, demonstrate the stroke order for me, then ask me to try to reproduce it myself. The contrast between our assumptions about how one approaches such a task is made very evident in the transcripts of our tutorials which are full of incidents where I try to get Cindy to specify such rules as, Line x crosses Line y at Point z, and she responds with comments such as, "The character needs practice."

Cindy understood Chinese literacy in ways which she had never had occasion to explicitly formulate and consequently did not think to share with me. She knew that the simple strokes demonstrated in the numerals and other elementary characters would reappear in more complex characters, both independently and in various combinations. She understood how the characters needed to be seen in relation to a square not to a line. Once she moved away from the notion of English language literacy and began instead recreating her own learning experience, she taught in accordance with these understandings. She recognized, for instance, that once these early characters were well learned, the later characters could be learned more swiftly; consequently, she moved very slowly through the first lessons. She was dissatisfied with the results on the lined paper and asked me to work with squared charts although she was not able to make explicit the purpose behind them in a way I could initially understand.

Talking about her early school days, Cindy commented that she remembers relatively little explicit instruction from the teacher except in mathematics. She learned to read and write essentially by copying from a primer, first individual characters and later model sentences.



During one of our lessons, she described the endless hours of practice aimed at achieving attractive characters:

1. When I think of Chinese, I think of it as a student and I remember sitting all those hours doing homework, just working on the one character. . . . Calligraphy or penmanship isn't important in English. It's not the writing, it's the knowing and the recognizing that's important. But in Chinese it's the writing art that is as much a part of literacy as the reading and reproducing. (Bell, 1991, p. 255)

Underlying these comments is the belief that the form of a text is inextricably linked to the content. She explained that her teachers felt it was not acceptable to develop the ideas and then try to work on the form. The form and the concepts had to take shape simultaneously. Her early teachers told her the "flow of ideas and the development of form should be concurrent. It's too late by the time you have got the ideas out, to go back and look at form." Consequently, she insisted that I develop control of form before concerning myself with content.

It was suggested to me by another Chinese friend that the handwriting practice, which is such a hallmark of traditional Chinese literacy approaches, is directed less towards the actual production of written characters than towards the development of mental discipline. This certainly seemed to be supported by the kind of feedback which Cindy gave me as a learner in which she stressed balance and concentration. When I asked Cindy this, her answer was a wonderful demonstration of how our stories of learning are not distinct entities but are shaped by our whole cultural view of the world. She pointed out how pervasive the concept of discipline had been in her life as a young child and how literacy training was merely one exemplification of it.

2. Well, discipline was such a big part of life—discipline in actually producing a character? I suppose in a general way it applied but discipline was so important in every other way that I didn't see it as just something that was particular to learning to read and write. (Bell, 1991, p. 256)
3. The way you are supposed to learn is to receive—and that's in the teachings! You do a lot of observing and then you think about it. (Bell, 1991, p. 257)

"The way you are supposed to learn is to receive"—and that was exactly how Cindy found herself teaching me Chinese literacy—in a style quite different from the one she uses in her ESL classes. After the study was over, I asked her about this, and it became apparent that she had not consciously chosen to shape the experience in this way. As she said,

4. You fall back, I guess, on what you know best and that's your own experience. And in this case, not as a teacher but as a learner, so there

were times I think in our sessions when I was surprised by how—I actually was insisting on certain things—and I trusted you understood why I was insisting. . . . When in doubt, you tend to use what you think will work. I really believe that it had to be done that way. That might surprise you now. . . . I felt you should go through the same thing I went through, you ought to be proud of your characters. . . . Maybe there was something that I had—something within me but never articulated—something never even actually told to me. But I think I did know deep down what the definition of literacy was in Chinese, and it had a lot to do with how you produced the characters. (Bell, 1991, p. 260)

Cindy's expectations of what would constitute acceptable progress were also affected by this approach to literacy. Where I was constantly comparing my progress to those of English literacy learners and frequently feeling disappointment at my limited word count, Cindy drew her standards from initial Chinese literacy. She saw progress as being subsumed in process and was very encouraged by signs of emerging harmony and balance in my work which were imperceptible to me.

It seems likely that Cindy also had different understandings about appropriate feedback in the two contexts. She commented more than once that when she was a child in school, the good students were given relatively little feedback. In another context, she wrote, "Good students are always left alone." To some extent, this pattern was also repeated in our tutorials, with her comments tending to focus more on areas of work which required improvement, rather than commending progress. In her annotations of the transcripts, she commented explicitly on her own surprise at her different feedback patterns. "If I were in an ESL class and somebody gave me a comment, I would speak to that comment a lot more—it's a surprise to me that I somehow teach you very differently from other people I have taught in the same situation."

It appears, then, that once put into a Chinese language teaching situation, Cindy's much older story of language, learning, and literacy surfaced and shaped her practice in ways which were as surprising to her as they were to me. A number of comments she made suggest that she was not consciously aware of having changed her practice until her attention was drawn to it by our joint analysis of the transcripts.

There are two major issues here. The first is the notion that literacy is not a neutral technology but is differently understood and demonstrated in different languages so that a teacher must select a methodology which is suited to the particular cultural manifestation of literacy which is being taught, no matter how foreign that methodology might seem to the learner. This suggests that the selection of a program philosophy cannot be completely determined by the learner's needs but must take into account the target culture as well as the learner's culture.

The second issue of concern is that we teachers are so socialized to particular views of life and learning that we are rarely conscious of the deeply held assumptions which shape our practice. Consequently, we do not recognize the necessity to make explicit such features of our classroom as the measures of progress and the implications of feedback. Kerfoot suggests that the great advantage her inexperienced teachers possess is that they come from the same culture as her learners. They understand the local environment in both a physical and an emotional way, and there is no barrier of communication between them and their students. There is no doubt that it helps to speak the same dialect as one's learners. It helps if one has had firsthand experience of the local housing, diet, political situation, and so on. All these experiences allow a teacher to be sensitive to the learner's concerns and needs. I suspect, however, that the shared bond between teacher and learner from the same community goes much deeper than merely having had similar daily experiences and comes down to a similarity of epistemology.

When we teach learners from different cultural backgrounds, it is inevitable that there will be epistemological differences which we cannot expect the learners to bridge. Consequently, it becomes imperative that we become aware of the forces which drive our practice so that we can make our understandings explicit. All teachers benefit from being reflective practitioners (Schon, 1983), but ESL teachers benefit more than most.

## THE AUTHOR

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## ***Resistance to Taking a Critical Stance***

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Although empowerment education has had much success in adult literacy programs, its future depends on preparing teachers to work within an empowerment framework. A common challenge in empowerment education, whether in adult literacy programs or teacher education programs, is student resistance to the whole notion of empowerment. In this paper, we explore such resistance in the graduate ESL teacher preparation program at the University of Massachusetts. Using a postmodern critical and feminist framework, we analyze student resistance to the invention and critique of "facilitation," a role designed to help small groups invent and critique theories and methods of teaching. Both students and professors alike resist taking a critical stance toward their own inventions. Two practices, however, have been helpful in our struggles to deal with our mutual resistance in ways that maintain the empowerment framework: (a) communities of resistance and (b) student writing and research. Our goal in documenting our struggles is to help those who want to work within the empowerment framework deal with resistance in their classrooms.

**T**eachers in the field of adult ESL literacy work in the margins. They work in left-over spaces, with inappropriate materials, under unpleasant conditions, for little money or professional status, with students who are ignored and excluded by the dominant society. Many teachers have had no professional preparation and those who have complain that teacher education programs do not address the reality of their situation (Young, 1990). Furthermore, teachers and teacher educators have struggled with their own marginality in the education profession and in the academy (Jeannot, 1992). All players in the hierarchy find themselves trapped in recursive marginality.

Empowerment education is a philosophy of education that seeks to help teachers and learners who work and live in the margins to transform their situations (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991; Brodkey, 1987; Ellsworth, 1989; Freire, 1973; Giroux, 1992; Lather, 1992; Weiler, 1988).

According to the traditional view, the purpose of education is to provide learners with the skills and attitudes needed to function in society as given. In the process of providing and acquiring these skills and attitudes, teachers and students together reproduce the inequitable power relations that constitute society. For example, immigrants are taught workplace English, but there is no serious effort to teach Spanish to the supervisors of Spanish-speaking immigrants in the workplace or to teach supervisory skills to Spanish speakers. Empowerment education, on the other hand, acknowledges that many of the difficulties faced by learners exist because society is organized to maintain existing power configurations. The aim of empowerment education is both individual empowerment and social transformation (Weiler, 1988). Teachers and learners together help one another understand their subordination and construct ways to challenge the social structures that marginalize them. Together they work to gain a substantive and significant voice in the transformation of society. Remembering their own marginality, however, they strive to construct social meanings that are more just and to critique their own privilege.

Empowerment education has had many successes in adult literacy programs. With newly acquired literacy skills, students learn to challenge the social world that has pushed them to the margins (Auerbach, 1990; Fingeret & Jurmo, 1989; Freire, 1973; Rayman, Sperzi, Maier, & Lapidus, 1990; Soifer, Young, & Irwin, 1989; Spener, 1991). Only recently, however, has the field of teacher education recognized the voices of practicing teachers and learners in the process of shaping educational institutions and the need for teachers and learners to participate in their own transformation (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1992; Pennycook, 1989; Prawat, 1991). If empowerment education is to have a future in adult literacy programs, the TESOL profession needs to focus more intensely on the education of the teachers who will work in these programs.

Despite recent interest in the notion of empowerment education as a framework for teacher education, we have only just begun to explore its many challenges. One of the most fundamental challenges faced by empowerment educators in other fields, such as feminist studies and the field of race relations, has been learner resistance to the whole notion of empowerment and reflexive critique (Lather, 1990; Orner, 1992). In our TESOL teacher education program at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, we also have faced this challenge. In order to better understand this challenge, we will explore questions put forth by Orner (1992): "How can we understand 'resistance' by students to education which is designed to 'empower' them? How do we understand our own embodiment of privilege and oppression both historical and current? What does it mean to teach as an ally [rather than an

adversary]?” (p. 75). Our exploration draws on data collected in ongoing research on learning in our TESOL program and on the research and theories of pioneers in empowerment education (Cherryholmes, 1988; Ellsworth, 1989; Giroux, 1988; Lather, 1990; McClaren, 1988).

While resistance is evident throughout many aspects of the program, we will focus on the role of “facilitator,” a role instituted to help our graduate students reflect on their own collaborative and critical processes. Our purpose is not to analyze facilitation as a method or practice but to provide enough description of the role to understand the examples we use to explore issues of resistance, the focus of our article. First, we will provide a brief sketch of the role as it has been developed and enacted in our program. Second, we will describe some of the general assumptions about resistance that underpin our exploration of the phenomenon. Finally, we will look at resistance to the role of facilitation as it is expressed through the *language of care* and the *language of critique*, the two competing discourses that have emerged in our program.

## **FACILITATION: CONTEXT AND INVENTION**

The Graduate ESL Teacher Education Program at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst offers the traditional courses found in most programs. We attempt, however, to integrate some of the tenets of empowerment education into our courses. Graduate students frequently work in small collaborative groups helping one another to become active and critical learners and professionals. They are encouraged to “invent” methods and theories rather than passively consume those created by authorities. They are asked to critique their own assumptions about learning and teaching and those around which the program is constructed as well as critique institutional assumptions that dictate how they work with ESL students and with colleagues. They also explore notions of learner empowerment and understandings of the broader political and social contexts governing their roles as teachers. Finally, they are encouraged to contribute to the scholarly and professional dialogue that shapes the TESOL profession.

One way we have assisted graduate students in achieving these goals has been to institute the role of facilitator. When students work in small groups, which they do in most of their TESOL courses, a peer serves as a facilitator, whose primary responsibility is to help the group reflect on what they are doing and how they are doing it. Facilitators do not participate directly in producing the group “product” (e.g., oral presentations, analyses of classroom instruction, or case studies of learners) so that they are free to notice how the product and relations



with one another are evolving. Nevertheless, they are considered to be full members and experience both the challenges and successes of the group. We make it clear that they are not substitute teachers who have expert knowledge about how to facilitate. Rather, within the parameters outlined above, the facilitator and the group decide for themselves how the facilitator should work with the group to help them function better.

The role has multiple possibilities in terms of empowerment depending on how it is invented by the students. Two possibilities the professor (J. Willett) hopes for are that: (a) the role provides a way to assist students as they invent and critique in their small groups while also ensuring the group's autonomy by muting the professor's authority; (b) the role gives the student who takes on the role of facilitator an intensive experience in creating new knowledge (i.e., about the role of facilitation), relating to learners in nontraditional ways, problematizing his or her own practice and authority (i.e., the practice of facilitation), and contributing to institutional structures (i.e., the University of Massachusetts at Amherst TESOL Program).

The facilitator's role is purposely underdefined, and groups are asked to experiment with the role and turn it into something that has meaning for them (Britzman, 1991). The class is cautioned, however, not to turn the role into a traditional group leader with higher status than other members, nor to give the facilitator sole responsibility for being reflective and concerned about group process. Nevertheless, a single vision for how the role should be fashioned is not put forth, and alternative visions for working together are encouraged. The way that facilitators are used in groups and the nature of their interactions varies considerably from group to group.

Facilitators not only invent their roles by negotiating with their groups, they also construct their roles by meeting with other facilitators to share ideas and resources, talk about their concerns, and critique the way the small groups are negotiating the role. They talk about such things as the kinds of challenges they should make to their groups, if and when they should intervene, how to help the group critically reflect on social relations they have constructed, how to deflect attempts to make theirs an authority role, and how to find out when participants need extra support in getting their ideas voiced in the group. Together, they refashion and elaborate the purposes and meanings of facilitation that were presented to them by the professor. They document the process of inventing facilitation, detailing their own transformation over time and analyzing structures that hinder and facilitate their transformation. They also document the practices and tools they have developed to help them accomplish their goals. Some of these practices include taping and analyzing group sessions, keeping dialogue journals

with each of their group members, conducting process and debriefing sessions with their groups, and devising ways to ask challenging questions without deflating confidence. This documentation is passed down to new facilitators and becomes a resource to be used by the next "generation." In the process, they see their own knowledge construction and theories become part of the institution of facilitation.

The main source of new ideas about facilitation and critique of their inventions comes from the fact that they are a diverse group of students with varied experiences, a structural fact of the program. Some are practitioners from schools in surrounding areas, some are seasoned masters degree students, some are doctoral students pursuing various research interests, and some are nondegree students who are testing the waters. Moreover, most students have had extensive cross-cultural experience, providing a pooled knowledge base that is culturally diverse. Facilitators do not bring to the role expertise on any one particular topic, method, or theory, although they may have substantial knowledge and experience. Nor do they necessarily have special knowledge about the process of collaboration or reflection. They have not read the same things, nor do they have similar ways of being in the world or shared values and beliefs. Rather than having expertise in facilitation, they use their diversity to shape and critique the experience and experiment of facilitation.

The facilitator's role and the process of role invention is sustained by the professor's authority. She is the one who decides that groups will have facilitators, that facilitators will meet, that facilitators focus on group relations, and that facilitators do not make decisions about group products. However, she does not directly participate in defining or enacting the role of facilitator, evaluating the performance of facilitators, or guiding discussions in which facilitators create ideas about their role. Rather, she participates by legitimizing the process of role invention. She does this by providing the space and time for dialogue to which she occasionally contributes, urging them to invent and critique their roles, modeling the invention and critique of her own role in the classroom, passing on the papers written by previous facilitators to new facilitators, and revising the structure of the course in response to issues and concerns they have raised.

To many students the role of facilitator is a strange one, and it is this strangeness that we seek to foster. Maxine Green's (1973) metaphor of teacher as stranger is fitting here for several reasons. Students are not accustomed in their courses to having a participant observer (equipped with a tape recorder) whose function is to help. However, if as Britzman (1991) proposes, teaching is a profession that has become overfamiliar, then teacher education courses need to ensure mystery, even strangeness. There is a kind of irony that facilitators who are

supposed to be in a helping relationship with their fellow learners should appear as strangers to them. However, by stressing the unfamiliarity of the role, all participants in the course are inclined to reconsider and reflect on their own roles, as constructions, not fixed, not static, but dynamic. In keeping the facilitator concept strange, we hope to thwart our tendencies to turn the facilitator concept into a method concept that organizes itself around techniques (Brodkey, 1987; Pennycook, 1989). Finally, we hope that facilitators may begin to understand and appreciate the power of students to direct their own learning and to experiment with new ways of working with learners.

## FRAMING RESISTANCE

Resistance to the process of inventing and critiquing facilitation is commonplace. It has taken many forms ranging from perfunctory execution of the facilitator's role, outspoken critique and organized protest, all the way to subversion of the process. This is not to say that we believe our experimentation has been a failure. In fact, we have been pleased with the courses and the invention of facilitation in particular. Facilitators and other students generally evaluate the courses positively, many students have commented that the experience of facilitation has helped them look at teaching and knowledge construction with new eyes, and others have become so fascinated with facilitation that they have asked to study the process in more depth (including M. Jeannot, one of the authors of this article). Furthermore, the dialogue in which we have engaged over the years has begotten many positive changes in the program. Therefore, although we will problematize our invention, we do not equate resistance with failure.

The assumptions framing our analysis of resistance to role invention and critique are drawn from postmodern critical, feminist, and empowerment literature (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991; Giroux, 1992; Kecht, 1992, Marshall, 1992; Weedon, 1987; Weiler, 1988). To those unfamiliar with postmodern theory, the language seems obscure and the logic counterintuitive—as does any language one is unfamiliar with. Although limited by the constraints of space, we have attempted to describe in an accessible way a few of the notions needed to understand our interpretations of resistance. We recommend Brenda Marshall's (1992) *Teaching the Postmodern: Fiction and Theory* as an introduction to this way of talking about and looking at the world.

The first assumption framing our analysis is that resistance is empowerment. Empowerment is the process of resisting those who impose social meanings that marginalize or subordinate (Giroux, 1992). By asking students to invent and critique in our courses, we are asking

them to reconstruct and/or rearrange the habits, traditions, language, and values they bring with them to the class. Our invitation threatens their commonsense ways of talking, thinking, and acting in academic settings, and they rightly resist. They resist even when the traditional ways have worked to subordinate them because they have internalized the meanings of the dominant worldview (i.e., men are suited for leadership), making alternative meanings sound outlandish and unrealistic (Giroux, 1983). From this perspective, evidence of resistance, then, may be interpreted as a sign that students have, in fact, become empowered to put forth their own meanings in a setting that traditionally silences their meanings.

The second assumption framing our analysis is that resistance cannot be understood as something residing only in the facilitators or as something that must be avoided or suppressed. Rather, resistance lives at every point in the structure and process of empowerment education (Merod, 1992) and in the broader context enveloping any particular enactment of empowerment education. Social meanings are continually contested and resisted, a fact of human communication and cognition. The question is not whether struggles occur but rather how these moment-by-moment struggles privilege some meanings about facilitation over others. For example, who gets to name an act resistance?

The third assumption framing our analysis is that we all operate within a particular language, culture, social formation, and historical moment, collectively referred to as language or discourse (Gee, 1990; Marshall, 1992). This language shapes who we are, what we can say and know, how we think, what we can mean, what becomes visible and what is possible. For example, the social meaning of plagiarism only makes sense in a culture that has private property and where authors can own words and ideas. In other words, the concept of plagiarism is socially constructed. But we are not free to construct reality any which way we please because we are constrained by the language/s (created through history) into which we are socialized—language (used in the broadest sense) names our act plagiarism rather than homage. Moreover, it is an individual's place in the social hierarchy that authorizes a particular person to label an act plagiarism. In our analysis, we describe two languages competing for authority in being able to name what facilitation will be in our program—the *language of care* and the *language of critique*.

The fourth assumption is that there is no authoritative foundation outside of language with which to justify individual social constructions or to persuade others to accept these social meanings (Marshall, 1992). However, there are contradictions in language that can be used to unravel the provisional truths under which one operates. For example,

feminist and critical theorists have been able to reconstruct the authority of nature, tradition, market forces, divinity, justice, evolution, power, majority rule, or whatever other universal truth justified the domination of women and minorities by using the *language of logic* (the dominant *language of persuasion*). One consequence of this deconstruction, however, has been that feminist and critical theorists have been left without an authoritative foundation for justifying their own social constructions. Likewise, the *language of empowerment* gives us as teachers no absolute truths to justify sharing power with students and reconstructing social meanings that marginalize them. Furthermore, the contradictions and paradoxes inherent in the language of empowerment can be used to unravel the provisional truths used to justify what is done. As teachers, we cannot use our power to impose our views about student subjugation, to force students to use the power we “give” them, or to prevent them from reconstructing empowerment. The mere mention of student empowerment positions them as marginal and others as powerful (Ellsworth, 1989). Moreover, because our foundational premise is that all social constructions privilege some meanings over others, our own constructions will also privilege some over others. This is an important subtext running through our analysis.

Finally, we want to frame our analysis with the following clarification. The purpose of our analysis is to help us understand resistance within the language of empowerment, not to undermine that language. Our analysis will suggest that resistance should not be viewed negatively but as part of the process of empowerment (i.e., it is inevitable and positive). Nevertheless, the more coherent we make our position, the more certain it is that we will silence other interpretations. To mitigate this somewhat, we begin our analysis by mentioning some of the unintentional but nevertheless problematic consequences of our attempts to empower students—consequences we keep in mind as we attempt to understand and justify student resistance to the practice of facilitation:

1. One of the most devastating consequences has been disempowerment not empowerment, a response that echoes the title of a paper by Ellsworth (1989), “Why Doesn’t This Feel Empowering?” For some, rather than empowering, the experience has been denigrating of their own competence—perhaps a common response for those who have been marginalized.
2. A second consequence has been the reinforcement of the status quo. Some students dismiss the ideas of invention and critique without, in our view, giving these ideas a fair hearing. The fact that the professor’s voice is purposely muted means that she has less opportunity to persuade students. Although only one person has

refused to participate in the process, some have engaged perfunctorily, and in the end, they critique the experience without having attempted to understand it. For them, their perceived and constructed “failure” is proof that the traditional ways are the “right ways.”

3. A third consequence of our practices has been that students sometimes use their groups to reproduce the same inequitable status relationships that we are struggling to unravel, despite our constant attempts to keep these issues under discussion. For example, men may continue to talk more than women or nonnative speakers may have less influence on the group’s product. By necessity, many of one’s attitudes and behaviors are automatic. When the need to act quickly arises (i.e., to meet presentation deadlines), students respond by habit.
4. A fourth consequence arises out of our attempts to avoid the consequence of reproduction. The professor and those students who are committed to the ideas of invention and critique, just as insidiously, lose their ability to critique their own constructions of status relations. Over time, techniques originally designed to help participants look at teaching in a “strange” way have become conventionalized and efficient. Those “in the know” become socializers of newcomers, and in the process, the cumulative voice of several generations of facilitators becomes stronger. We are used to resistance and its patterns and have become less moved by it. It becomes easier and easier to silence those who resist invention and critique by inadvertently positioning them as outsiders. It becomes more and more difficult to critique and transform our own social constructions.

### **COMPETING LANGUAGES IN THE NAMING OF FACILITATION**

The dynamics of resistance are expressed in our program in many ways, but we will focus on the contest between the language of care and the language of critique in the construction of facilitation. The language of care privileges bonding, nurturing, mutual interdependence, responsiveness and analyses of needs, whereas the language of critique privileges justice, reciprocity, rationality, and analyses of power relations (Waithe, 1989). A tension between these two discourses has been structured into the role of facilitation as it has evolved over the past 4 years. It is important to note here that the role of facilitation was originally designed as a helping role, not a critical role, but over time students themselves have introduced the language of critique, a

move that was supported by the professor. Each semester, however, we struggle to keep these two discourses in balance. The language of care is used to create safe places for taking the kinds of risks that are necessary to challenge the dominant discourse. The language of critique is used not only to examine the dominant discourse, but also to examine the social meanings and social formations created by the facilitators and their group members. Facilitators often resist one or the other language.

### **The Language of Care**

Stories about groups providing comfort, healing, and solidarity have been much more common than stories about groups working through issues or challenging one another's perspectives. The majority of students are women who have had experiences as caretakers, and they draw heavily on these experiences to shape their notions about teaching in general (Young, 1990) and Facilitation in particular. Although they come from a wide variety of cultures, they understand the language of care and are concerned with ways of talking and interacting that build and maintain relationships. This is not to say that all women in the program use the language of care. It is significant, however, that those who do not are considered difficult by the majority. These concerns are expressed in what they say and the choices they make. For example, an article by Noddings (1990) on the ethic of care typically generates an enthusiastic response including stories of personal identification. Talk in facilitator meetings focuses explicitly on how to better care for individuals in their group and how to maintain better relationships—not for immediate instrumental reasons (i.e., to give a better presentation) but for building better relations and helping learners to feel better about themselves. Both facilitators and group members often define success or failure almost exclusively by how well their groups bond. Several facilitators have commented on how much they missed their group when the course was over, and one facilitator even continued a dialogue journal correspondence long after the course finished. The only thing unfamiliar about the language of care for most of these women is that they are not used to being allowed to use it in academia. Many comment on how different these classes are from others they have taken in the university. One facilitator found the collaborative and supportive atmosphere so compelling, she switched majors so she could take more courses in the program.

Carole's story (pseudonyms have been used) illustrates well the kind of talk that facilitators typically embrace to interpret and guide their

work as facilitators. Carole shared with the other facilitators her struggle to value Dorothy, a middle-aged woman in her group who was having difficulty adjusting to graduate-level studies. Compared to the other members of her group, Dorothy seemed to have difficulty grasping the readings and contributing to the group's analytical discussions. Carole confessed that she had difficulty "listening" to Dorothy's cries for help in the dialogue journal, hearing instead whining. Dorothy complained about having to rearrange her life to keep up with the readings and about the group's ignoring her attempts to contribute. Other members did indeed confide in Carole that it was difficult working with Dorothy because her contributions seemed irrelevant and trivial. Carole used the case for self-critique as a caretaker and drew upon the language of care to guide her future interactions with Dorothy: "I had to learn to value Dorothy before I could help her build self-esteem." Carole's language and actions were well received and supported by most of the other facilitators. Whereas they felt it was sometimes difficult to meet these ideals, the "truth" she expressed was unchallenged by most of the other facilitators.

There was one indirect challenge to Carole's truth, however. John's story, which unfolded in the same group of facilitators, is interesting because it contrasts so sharply with the dominant discourse of the class. His group consisted of two other men and two women. John was a reluctant participant in the facilitator's discussions and only after considerable urging did he begin to talk about a problem in his group. John complained about Maj, one of the men in his group, dominating discussions. Maj was well versed in critical philosophy and attempted to bring this language into their small group, but in doing so he took on the role of expert, a move which *was* resented by the other members of the group. It soon became evident that what was bothering John the most was his perception that Maj was critical of him for not being a strong leader who could guide the group's discussions. Whereas he took comfort in the fact that he wasn't supposed to guide discussions, he could not step out of the gendered discourse that shaped their relationship.

The other facilitators, mostly women, attempted to help John deal with the status issues between himself and Maj using their language of care. At one point someone suggested that each of them tell something good about a group member who was resisting them as facilitators (the group having appropriated Carole's approach to dealing with this kind of frustration). When it was John's turn, he insisted that there was nothing good about Maj and refused to engage in the exercise. John strongly resisted the group's language of care, finding it incomprehensible and alien to his own ways of talking and interpreting.



The more the group attempted to “help” John, the more resistant he became. Neither was he able to access the language of critique, a language that Maj would have understood and an intervention that would have helped the group to better understand Problem Posing (the group’s assigned topic). Intellectually, he understood the language of critique, and he appreciated the irony in this situation (the expert on critical theory unable to critique his own behavior), but the group at that point in time was unable to support his using it. In the end, John was positioned by the role and its discourses to be inarticulate, so he resisted the whole enterprise.

Given the dominance of the language of care, it is not surprising that facilitators often resist the language of critique, a language that may seem to threaten the solidarity and intimacy of the group (Pulka, 1989). They resist tools that might help the group reflect more critically on their experiences, such as taping group sessions or taking notes, while embracing tools that enabled them to establish more intimacy, such as dialogue journals. Conflict, often privately revealed in dialogue journals rather than openly expressed in groups, is mediated behind the scenes to avoid and suppress confrontation. Very few facilitators have used their position to push public critique or collective action and those who do often fail to get a response. One facilitator, for example, detecting frustration with the domineering behavior of a male member of her group, tried to get the women to talk about their frustration in the dialogue journals, but none would respond. Furthermore, the facilitator herself did not feel comfortable bringing the issue to the group to discuss openly. She summed up her group by saying, “I guess we are just polite middle-aged women.”

Even when Facilitators are critical about their work as facilitators, the critique is framed within the language of care. One facilitator’s controlling behavior toward second language speakers in her group was interpreted as being overprotective rather than patronizing or domineering. Facilitators often worry about when to intervene and when to leave the group to its own devices, but the discussion centers around concerns about the group “suffering,” rather than concerns about the group failing to reflect. When pushed to critique, facilitators instead question their own competence rather than critique the group’s processes or inventions. One facilitator, whose group was unable to achieve the “mystical bonding” that others talked about, wrote, “Had I been in a position to create calm and clarity, I would have rendered the group a great service and gained their trust.” Another facilitator commented, “It became very disheartening for me as I surveyed all of the missed opportunities and unwitting disservice [perpetrated on the group because of not knowing how to facilitate].”

## The Language of Critique

One might conclude from these stories that the discourses students bring with them are too ingrained for them to acquire new ways of talking, interpreting, and acting (invention and critique)—at least within the structure and time frame of the program. Although muted, the language of critique finds voice in the program, however, and seems to grow stronger over time (despite the turnover of students). More importantly, it is not the professor's intervention that sustains the language, but the efforts of the students themselves, despite resistance to the notion. We have identified two ways through which this occurs: (a) "communities of resistance" and (b) student writing and research.

The first way that the language of critique is sustained is through what has been called by feminists communities of resistance (Welch, 1985). Although students in the program do not use this term, what they say and do is compatible with the concept. Feminist theory and research (Hooks, 1990; Moore, 1990; Stimpson, 1989) describe these communities as spaces where the marginalized are able to construct alternative identities and meanings—places where they "can return to themselves more easily, where the conditions are such that they can heal themselves and recover their wholeness" (hooks, 1990, p. 40). Women in the program often report having felt marginalized and intimidated by their previous experiences in formal education, even when they have been successful. Success came because they were willing to work hard in private and to parrot the teacher's words, rather than because they engaged in the give-and-take of intellectual dialogue. As a result, they begin graduate school with little confidence in their ability to succeed but with well-developed coping strategies. When courses are not conducted according to their expectations, they initially panic and resist (this is usually expressed privately to the facilitators in the dialogue journals.) This panic motivates facilitators to emphasize the caretaking side of their roles and program norms (i.e., you have a responsibility to help one another and the right to receive support). Most women respond readily to this language, and they begin constructing communities in which they feel safe and comfortable and in which they are able to construct new identities for themselves.<sup>1</sup> A facilitator from China, recalling her first experiences in the program, expressed sentiments that are commonly echoed by others,

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<sup>1</sup> There are too few men in the program to generalize about their presence in these communities. It has been our experience that many of them have some difficulty the first time they participate in the small groups but have less difficulty the second time around. One of the men commented that he had to get used to the way the women talked. He was used to more direct participation and more explicit challenging of one another's viewpoints.

Before I took this course, I never talked in the class. I never expected to know anybody, to make friends in a class. I always felt that I was a foreigner, an observer more than a participant in the class. . . . As time went by, I found I had been engaging in a cooperative learning process in a very comfortable way, light atmosphere. I and my peer group developed a close relationship. For the first time I made some American friends, friends from other countries from the course I am taking.

Even though students have difficulty critiquing their own groups, the “healing” they experience, enables them to become much more public and vocal critics of the program and the professor. For example, one group of facilitators became particularly vocal about practices that make newcomers anxious and about the lack of scaffolding for their roles as facilitators. In particular, they wanted more explicit guidance for facilitation so they could provide better support to their group members, thus, in effect, rejecting the professor’s challenge to “invent” facilitation. When the professor resisted their demands by suggesting that they needed to give up their dependence on authoritative texts and find their own voices, the woman who had described herself as a “polite middle-aged woman” a semester earlier, countered, “That’s manipulative and patronizing. We can decide for ourselves when we are ready to use authoritative texts.” This is just one of many examples of women appropriating the language of critique to protect their small groups—it is an act of care.

There is no doubt that these communities give many women the strength to confront some of the practices and structures that have worked to subordinate them. In fact, during the summing up that occurs at the end of most courses, it is quite common for women to give public testimonials about their own transformations—a display that may seem to be the uncritical celebration of teachers’ voices that Giroux (1992) has warned us about. However, another program practice seems to mitigate some of this uncritical celebration: the facilitators’ research and writing, which is passed down to new facilitators. As with other aspects of the course, this practice was initially resisted but has gradually become more prominent. It is through this practice that facilitators and, with their assistance, other group members are enabled to critique their own inventions.

This research and written critique is an imposed requirement although students may define what it means in their own way, and it is frequently resisted. Requiring a written paper is, of course, conventional, but collecting data on one’s peers is interpreted by some as tantamount to spying. Some refuse to engage in these practices outright, whereas others tend to subvert the practice with less direct acts of resistance (i.e., such as forgetting to record or failing to transcribe the tapes). Even those who acquiesce to tape-recording and analyzing

their small-group discussions often do not use the data in their final papers. They choose instead to write about their own failures as facilitators or to critique the professor's design of the course. Over time, the professor has attempted to give more prominence and legitimacy to the research side of facilitation and the most important vehicle for furthering this aim has been doctoral student research. We have not intentionally put doctoral students in this role in order to fight the resistance of facilitators, and in many ways the presence of doctoral students has merely strengthened this resistance. Nevertheless, the research of doctoral students has helped to demonstrate the need for critique and the possibilities of research in assisting critique.

As with other facilitators, the success of doctoral students as facilitators (as defined by the emerging discourse of the program) depends on their ability to play the caretaking role. But their success as doctoral students (as defined by the discourse of the university) depends on their doing research. Consequently, to succeed in these two discourses, doctoral students must find a way to keep the two in dynamic tension. Their experiences struggling with these discourses enable other facilitators to see the possibilities.

Francis's story is the most clear-cut example of the way that doctoral student research appears to be working to give more prominence to the language of critique than has traditionally been the case. As part of his doctoral program, Francis has worked as a facilitator and with facilitators since the establishment of the role. (His real name is used with permission; his work is described in detail in Bailey, 1993.) Knowing the program and its language of care and coming to the program predisposed to the language of critique, Francis was able to use the research data to help his group begin to critically reflect on how they were jointly constructing the silence of a Japanese-speaking woman in their group, he and the Japanese woman also contributing to the silencing. Using the dominant language of care (i.e., one of our members is having a difficult time understanding some of what's going on), Francis was able to guide the group to closely examine a transcript of one group discussion. The group challenged one another's interpretations of the transcript, noted and appreciated the contradictions and paradoxes in their perspectives, and brainstormed ways to simultaneously be inclusive, tolerant of differences, and critical.

Lack of space prevents us from describing the history of struggle that enabled him to take advantage of this moment, but the episode should be noted. The importance of this moment, which Francis described in writing and passed out in the program, extends beyond the experiences of this particular group. His work was well received by other facilitators because he demonstrated how critique could work to increase solidarity rather than destroy it. Nevertheless, the notion of

research was still hotly contested, despite what seemed to be a clear and compelling example of the usefulness of research and the importance of critique to the language of care. In discussing how they were going to present to the class what they had learned about facilitation, a facilitator suggested framing their presentation with the notion of teacher-researcher. Another facilitator at first refused to have her work framed as research. It was only after a long discussion about the differences and commonalities between “knowing your learners in order to care for them” and “researching learners in order to care for all learners” that this particular facilitator was persuaded to at least explore the possibilities of calling her work research. The next semester, one of the members in Francis’s small group became a facilitator; as a result of her experiences in the group, she now appreciated the language of critique. Gradually the language of critique is gaining currency.

It is important to note that Francis’s writing is not the only writing being passed on to the new generation—to do so would undermine the invention of facilitation. It would instead become “Francis’s Method of Facilitation.” The writing and analyses of all facilitators, many of them resistant to empowerment, must remain part of the program’s discourse that shapes what facilitators do and talk about. It is through ongoing dialogue, not the professor’s authority, that the possibility of transforming ingrained discourses exists.

## CONCLUSION

Our story documents the struggle that has occurred in our program to determine the nature of facilitation in the program within an empowerment framework. Within this framework, resistance is interpreted as both inevitable and productive. Moreover, we demonstrate the possibility of being able to acquire a new language without subordinating the languages that learners bring with them and without imposing the new language.

Although the issues and processes described in this study are particular to our teacher education program, the analysis suggests ways that resistance might be examined in other empowerment education programs. We also believe that the tension between the language of care and the language of critique is inherent in the notion of empowerment and will be evident in other programs although played out in unique ways.

The question remains whether or not our students’ experiences in the program will empower them to challenge the dominant language outside of the program and to use an empowerment framework in

their own classes. Anecdotal evidence suggests so, but future research will help us better understand the struggles they face and the ways they draw on their experiences in the program to help them with their struggles.

In our efforts to understand the “problem” of resistance, we have created a coherent explanation for ourselves—one that gives us the courage to continue our work in the face of resistance. Nevertheless, we have also constructed a theory of resistance that protects our empowerment framework (Zavarzadeh, 1992). In doing so, we increase our chances of silencing those who resist. We will continue to search for ways to help them resist us (those whose meanings prevail) and for us to hear them.

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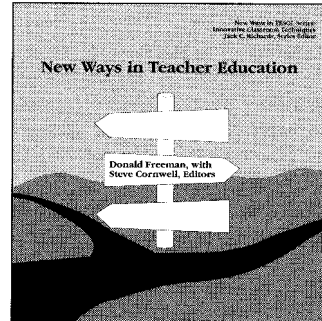
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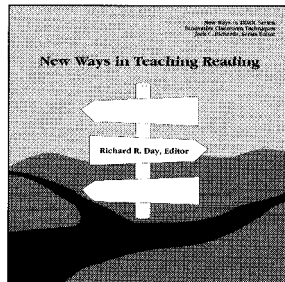


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Adult ESL practitioners operate in a context in which full-time positions are rare, resources are scarce, and turnover is high. But efforts to professionalize the field should not be taken as an indictment of the professionalism of the adult ESL workforce. Even under adverse current working conditions, professionalism in the field is high, as is demonstrated by participation in ongoing professional development and the range of professional development models in use. Whereas both certification and credentialing have been proposed as ways of enhancing the professionalization of the field, credentialing may be more appropriate because it can provide for multiple routes of access to the profession. The article discusses three major models of adult ESL literacy professional development: craft or mentoring models, applied science or theory to practice models, and inquiry or reflective practice models. The article concludes by outlining each model, describing examples of each in adult ESL literacy and suggesting ways in which they can be effectively combined, looking to innovative teacher development practices in K-12 education as a guide.

*In order to advance the state of the art, we must build a profession.*  
(Foster, 1988, p. 14)

**L**arge, multilevel classes, limited resources, substandard facilities, intermittent funding, limited contracts with few benefits: This is the context in which adult ESL literacy practitioners work. Adult education is a stepchild of K-12 education and an afterthought in U.S. educational policy. That fact is made obvious each time a public school which is no longer needed is reassigned to adult education (often with the same small, children's desks inside) or when adult education classes are conducted in inappropriate facilities that during the day have other functions as elementary or secondary classrooms. Add to this the common perception that if you can speak a language,

you can teach it and if you can read, you can teach others to read (both of which have led to a reliance upon volunteers to teach adult ESL literacy), and it is difficult not to view adult ESL literacy practitioners as among the least empowered workforce today, a situation which both practitioners and professional associations (such as TESOL) have been attempting to change for some time (see what Auerbach, 1992, calls a Practitioners' Bill of Rights; and Wrigley, 1991).

Adult ESL literacy programs usually operate on shoestring budgets, piecing together limited funds from several different sources. Because funding cycles are often short (1 year or less), a good deal of personnel resources are expended in the constant search for funds. And whereas there are some exceptions, in general, the number of programs provided are insufficient to meet the demand: long waiting lists and waiting times (from a few months to several years) are the norm. In many major metropolitan areas, there is little or no outreach conducted by existing programs because they cannot adequately serve those who have already sought enrollment (Crandall, 1989). Ironically, this situation exists in the U.S. when numerous social welfare or citizenship programs require individuals to participate in language and literacy programs if they are to receive other benefits.

When there are vacancies, it is often because the stated or perceived purposes of the program do not meet learners' goals. A variety of adult ESL and literacy programs are necessary to accommodate the diverse group of adult ESL learners, who differ in their degree of English language proficiency, their literacy in their first and other languages, and their purposes for participating in English language and literacy education (Crandall, 1991). Some speak languages which were previously unwritten and thus have limited familiarity with written language (e.g., many Hmong and Haitians); others have limited literacy in their L1, having participated in only a few years of formal or informal education; and still others are highly educated in their own language, only wanting to add English language literacy (and sometimes a new writing system, as well).

Multiple types and levels of programs have been developed and offered in a variety of settings, involving one-to-one tutoring, small- or large-group instruction. Depending on the program provider, the context, the learners, and the pedagogical approach, the variation is immense. Programs may be sponsored by community-based, secular, or religious organizations; by voluntary literacy organizations; by employers or unions; or by local educational agencies, libraries, community colleges, or a host of other public and private institutions. The focus of these programs may be on helping learners establish basic or initial literacy (in their first language as well as in ESL); on family literacy or intergenerational literacy, linking parents with children in joint reading and

learning; on workplace literacy (focusing on specific job skills) or broader worker development; or on any number of specialized needs for literacy (Crandall & Imel, 1991; Guth & Wrigley, 1992).

## **THE ADULT ESL LITERACY WORKFORCE**

Given the need to provide a variety of literacy programs and the increasing demand for such services, it is clear that a professional, well-paid adult ESL workforce is warranted, but we are faced with the opposite situation. The majority of adult ESL and adult literacy instructors work part-time without contracts or benefits (estimates range from 80% to 90%), and often they are volunteers. Except in unusual programs, such as the Riverside Adult Literacy Center in New York (Pleune, 1989), or in some states, such as Arkansas, there are few full-time instructors; those who are full-time are likely to function as program administrators. In an effort to make funds stretch as far as possible, when programs grow, administrators are likely to hire more part-time instructors or look toward additional volunteers rather than convert several part-time positions to a full-time position with benefits (Foster, 1988; Tibbetts, Kutner, Hemphill, & Jones, 1991; Wrigley & Guth, 1992). The net effect is that many practitioners are part-time instructors in several programs which require different knowledge and skills. For example, an instructor might combine a part-time job in a family or workplace literacy program with another part-time job in adult basic education.

Not surprisingly, the turnover among adult basic education and ESL practitioners is great; one survey of adult literacy practitioners in New York City reports that a majority of those working in adult literacy had been in the field for 3 years or less (Metis, 1986). Nor is it surprising that among adult ESL and literacy educators, there is great concern about the need for professionalization of the field: full-time employment with benefits, more job stability, better programmatic resources, and more commitment to professional development. An increase in full-time positions would not only attract more professionals to adult ESL literacy and keep them in the field, but it would also facilitate effective, long-term, coherent and consistent professional development (Dick, 1989; Griswold, 1989; Tibbetts et al., 1991), a need recognized by the National Literacy Act and other recent literacy initiatives.

## **PROFESSIONALIZATION AND PROFESSIONALISM**

It is important, however, not to confuse professionalization (status enhancement through certification or credentialing, contracts, and

tenure) with professionalism (professional practice, involvement in program development, continued learning). Being full-time does not necessarily make one a professional; nor does being part-time necessarily entail the reverse. For example, the Metis (1986) study found that more than 70% of those surveyed wanted to participate in staff development for professional development even though a very few (20% of the total surveyed) had full-time positions. Limited financial or other incentives, however, did affect how extensive or frequent that participation might be.

In spite of surveys which demonstrate professionalism in the field, it has been common to view the adult ESL (and more broadly, the entire adult education) workforce in deficit terms, focusing on what instructors lack rather than what they bring to the task. To be fair, some of that view is justified. The adult ESL literacy workforce brings a diverse set of skills and experiences to their work, but the appropriateness of that preparation for adult ESL literacy contexts is questionable. Whereas the majority may have college degrees, these may be in almost any field. Those with degrees in education are likely to be prepared to teach children or adolescents, not adults. Those with degrees in reading may have had little preparation for teaching literacy in a second language. Even those with degrees in TESOL or applied linguistics may have limited preparation for teaching ESL literacy to adults. Until recently, most TESOL or applied linguistics programs focused on the needs of primary, secondary, or university students, not on adults with limited education.

Time spent in in-service education may also be limited. Current staff development efforts often consist of voluntary attendance at workshops, conferences, or seminars for a day or two per year (Tibbetts et al., 1991). A typical literacy volunteer, working in one-to-one tutoring, may receive only 15–20 hours of preparation during the first year, with even more limited training in subsequent years. Tibbetts et al. (1991) voice a common concern when they suggest that “inadequate preparation of adult education teachers is generally considered to be a fundamental weakness of ABE [adult basic education] and ESL programs” (p. 1).

### **What Constitutes Professionalism?**

The great demand for adult ESL literacy education and the diverse needs of adult ESL literacy learners have forced our profession to engage in a delicate balancing act in deciding who is qualified to teach ESL literacy. As Wrigley and Guth (1992) note,

On the one hand, there are concerns about professionalizing ESL literacy teaching by insisting on strong academic credentials, such as certificates in

ABE or TESL or a Masters degree in ESL. On the other hand, credentialed teachers who understand literacy issues and have experience teaching language minority adults are difficult to find [and to keep]. As a result, the field is grappling with the issue of how to ensure competence and foster professionalism without establishing rigid certification requirements that deny professional opportunities for good teachers who lack academic credentials. (p. 196)

Whereas there is little research on the relationship between preservice education criteria or participation in in-service education and overall staff effectiveness, program effectiveness, or adult literacy learner outcomes (Kutner, 1992; Lytle, Belzer, & Reumann, 1992), there is widespread consensus within the adult ESL literacy field on the basic requirements for teaching adult ESL literacy. According to Wrigley and Guth (1992), these include special knowledge of theory and practice in L1 and L2 literacy, cross-cultural awareness, and the development of skills for teaching ESL literacy to adults in educationally and culturally appropriate ways.

### **Certification or Credentialing?**

But there is less agreement on when necessary knowledge and skills should be acquired or how they should be validated. The concern for professionalization of the field has led many to suggest that some kind of certification (involving participation in university courses) or credentialing (involving some demonstration of proficiency) be required for adult ESL literacy teachers.

There are a number of reasons why credentialing may be more appropriate than certification. Even in the broader context of adult education, there are few states with certification: Only 11 require special preparation for adult education; 14 require either K-12 or secondary-level certification (for teaching adults!); whereas 25 do not report any adult education certification requirements (Tibbetts et al., 1991). Certification in adult ESL is even more limited.

Moreover, as Draper (1986) cautions and those of us involved in teacher education are often painfully aware: "The certification of teachers does not necessarily result in better teaching or a more sensitive interaction between the teachers and the adult learner" (p. 6). Even those who have participated in TESOL preparation or applied linguistics programs may have had only limited exposure to nonformal adult education or to the types of concerns and needs of many adult ESL literacy learners. Some of this is acquired only through experience, and for program directors such as Berman and Robbins (see Pleune, 1989), even a Master's degree may not be enough. A teacher "must also

come recommended and with classroom experience” (Pleune, 1989, p. 5).

To some degree, appropriate qualifications will vary with the type of adult ESL literacy program. As Lytle et al. (1992) suggest, “deciding on the appropriate qualifications for teachers, for example, depends on the program’s concepts of curriculum and instruction—the what and how of teaching in that particular context” (p. 3). If a program defines literacy in terms of a set of specific skills, as is frequently the case in workplace literacy programs, then a qualified instructor would be one who could develop those skills, perhaps using a particular curriculum or set of materials. If the program defines literacy in terms of social practice and critical reflection, as is often the case in community-based initial or family literacy programs, then the curriculum would need to be jointly constructed by teachers, learners, and staff, and qualifications would reflect an orientation toward that approach.

Demonstrated proficiency, or credentialing, may offer a more appropriate and productive means of validating the professionalism of adult ESL teachers. Adult ESL literacy professionals would be those who have acquired appropriate theoretical and practical knowledge (through formal education and experience); who continue to develop themselves as professionals by participation in ongoing professional development; and who can “provide evidence” that they are “capable of teaching ESL literacy in ways that are educationally sound, socially responsible, and responsive to the needs of ESL literacy learners” (Guth & Wrigley, 1992, p. 197). Whereas individual teachers might acquire some of their qualifications through programs which lead to certification, they could also learn and demonstrate these through a variety of professional development activities and in their practice.

### **Diversity and Professionalism?**

Credentialing allows for multiple routes of access to adult ESL literacy teaching and validates the different knowledge, skills, and experiences that practitioners bring to their practice. Whereas it might be ideal to hire only bilingual teachers with advanced degrees and experience in some area of L1 and L2 literacy instruction and who have had experience working in the learners’ communities, given the current context (i.e., limited resources, part-time employment, etc.) of adult ESL literacy education and the number of available individuals with those qualifications, it is not always possible. Instead, programs need to provide ways in which individuals with different qualifications can work together, expanding their knowledge and skills through activities related to their work. Those with what Auerbach (1992) refers to as

“formal qualifications,” such as knowledge of theory and practice in L1 and L2 literacy, may have limited experience in working in linguistically and culturally diverse communities; members of these communities with “informal qualifications,” who better understand the learner and the potential uses and contexts for literacy, may have limited theoretical or pedagogical background in L 1 or L2 literacy. Ideally, when brought together in an adult ESL literacy program, they will learn from each other and can help create a diverse, professional, adult ESL literacy workforce which “mirrors the diversity” of adult ESL learners “and the diversity of contexts in which they seek to learn” (Lytle et al., 1992, p. 9).

Without multiple routes of access, community members with relevant experiences and educational backgrounds would be barred from teaching. As Heath (1983), Reder (1985, 1987), Weinstein-Shr (1984, 1990), and others have shown, both the contexts and processes of literacy vary cross-culturally; members of the community are more likely to understand and focus on culturally relevant and appropriate literacy practices (Auerbach, 1992). If the practitioners are newly literate, they are also likely to be more sensitized to the hopes, fears, and other experiences of the learners with whom they are working (Podeschi, 1990; Reder, 1985; Rivera, 1988). Community members may also be better able to provide the scaffolding needed for helping adults to develop their new language and literacy skills.

Ironically, Klassen (see Klassen & Burnaby, this issue) found that Spanish-speaking nonliterate in Toronto were able to cope pretty well in all environments except their ESL classes! A survey of Hmong adults in Milwaukee (Podeschi, 1990) at basic literacy levels with little or no experience in successful formal education who were enrolled in adult ESL classes with others with much more formal education revealed that two thirds experienced “great difficulty” in understanding their ESL literacy instructors; one half did not understand what they were studying. Of these, “most felt that help must come from someone who could speak their language” (p. 59). Reder (1985) suggests that community literacy programs, where learners and teachers share common backgrounds and languages, can help prevent literacy learners from feeling “(as they often do) that becoming more literate means abandoning friends, families and peer values to join a larger, more impersonal world dominated by alien and sometimes hostile institutions and values” (p. 2).

Practitioners who share a common language with their learners are needed especially for first language literacy instruction, important not only for cultural maintenance and for preserving and supporting a critical national (linguistic) resource but also for its effect upon second language acquisition (see Burtoff, 1985; Robson, 1982). With support



and training, these individuals can provide appropriate educational experiences for others from their communities; at the same time, these adult L1 and L2 literacy programs can serve as an entry point into the field of adult education for language minority individuals, who are terribly underrepresented at all levels of teaching (Gonzalez, 1992; Marcusson, 1992), including both ESL and adult literacy, and who may find the standardized assessment measures and other certification requirements a formidable barrier.

Better employment conditions in adult education, ESL, and literacy (i.e., professionalization) will undoubtedly lead to more qualified individuals entering the field and remaining there but what is also needed is the establishment of a variety of ways through which individuals can both acquire and demonstrate their professionalism in the field. Some knowledge and skill can be acquired in preservice programs, but given the diversity of learners, contexts, and purposes of literacy instruction, adult ESL literacy practitioners must continue to develop through their practice and through in-service education which enables them to reflect upon and learn from their experiences. However, adult ESL literacy programs should provide financial support for these activities. Auerbach (1992) cites "paid time for preparation, professional development, and nonteaching activities" as "probably the single most important factor" (p. 29) in the success of teachers in developing an innovative family literacy program and contributing to the development of the field of adult ESL literacy.

### **The Importance of Continued Professional Development**

Regardless of prior preparation or experiences, adult ESL literacy practitioners need to participate in ongoing professional development. Those with certification or advanced TESOL degrees need to become knowledgeable about the lives of their learners, the distribution of language and literacy within that community, and the purposes for participation in the program. Community members with more limited preparation in adult ESL or literacy education need to become more knowledgeable about theory and practice in second language acquisition/learning, especially as it affects literacy. And, these individuals can profitably learn much of what is needed from each other and from other sources of staff or professional development.

What follows is a discussion of what constitutes effective staff development and a description of some interesting ways of providing that professional development, drawn from many areas of teacher education as well as adult English language and literacy instruction. Some of these staff development programs occur despite limited funding and competing needs for the use of these funds. Some do this by

combining professional development with curriculum development, materials preparation, or program evaluation, thus maximizing resources. Some are engaged in partnerships or collaborations among a number of different entities and individuals making better use of available resources. Equally important, some involve a diverse group of practitioners in the process: traditionally and nonformally or non-traditionally trained teachers, teacher educators, graduate students, and instructional assistants. Whereas these programs do maximize available resources, the discussion should not be construed as a validation of the status quo, however. Greater and more consistent funding must be made available to adult English language and literacy programs to provide increased full-time employment and more adequately to support those who are in part-time positions.

### **THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

Professional development is an ongoing process, not a product which can be neatly packaged; nor is it something which can be developed in occasional workshops, the staple of many in-service staff development programs. Instead, what is needed is an ongoing series of staff development opportunities which will enable practitioners to question their own practice, expand their knowledge of and skills in improving that practice, and evaluate the effectiveness of their classrooms. These staff development opportunities include: participation in workshops, seminars, institutes, or conferences; classroom observations (including the use of videotaping to observe one's own teaching); enrollment in courses or a sequence of seminars leading to a certificate; involvement in a mentoring relationship with a more experienced or "master" teacher or in a peer-coaching relationship; extensive reading in the field; involvement in curriculum or materials development or joint lesson planning; participation in program evaluation; and increasingly, engagement in some type of action research or reflective practice in which teachers investigate problems and practice in their own classes and meet to share their experiences, frustrations, and insights (Dick, 1987; Sherman, Kutner, Webb, & Herman, 1991; Tibbetts et al., 1991).

Key to success in all of these staff development approaches is participation by the practitioner as trainer, inquirer, discussant, coteacher, materials developer, evaluator, and researcher. Effective professional development engages adults in their own development and involves collaboration with others: teachers, learners, and administrators. It also brings together practitioners with diverse backgrounds and experi-

ences and provides opportunities for them to learn from each other (Cervero, 1988; Kazemek, 1988; Wrigley & Guth, 1992).

Wrigley and Guth (1992) basing their discussion on Wallace's (1991) models of staff development in foreign language teaching (1991), group this diverse world of adult ESL staff development opportunities into three types or models: (a) the craft or mentor model, which "relies on the knowledge of the experienced practitioner to mentor less experienced practitioners" (p. 201); (b) the applied science or theory to practice model, which links relevant research in the field with teaching practice; and (c) the inquiry or reflective teaching model (more commonly referred to as reflective practice by teacher educators), in which teachers work individually or collaboratively to reflect on their own practice or their programs and curricula. (See also the three major frameworks in teacher preparation—effective practices, coaching, and collaborative research—identified by Milk, Mercado, & Sapiens, 1992.)

Although these are useful distinctions, most staff development initiatives involve combinations of all of these and although reflective practice is becoming viewed as an essential component, it is important to remember that one needs something to "reflect" upon, some information base acquired in reading and discussion of relevant research or practice, especially for those who are new to teaching (Willig, 1990). Also needed is some opportunity to work with experienced practitioners in a mentoring or coaching relationship (Joyce & Showers, 1984).

Optimally, all curriculum and materials development, program design, and program evaluation should be part of the professional development process, and teachers, administrators, and learners should share in identifying needs, researching the situation, evaluating options, developing procedures and materials, and gauging the effectiveness of their efforts. Rather than being recipients of others' actions (i.e., implementing a curriculum developed by others or being evaluated by outsiders on the effectiveness of their teaching), practitioners need to be encouraged to "develop ownership" or at least be integrated into the evaluation process (Kutner, 1992). Similarly, professional development programs become more closely tied to learner satisfaction and outcomes when learners also participate in the process, for example, through student delegate systems such as that at the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) Worker Education Program in New York or through participation in program advisory groups.

### **Craft or Mentoring Models**

An interesting example of the craft or mentor model was established in the refugee education programs in the Philippines, Thailand, and

Indonesia, where host country national teachers collaborated with each other and with a master teacher in developing lesson plans, sharing ideas for classroom activities, and trying these out with each other. In addition, the master teacher visited classes and did some demonstration teaching. Whereas a refugee camp provided unique opportunities for (and challenges to) professional development, a similar type of program can be established in adult ESL literacy contexts, providing an opportunity to develop curriculum, materials, and teaching activities or techniques as part of professional development. A mentor teacher can provide demonstration lessons as occurs at The City University of New York, where master teachers open up some of their ABE/ESL classes to colleagues who are encouraged to observe as often as possible and are reimbursed for their time (Meyers, 1989). Equally important, master teachers can take over classes, freeing teachers to observe and learn from their peers.

Other relevant examples of professional development involving craft or mentoring in combination with reflective practice come from elementary and secondary education, especially in alternative certification programs which seek to increase numbers of teachers, especially those groups underrepresented in teaching, both in terms of personal characteristics (gender, race, ethnicity) as well as in disciplinary knowledge (i.e., mathematics, science, technical areas), and to place them in hard-to-serve areas such as inner city or rural schools. In these alternative or "fast-track" certification programs, recent graduates in academic disciplines such as science or mathematics without teacher education and "career changers" with a vast amount of field-based experience but little knowledge or experience in public school education are provided with a number of experiences leading to certification without participating in traditional undergraduate or graduate teacher education. The programs usually involve an orientation session during the summer prior to placement in classrooms and then a series of mentoring and other support activities during their first year of teaching to enable them to develop as teachers. These activities may include the keeping of teaching and learning logs and participation in a series of special graduate teacher education courses, often cotaught by expert teachers and university teacher educators, where these new teachers voice their concerns and problems, read and discuss relevant research and relate it to their experiences in the classroom, and learn from each other.

In another variant of this approach, individuals who have extensive experience working in a field but little relevant prior education are also enrolling in alternative certification programs which validate their prior experience but add to it, especially in developing the theory to support what may seem intuitively to be appropriate practice. Relevant

examples of this kind of program can be found in programs for returning Peace Corps volunteers or others who have spent a good deal of time as volunteers working in a particular area such as English language teaching but who have had limited opportunity to read in the field, to discuss relevant theory and research, and to relate that research to their experiences. It is interesting to note that teachers in both types of alternative certification programs frequently continue their formal education by enrolling in graduate programs.

A comparable kind of alternative certification program could be developed for adult ESL literacy, especially for those who have undergraduate degrees in education, reading, or related fields but who lack specific education or appropriate experience in teaching second languages or literacy. It is also possible to pair beginning teachers, especially members of the community engaged in L1 literacy instruction, with others involved in an alternative certification program as a first step toward more formal education-based professional development for those who lack that education. The involvement of community members in the professional development program will also offer a valuable resource on language, culture, and literacy practices for participants who are neither bilingual nor members of the local community.

### **Applied Science or Theory to Practice**

A number of excellent examples of an applied science or theory to practice model exist, including some which incorporate mentoring and reflective practice. One of these, the Adult ESL Teacher Training Institute, developed for California, has been implemented in many other states (Connecticut and Virginia, among others) and is extensively used in Peace Corps programs in Eastern and Central Europe (K. L. Savage, personal communication, September, 1992; Wood, 1992). It is also one of the few professional development programs to be carefully evaluated (Alamprese, Keltner, & Savage, 1988; Sherman et al., 1991). The "institute" consists of a series of sequenced, skill-based training sessions involving the use of video training packages implemented by trainers who are experienced teachers and certified by the institute. Each video provides the basis for 3 hours of formal training, involving discussion of the goals and underlying principles of the technique, demonstration of that technique through the video, analysis of the technique, and identification of and practice in implementing the key elements of the technique (Savage, 1992). Before institute sessions are held, program administrators attend a workshop where the training is previewed and implementation and follow-up is encouraged. Some of the institute's strengths are the sequenced nature

of the workshops; the on-site follow-up and coaching; the spacing between sessions to permit application and follow-up discussions; the development and use of experienced teachers and trainers, nominated locally; and the clear presentation of the techniques (Kutner et al., 1992). In fact, evaluations of the institute have found that teachers learn the techniques well though they emerge "stronger on practical application than theory" (Sherman et al., 1991, p. 41), a point that teachers made in their evaluations when they requested the treatment of fewer techniques in more depth.

Video, satellite telecommunications, and other technology are making it possible for this model to be offered to individuals through distance education. For example, Los Angeles County is using its Educational Telecommunications Network to provide programming for adult ESL literacy teachers and administrators with segments on teaching techniques and administrative strategies (Fleischman & Kilbert, 1993), and my colleagues and I are developing a similar set of videotapes on exemplary programs at the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL).

Other institutes with similar goals, though different delivery modes, are offered by the Illinois ESL Adult Education Service Center (see Terdy, this issue); the Literacy Assistance Center (LAC) in New York (Freeman, 1989); the Consortium on Worker Education (a consortium of various union education programs) in New York; the Virginia Adult Institute for Language and Literacy (VAILL); and the System for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES) in Massachusetts. A major difference between many of these (e.g., SABES or LAC) and the Adult ESL Teacher Training Institute is the local identification of professional development needs, the opportunity for peer-coaching or "partner-teacher" relationships, and the presence of ongoing support through regional resource centers, which can also convene workshops, establish study circles, and serve as a source of encouragement for teacher collaboration and research or ongoing curriculum or materials development (Kutner et al., 1992). Whereas the institute can assure some adherence to criteria and standardization of training, there may be a trade-off in the degree to which the program is locally appropriate. Some combination of the two types of institutes might be optimal.

### **Inquiry or Reflective Practice Models**

The most exciting professional development programs and those which are likely to have the greatest local impact on teachers, programs, and learners are those involving some kind of action research, reflective practice, or inquiry-based professional development. In these approaches, teachers are active researchers, engaged in reading, sharing,

observing, critically analyzing, and reflecting upon their own practice with the goal of improving it (Hewitt, 1992; Imel, 1992; Schon, 1983, 1988; Wolfe, 1991). As Griswold (1989) points out, reflective practice is responsive to a common view among practitioners that the best staff development often exists in contexts other than those generally considered to be staff development activities. As he says,

To be sure, I've learned a lot from participating in workshops, attending institutes, hearing speakers, and reading articles. But I think I've learned the most from ongoing discussion and work with groups of other teachers and administrators founded on a specific program issue or concern. Most of these groups have been within the context of the program I was working with at the time; occasionally I've been a part of ongoing groups involving several people. (p. 2)

Action research, reflective practice, or researcher-teacher collaborations share a common base, building upon what practitioners in local settings want to know and, as a result, are likely to have the greatest impact on practice, especially if the reflection occurs during practice. The research can be carried out collaboratively by practitioners, by practitioners and administrators, or by a combination of these and university teacher educators. In this research, teachers are engaged in all stages of the research, from determining the questions to be investigated and researched, identifying the research methods, analyzing the results, and reflecting upon ways in which the results might implicate changes in practice. Action or participatory research can lead to changes in the perceptions teachers have of themselves: They begin to see themselves as researchers and writers.

One example of this type of professional development is the Adult Literacy Practitioner Inquiry Research Project (Lytle et al., 1992), an ongoing seminar involving adult literacy practitioners in Philadelphia who conduct systematic research into their own practice, analyzing current theory and research from the perspectives of their own field experiences and then discussing this with others in the project. The project operates from two major assumptions:

that research by adult literacy practitioners can contribute both to individual professional development and immediate program effectiveness and that these inquiries have the potential to enhance and alter, not just add to, the wider knowledge base of the field. (Lytle et al., 1992, p. 4)

Adult ESL literacy practitioners have used action research in a variety of ways, such as to develop a new learner assessment tool (Isserlis, 1990).

Action research can also be applied to program evaluation, helping to make that process part of an overall program development process.

For example, I am currently engaged in two evaluations, one of a Title VII program in the U.S. and another of English language programs at a number of Mexican universities; in both, teachers and program administrators are involved not only in identifying the purposes and goals of the evaluation but also in conducting the actual evaluation. This helps to ensure that the evaluation process provides appropriate and relevant information and that the evaluation contributes to teachers' and administrators' professional development as well. In the Mexican program, participation is part of a graduate thesis research course, resulting not only in a much broader and deeper evaluation than might be possible with fewer and less knowledgeable individuals engaged in the process but also in the development and publication of graduate theses for each participant.

Perhaps the best known example of reflective practice is the University of Massachusetts Family Literacy Project, a collaboration between the University of Massachusetts at Boston, and three Boston-area community-based adult literacy centers, each with well-established programs and long-standing and deep connections with the community in which it is located (Auerbach, 1992). The project used a participatory approach to ESL literacy, involving teachers and administrators in researching, developing, implementing, and reflecting upon each aspect of the process and then writing up two accounts of the process: one, *Making Meaning, Making Change* (Auerbach, 1992), focusing on theoretical and methodological aspects of curriculum principally from the perspective of the coordinator; and the other, *Talking Shop* (Nash, Cason, Rhum, McGrail, & Gomez-Sanford, 1992), focusing on the teachers' own accounts of various curriculum cycles as they played themselves out in the classroom. Although this project stipulated that all teachers have graduate degrees, precluding potentially effective community members from participating as teachers, Auerbach and her colleagues are involved in an interesting extension of this model with another community-based organization in Boston in which practitioners with diverse sets of formal and informal qualifications are involved, and access to teaching positions is provided to underrepresented ethnic groups.

### **A Combination of the Three**

Professional development schools provide an exciting example of how all three professional development models can be brought together in one setting, allowing aspiring and experienced teachers, teacher educators, and others involved in education to learn from each other (President's Commission on Teacher Education, 1992). These professional development schools are specially designated elementary



or secondary schools which serve as the locus for research and improvement of practice by teachers and other personnel within the school working collaboratively with university teacher educators. Modeled after the clinical experiences of other professions, these schools seek to more intimately relate theory and practice and to make both preservice and in-service education more integrally related to the improvement of practice. Experienced and expert teachers provide mentoring, offer graduate teacher education courses, and engage collaboratively in research. Teacher educators who are often removed from the day-to-day realities of schools are provided with a “laboratory” in which to test theories and to ensure that they are grounded in real and potential practice; experienced teachers are offered what may be a more relevant professional development experience than enrollment in postgraduate degree programs separated from their practice; and those preparing to teach for the first time are provided with real opportunities to see and test the ways in which theory is applied to practice. To my knowledge, there are no adult ESL (literacy) programs functioning in this regard, though the University of Massachusetts at Boston, collaboration with community-based literacy programs represents a beginning in this direction. However, there is little to prevent more programs from doing so and much to recommend the practice. The site could be a community center, an adult education center, or a worksite. The principle would be the same: to bring together teachers and learners at all stages of their development and to provide a laboratory where they could expand and demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and experiences. TESOL teacher educators and applied linguists would have much-needed authentic adult education contexts in which to test both theory and practice; beginning teachers (regardless of their prior formal education) would be provided with both formal education and opportunities to learn from their experiences; and more experienced teachers could serve as mentors, conduct research related to their own classes and practice, and reflect upon and share their experiences with each other, with their learners, and with university colleagues. These schools could also be ideal sites for credentialing teachers. I look forward to the day when I might be part of such an institution.

## **CONCLUSION**

Efforts to professionalize the adult ESL literacy field—to improve the teaching and learning conditions through full-time employment, reasonable salaries and benefits, better facilities, and more resources—must be intensified. Until greater support is provided for adult ESL

and literacy education, the challenge facing all programs is how to offer appropriate professional development activities within the incredible constraints presented by limited resources and diverse staff working at different times with diverse experiences and needs, each bringing special strengths to the program but also needing special ongoing development and support. Professional development for adult ESL literacy, like teacher education in general, is most beneficial when it builds on teacher/learner strengths, views teacher education as shared learning rather than training, and considers teacher development a lifelong process of questioning, reflection, discussion, and collaboration.

We need to use the various professional development activities as opportunities for research, as well as reflection, documenting not only the processes of development but also their results, especially as evidenced in changes in teacher practice, in program goals, and in learner outcomes. If teachers, learners, and administrators collaborate in both the professional development activities and the research, then it may be possible to develop insights relating professional development to program, teaching, and learning outcomes and thus begin to build a much-needed base of adult ESL literacy research.

## THE AUTHOR

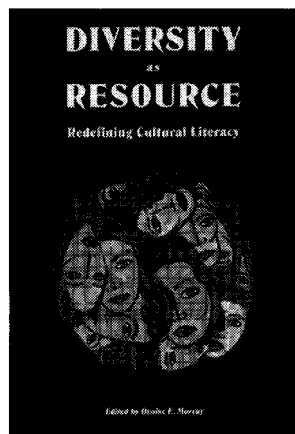
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***Diversity as Resource***  
***Redefining Cultural Literacy***

Denise E. Murray, Editor

Some educators see the growing cultural and linguistic diversity within the United States as a liability. But the authors of this collection offer insight into the language uses of diverse student populations so that we—ESOL and Language Arts teachers and teacher educators—can find ways to see diverse learners as resources, not problems.

Part I discusses definitions of literacy and culture and methods for investigating cultural literacy and diversity. Part II explores literacy practices among dominated and recent immigrant groups in the United States. Part III focuses on classrooms to help teachers realize the potential of linguistically and culturally diverse learners.

Contributors include: Christine Pearson Casanave, Evelyn Baker Dandy, Allison Heisch, Ann M. Johns, Tamara Lucas, Daniel McLaughlin, Denise E. Murray, Patricia C. Nichols, Anna O. Soter, Olga A. Vasquez, Keith Walters, Usha Welaratna.

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## ***Overview Discussion: Directions in Adult ESL Literacy—An Invitation to Dialogue***

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**A**t the conception of this special issue, the tentative title was *Agendas for Adult Second Language Literacy: Invitation to Dialogue*. For reasons both conceptual and logistical, this has been condensed, words and phrases at a time, to *Adult Literacies*, a title that sounds tidy and resolved. As I write this overview commentary, however, I am struck by how untidy, how unresolved is the situation in which we find ourselves as a field and how many questions must indeed be asked. It is my hope that the voices gathered here create a context for conversation, for argument, and for reflection. To this end, I draw on the contributions of my colleagues and on my own experiences to suggest some directions for adult ESL literacy. Rather than a summation, I intend this framing discussion as an invitation to dialogue as we reflect on our work as teachers, teacher educators, researchers, program planners, and advocates for sensible policy. By examining collaboratively the nature of where we have come from and what we do now, we lay the groundwork for creating a collective vision of where we want to move.

### **DIRECTIONS IN ADULT ESL LITERACY**

Part of the context that determines the nature and efficacy of our efforts is the set of historical circumstances in which we work. The relation between language and immigration policies is illustrated by the Canadian case presented here (Klassen & Burnaby, this issue) as well as through the historical examination of the gatekeeping function of literacy in the U.S. (McKay & Weinstein-Shr, this issue). In both of these discussions, attempts are made to look at the connections between the policies of countries, their purposes, and the lived experiences of individuals affected by those policies. Wiley (this issue) reminds us that the face-to-face encounters of our daily work are partly the result of policies that reflect the power relations between groups. Perhaps the South African case, depicted in Kerfoot's account (this issue) provides

the most vivid reminder of the ways in which the political, social, and economic context determines not only how (and if) we teach but for what purposes and with what prospect for positive change in learners' lives.

It is my hope that the articles in this issue invite reflection on the circumstances that shape our own contexts as teachers, including the forces that determine who is in our classrooms and why, the agendas of those who pay for our work, our own agendas, and the agendas of the learners'. I turn now to the present, where our own experiences within and outside the classroom have a critical impact on what we know and how we see our mission. Of many potential lessons from the field, I have chosen three to provide stimulus for discussion.

### **Shift in Focus from Individuals and Institutions to Families and Communities**

Maria, a Guatemalan in her 30s described by Klassen and Burnaby, can name only three letters in the Spanish alphabet, yet she takes care of her household's literacy-related needs including recognizing and buying food, filling and dispensing prescriptions, paying bills, and other paperwork. It is ironic that the ESL classroom was one of very few contexts in which the adults Klassen worked with did not function adequately. By looking at the contexts in which the Spanish-speaking adults operated, it is possible to understand the resources these adults have and the constraints against which they are working.

In my own work with Hmong refugees (Weinstein-Shr, 1993), I noted a set of contrasts between two men who were representative in many ways of the neighborhoods where they lived. Chou Chang (names are pseudonyms) was a teacher's delight. Having become literate before fleeing Laos, he was able to manage in U.S. formal classroom settings, complete his high school equivalency degree, and create relationships with English speakers in his neighborhood through his role as pastor's helper. Pao Joua Lo, in contrast, was the nemesis of the overworked part-time teacher—a "perpetual beginner," who ignored every assignment, failed every test, and ultimately dropped out of the community college having acquired almost no English language or literacy skills. Until I came to know these learners as individuals, I was not aware of the different roles that literacy played in their respective communities and lives; nor was I aware of the terrible isolation experienced by Chou Chang within Philadelphia's Hmong community in

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<sup>1</sup> These issues are explored further in McKay (1993), in which she examines the sometimes harmonious but sometimes conflicting agendas of the many players who ultimately shape what happens (or does not happen) in an ESL classroom.

contrast to the enormous personal and social resources available to Pao Joua Lo through kinship networks for solving literacy-related and other problems. The star student and his family eventually fled Philadelphia to Wisconsin, where Chou and his wife worked double shifts at a factory as his ailing mother-in-law watched the six children in their crowded apartment. Pao Joua Lo, on the other hand, taking his turn to use the kin money pool, bought a large house on the outskirts of the city, where he could entertain members of his clan who visited from all corners of the U.S. My view from the classroom gave me a very limited picture of these men's purposes and potentials.

These examples among others in this issue illustrate a recurring theme in recent literature—that adults are members of social networks, families, and communities. These social contexts affect both the ways in which adults manage their material circumstances and the ways in which they create meaning and purpose for living. For our work as adult educators to be effective, it is essential to take into account not only the functions of language and literacy in learners' lives but also the relationships that create the contexts for language use, the needs of adults, and the resources they have for meeting those needs. In order to understand those social contexts, it is necessary to set our sights beyond the view of the classroom, shifting our focus to the families and communities where language is used and relationships negotiated.

### **Recognition of the Role of Existing Knowledge in the Construction of New Knowledge**

"I was born in Swelethmeba Location in Worcester. . . . we must run away like that and the police charge us every day" says Cynthia Bushwana, the courageous Cape Town woman in Kerfoot's account. Her story will become part of the curriculum at Use, Speak and Write English (USWE) along with the stories of other learners. The task of decoding a new symbol system is more manageable when you read from a story you yourself have told. But more than this, as learner stories in this part of South Africa become the curriculum, the processes of telling, shaping, and owning the stories become part of the process of becoming literate.

It may seem ironic that familiarity and comfort enable growth and change, but many intuitive examples come to mind. When children are secure in their parents' presence, they feel freer to wander off and explore unknown territory. Too much separation too early, in contrast, stunts independence and leads to clinging. Research has begun to confirm our intuitions—that when children are secure in their background and culture, they excel at developing familiarity with new



cultures (Cummins, 1986). When people are taught to be ashamed of what they have brought with them to the classroom (as was the case for Native American children, who were punished for speaking their native languages within or outside of their boarding school classrooms), the traditional resources are effectively destroyed and new resources are not effectively mastered in their place. The parallels with adults are clear. Any adult educator who has been in a classroom with mixed levels of native language literacy knows the enormous advantage enjoyed by those who have the luxury of literacy in their native language. An important task we face as literacy professionals is to explore the nature of this advantage and to create the baseline data for rigorously examining what we note in our daily classroom experiences.

Decades have passed since adult education theory began emphasizing the wisdom of beginning with adults' experience and building on what they know. Classroom techniques in ESL such as the language experience approach reflect this insight. Bell's account (this issue) of her Chinese tutor, Cindy Lam, shows that like all other adults, teachers benefit from drawing on what they know. The ways and experiences that are familiar are a resource for managing a complex task in a coherent way. Other accounts in this issue (especially Kerfoot, Wrigley, Willett & Jeannot, and Crandall) indicate that in order for teachers to expand their repertoire of classroom skills and techniques, conscious attention to and reflection on their own beliefs and understandings is often the most powerful starting point for developing in new directions.

### **Promoting Collaboration on All Levels**

The work in this volume is rich with examples that demonstrate the benefits of partnership, where diversity creates potential for tapping different kinds of strengths. In the graduate class depicted by Willett and Jeannot, some learners were more skilled than others at using the "language of care," a discourse in which participants use language in ways that provide comfort, healing, and solidarity to build and maintain relationships. Others were more comfortable using a "language of critique," a discourse that privileges rationality and fairness for analyzing (and challenging) existing power relations. As the authors point out, resistance requires the safety born of solidarity as well as critical analysis. In the setting they describe, the differences in ways of using language (often but not always associated with gender) created much more powerful possibilities for examining and challenging dominant ideologies than would be possible using one kind of strength alone.

A second example suggesting the potential power of partnership is provided in Crandall's discussion of professionalism and professional-

ization in our field. She notes the irony of the fact that those with the most up-to-date training in theories of language acquisition and pedagogy may know very little about the learners they wish to serve, whereas members of the communities who know the culture and concerns very well often have "limited theoretical or pedagogical background in L1 or L2 literacy." If a context is created in which both of these kinds of strengths can be tapped, programs have the benefit of practices that adapt up-to-date knowledge of pedagogy to the particularities of communities, including their unique resources, needs, and appropriate ways of addressing those needs.

In my own experience establishing Project LEIF (Learning English through Intergenerational Friendship), the relationship of the university-based Center for Intergenerational Learning (CIL) and the Southeast Asian Mutual Assistance Association Coalition (SEAMAAC) was interdependent. (For a fuller description of Project LEIF, see Weinstein-Shr, 1989). Part of the mission of the program was to provide college-age tutors for refugee elders. The individual Mutual Assistance Associations (MAAs) that comprised SEAMAAC were uniquely equipped to identify elders in their own communities, to provide explanation and outreach, to help identify learning centers that would be acceptable, and to provide channels for elders to inform the curriculum. As a university-based center, CIL was well equipped to recruit college volunteers, provide state-of-the-art training in ESL, and retain the tutors by identifying and meeting their unique needs (e.g., gaining teaching experience, classroom credit, an interesting cultural experience, etc.). Learning to work in partnership was not quick or simple (see Lewis & Varbero, in press). Our differences were a source of frustration, but they were also a source of strength: Together, CIL and SEAMAAC could tap a range of funding sources from a mix of foundations focused on elders, literacy, and minority leadership development. Those at SEAMAAC learned about Western ways of running an organization; we at CIL learned about how decisions are made in the communities involved. They learned to hurry for deadlines; we learned to slow down and show patience for people. In short, neither of us could have attracted the money or managed the task single-handedly, and despite (or because of) our respective frustrations, both partners grew in the process.

## **AGENDAS FOR LITERACY EDUCATION**

In the previous sections, I have focused on three directions in adult ESL literacy: (a) shifting focus from individuals and institutions to families and communities, (b) recognizing the role of existing knowl-

edge in the creation of new knowledge, and (c) promoting collaboration on all levels. In this section, I briefly suggest ways in which these directions may be addressed through research, teaching and learning, program planning, and the kinds of policies advocated.

## **Research**

With increased emphasis on families and communities, research must grow beyond the confines of the classroom. It has become important to find out how learners solve problems or how they fail to solve them in light of other social resources available to them. For our work to meet the needs of learners, it becomes necessary to investigate how people use literacy, in which languages, and for what purposes. This requires examination of meaning making, an endeavor for which, as Gillespie (this issue) points out, qualitative approaches are uniquely suited.

To build on the resources of learners, we need to know what those resources are. As Klassen and Burnaby aptly indicate, we have woefully little information about the language or literacy resources that immigrants bring to their new countries. Our research must continue to seek an understanding of the interplay of tradition and change, with special attention to the role of the native languages and literacies in the acquisition of new languages and literacies (see Gillespie, 1991). Both quantitative and qualitative approaches are necessary for an endeavor of this scope.

The principles of collaboration are ones which strengthen the potential power of research. There are growing accounts of models for collaboration between university researchers, who bring investigative tools to the task, and teachers, learners, and community leaders, who are best equipped to identify the questions worth asking and the potential consequences of inquiry. The movement toward reflective teaching and action research described by Crandall illustrates the potential for democratizing knowledge, as ownership is spread beyond the halls of academia, and creating accountability for research that directly benefits learners and teachers, whose beliefs and actions constitute the data.

## **Teaching and Learning**

If we are to shift our focus beyond the individuals in our classrooms, we must create ways within our classes to invite learners to teach us about themselves and the contexts in which they carry on their lives outside the classroom. Both learner-centered and participatory approaches (see Auerbach, this issue) provide tools for inviting learners to document their own language and literacy uses both for themselves

and for the teachers who can facilitate expanding their options. Exploration of learners' lives and contexts is not a singular event. Even after a thorough needs assessment, as language and literacy resources expand, contexts and needs change proportionally. In programs that are responsive to learners' realities outside of the classroom, the process of documenting language uses and language needs is part of the fabric of the daily work.

One way to value learners' knowledge is to tap it as curriculum content. The creative uses of learner-generated material, oral history, and study circles are among the techniques that demonstrate ways of tapping what learners know. Kerfoot's diagram suggests that by beginning with their own experience, learners can be invited to compare their experiences with those of others, systematically collect information about the issues raised, and thus create the context for informed reflection and collective action. Whereas learners begin with what they know, the ultimate goal is to go beyond what they know, expanding the repertoire of competencies, which they themselves identify with the assistance of teachers (see Savage, this issue). In this way, knowledge is broadened and tools are added without rejecting the resources of the individual or the community, the greatest potential source of strength and direction.

The principles of collaboration can become part of the fabric of our teaching and learning. Within classrooms, there is growing interest in cooperative learning techniques, including peer editing and peer tutoring, for accomplishing curriculum objectives. Some of the most inspiring examples of this shift are reflected in the curriculum itself when learners work together to investigate pressing issues in their own neighborhoods such as environmental abuse, interethnic tension, and housing policy or when workers collaborate to solve workplace or production problems. Creative teachers have also worked in partnership to create links between classrooms: For example, immigrants who have survived their first year can work with individuals who are recently arrived, or U.S.-born history students can work with immigrants who can bring history to life; older ESL students can gain confidence by tutoring younger children from their own communities; exchanges can be arranged through traditional or computer mail in which Puerto Ricans on the East Coast can learn about their similarities and differences with Chicanos in the Southwest. Partnerships that link learners to others outside the classroom can involve bringing community resources in—such as public health nurses talking about AIDS—or sending learners out—to interview seniors in a senior center to create a book of life histories or to interview workers about working conditions and language use on the job. Those partnerships which are most likely to last after the class has ended may entail the links most worth nurturing.

## Program Planning and Policy

To shift our focus beyond individuals in isolation, it is necessary to involve community leaders in our planning. Bilingual community members can advise us informally or more formally through advisory boards and through staffing. Fingeret (1993) advocates tapping the resources of learners themselves in these kinds of capacities when they are in the advanced levels of programs or after they have graduated. Another consideration is to bring programs to those places where people gather. At Project LEIF, our initial attempts at home tutoring in the Cambodian community failed miserably. Once a Buddhist temple was established, however, it became possible to enlist the help of the monks and to link language and literacy learning to other aspects of community life. With the focus shifted away from noncommunity-based institutions, agendas of learners can become more central. In family literacy programs, for example, the perspectives of school personnel can provide one source of input, but adult learners may also be concerned about family issues other than the school achievement of their children (Weinstein-Shr, in press). English for work becomes English for workers when the place of employment is a partner but not the center, as the aims of employees themselves become part of the educational mission (Alamprese, this issue). This kind of planning involves a shift in focus from the places and issues that are familiar to us to the places and issues that concern the learners we wish to serve.

To be able to effectively tap the knowledge that learners bring with them in constructing new knowledge, we have several imperatives which must be met through program and policy levels. First, I believe we must press our governmental institutions to address the conspicuous absence of information about the language and literacy resources of language minority residents. We must demand (and participate in) research on the role of native language literacies and ways in which our efforts can strengthen rather than destroy those resources. Attention must be turned to the development of assessment tools that fulfill at least the following four criteria: They (a) are appropriate for adults, (b) measure things that matter, (c) capture what adults already know, and (d) document effectively what they have gained in their time with us (also see Balliro, this issue). I personally believe that the lack of concern regarding immigrant elders, through absence of thoughtful educational policy, accelerates the loss of an irretrievable linguistic and cultural treasure. Although it is not a role that many of us in literacy education are accustomed to, the time has come to channel our insights from our work into advocacy for policies that strengthen and document the resources of learners, provide working conditions

that allow us to develop our own professional tools, and create an infrastructure that better employs the enormous human resources available for our task.

Finally, I believe our work will be most powerful when we promote collaboration not only on the level of the classroom but also through the designs of our programs and through policy imperatives. Examples that come to mind include partnerships between community-based organizations (such as MAAs) and educational institutions (like Project LEIF), between adult and child educators for family literacy such as those funded by Project Even Start, between employers and unions for workplace programs, and between ESL professionals and other educational programs that serve language minority communities such as sheltered English instruction, in which ESL professionals cooperate with content teachers. It will be critical to create safeguards against token participation and to create processes for nurturing leadership among those who are in a better position to articulate the needs of their communities. The cost in effort and time is enormous, but the potential for effective, empowering language and literacy education should be a more than adequate payoff.

## **STARTING THE CONVERSATION**

Are the learners in our programs most interested in acquiring functional, cultural, or expressive literacies? Do our ESL programs concentrate on social adaptation, social change, or developing cognitive processes? Is teacher development designed in the fashion of craft/mentor, applied science, or reflective teaching models (Wrigley; Wrigley & Guth, 1992)? The value of topologies lies not only in the degree to which the models proposed are accurate but even more in the degree to which they invite critical analysis of one's own beliefs and assumptions. Topologies are particularly effective if they illuminate directions in which we wish to move.

The directions suggested here and the contexts for pursuing those directions are only intended as starting points for discussion of our many roles as learners, researchers, teachers, teacher educators, program planners, and advocates of humane and sensible policy. Anyone who spends more than a short time in the field of adult ESL is likely to engage in several of these activities, as part of one professional role or in many concurrent or successive roles. The grid in Figure 1 is provided as an invitation to discuss these themes with others, concentrating collectively on those cells that directly concern our own work. The cells are blank for noting those points from this issue of the *TESOL Quarterly* that are most useful or for drawing instead from

other experiences and sources. A blank row has been added to suggest discussion of other themes or directions that are most pressing; a blank column has also been included to provide room to focus more specifically on a particular category of professional activity, such as teacher education, curriculum development, and evaluation.

As adult educators turn their attention to learning about the contexts of our learners, I believe that it is also important for us to become conscious of our own contexts: the setting and circumstances in which our work takes on meaning. This requires examining, documenting, and comparing our working conditions and seeking to understand the circumstances and policies that create those conditions. At the same time that we invite learners to explore their own contexts, we must do nothing less for ourselves.

The work of Crandall as well as that of Willett and Jeannot make explicit the parallels between ESL/literacy learners and teachers as marginalized groups whose voices are not customarily heard. In-

**FIGURE 1**  
**Directions in Adult ESL Literacy\***

Directions	Activities			
	Research	Teaching & learning	Program planning & policy	
Shift focus from individuals and institutions to families and communities				
Recognize role of existing knowledge in construction of new knowledge				
Promote collaboration at all levels				

\*Although the material in the *TESOL Quarterly* is usually copyrighted, the author gives permission for readers to reproduce this figure.

ing attention is being given to assisting learners in developing a sense of voice and a stance of authority with respect to their own experience. Just as classrooms are most effective when channels are created for student voices, so adult second language literacy research and policies will be most effective when they are responsive to the voices of practitioners, who learn more about literacies and about learners with every encounter. As language and literacy learners develop their voice, they must also develop the tools to use that voice effectively in pursuit of their purposes. I believe that the time has come for adult educators to demand the same of ourselves: Through our work with adult learners, we must also refine our own skills in observing, reporting, comparing, documenting our insights, and advocating in ways that assure that our views will be reflected in decisions affecting our work.

The notion of collaboration implies the creation of communities. Those interested in empowerment frameworks have long advocated creating the context for developing community among diverse learners, where they can draw strength from one another. If Chisman (1989) is correct, we must be ready to act at the time when our nations are "poised to make a quantum leap forward in addressing [literacy] problems" (p. 1). I believe that the time has come for ESL and literacy professionals to recognize and celebrate our own diversity and to struggle toward the creation of a community from which to draw strength and to find a collective voice in shaping our profession and our own role within it.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I am grateful to all the contributors to this issue of *TESOL Quarterly*, whose work and thinking have stretched my own. Sandra McKay and Marcia Taylor gave very helpful comments, and both Jodi Crandall and Hanna Fingeret provided encouragement when I needed it most. Special thanks to the San Francisco State University graduate students who helped on the project, especially Kathy Melee and Ann Fontanella, whose hours of work made mine more joyful. And to Ziqiang Shr, the best friend and critic a person could wish for.

## **THE AUTHOR**

Gail Weinstein-Shr, recently retired editor of the *TESOL Quarterly's* Brief Reports and Summaries section, is the author of books and articles on adult ESL literacy and intergenerational programming. She has recently joined the faculty of San Francisco State University where she specializes in preparing ESL teachers for work in nonacademic settings for adults.



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## PROFILES

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In place of Brief Reports and Summaries, three sets of brief profiles are included in this issue. These overview adult ESL learners, their programs, and teacher preparation programs, respectively.

### ***Profiles of Adult Learners: Revealing the Multiple Faces of Literacy***

**MARILYN GILLESPIE**

*National Clearinghouse on Literacy Education | Center for Applied Linguistics*

So then I left the factories. I didn't want to work in the factories any more because I was sick and tired to talk to myself and feel that the machine was so cold. . . . So, I said, "I'm gonna get the children [and open a day care center], and I'm gonna pretend I'm teaching them but I'm gonna teach myself." And I started with a picture dictionary and I'd say, "This is the word that goes with A." It became like a game. The more I did it, the more it became alive in my mind. (Gillespie, 1991, pp. 89–90)

■ For Lidia Nubile, a 53-year-old immigrant from Italy, becoming literate has been the work of a lifetime, representing much more than simply the acquisition of a set of isolated classroom skills. To read her life story is to become aware of a creative process of language acquisition shaped by experiences in and outside the classroom and by a continually evolving set of beliefs about literacy and learning.

Within the field of adult literacy, we are just beginning to recognize how little we know about the process of becoming literate from the perspective of adult learners. Over the past decade, however, thanks to insights provided by qualitative researchers using approaches such as educational ethnography, the ethnography of communication, longitudinal case studies, life histories, and other more naturalistic approaches to inquiry, the faces of literacy learners are emerging out of the stereotypical pictures of illiterate adults painted in previous generations. This profile summarizes some of those studies from the fields of adult literacy and ESL, both of which have brought those faces more clearly into focus.

Much of our expanded understanding of literacy learners has come from the work of ethnographers who have investigated the functions and uses of literacy in the everyday lives of various social groups. Heath's (1983) work among three working class communities in the Carolinas revealed a rich array of functions and uses of reading and writing, many of which were highly social events: from reading the local news aloud

and sending greeting cards to maintaining a record of births in the family Bible. Heath's study provided a framework for researching the differences and incongruencies between home and mainstream school literacy. This framework helped Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) examine the functions and uses of literacy among African American mothers living in an urban housing project. By allowing the women to describe in their own words their efforts to involve their children in literate activities (making grocery lists, playing word games, keeping journals), their study challenged a common conception that low-income mothers seldom engage in literacy practices with their children.

Ethnographers have also helped us to recognize the collaborative nature of literacy. When Reder (1987) asked members of Hmong, Eskimo, and Hispanic communities to tell them about the social organization, roles, and status of given literacy practices, they found that reading and writing events were often shared activities. A young person, for example, might be technologically engaged in a literacy practice by taking down a letter dictated by his mother, who is functionally engaged in the same task even though her literacy skills are limited. This work, Reder suggests, has implications for literacy education, which is often considered a solitary activity, ignoring the interdependency and potentials for collaboration that exist within communities.

In her work with Hmong adults living in Philadelphia, Weinstein-Shr (1990) also examined the functions and uses of literacy and their relationship to kinship structures. Like Reder, she found that literacy and language labor was divided within families and communities as those who knew English often became brokers for others. She also found that the ESL classroom could give teachers a distorted picture of adult learners' resources. A view of individual learners outside the classroom showed that the strength of their social networks was much more important for survival than the individual's degree of skill with English literacy.

Other ethnographic studies of literacy uses in family and community settings include the work of Farr (1989) in Chicago, who explored how a group of men of Mexican origin learned informally with the help of friends who had limited literacy abilities. In Toronto, Klassen (1992) has looked closely at the lives of nine Latino men and women to discover language domains in which they managed to get along effectively (at home, on the streets, in shops and offices) and those where they encountered difficulties (in some work settings, school, and church). In Philadelphia, Hornberger and Hardman (in press) have investigated the relationship between bilingualism and literacy among Puerto Rican and Cambodian adults enrolled in literacy classes. Balderas (1988) has looked at the attitudes of Spanish-speaking parents toward the use of Spanish by their children at school and at home. This work has important implications for curriculum development if our literacy efforts are to respond in any way to the realities of learners.

Another group of researchers has used interviews and case studies to investigate how learners perceive literacy. As a result of her interviews, Fingeret (1982), for example, found what was at the time considered

surprising—that many adults in the U.S. did not see the need for literacy for themselves as individuals because it was available to them from others within their social network. A seamstress, for example, might exchange her skills for those of a friend who could help her write down a recipe; a businessperson might record letters on a tape recorder for a secretary to type. Many felt the most damaging effect of not being able to read was not the inability to function in daily life but rather the stigma attached to illiteracy by society and the association of illiteracy with incompetency. Indeed, Burnaby and Klassen (this issue) echo this finding among immigrants who manage quite well in daily life but are denied access to job training programs unless they succeed in English classes. Other qualitative investigations have further illustrated the pivotal role beliefs play in literacy learning, including their role in adults' shifting goals and plans (Fingeret, 1991; Gillespie, 1991; Lytle, 1990), and of the importance of overcoming socially enforced feelings of inadequacy associated with limited literacy in order to progress in literacy learning (Beder & Valentine, 1990).

In-depth interviews have also allowed us to learn more about the relationship between gender and literacy acquisition. When Rockwell (1987) collected life histories of women in a Los Angeles Spanish-speaking community, she found that women were frequently discouraged from attending classes by the men in their lives. Many married women thought of literacy as a "right" for their husbands and children but not for themselves. Women were more likely to advance their literacy skills when they were separated or divorced; their desire for further education sometimes precipitated the separation. In *Something in My Mind Besides the Everyday*, Horsman (1990) recounts how Canadian women in the Maritimes attended literacy classes not so much to learn functional skills as to find meaning in their lives and for the connection with others it offered them.

Qualitative approaches to literacy and second language acquisition research have much to offer researchers in ESL literacy, where complex and multiple features of language, culture, and social context interact. They allow us to enter the world of learners and capture ways of knowing which can too often be strained out of traditional reporting of data. Such studies need not be incompatible with quantitative research. In fact, qualitative methods often can play an important role by preceding quantitative procedures so that the researchers can more fully assure that they understand what is being measured (Johnson & Saville-Troike, 1992).

To gain legitimacy within the field, however, qualitative researchers must do more than simply describe their interactions with learners. Research must be grounded within a larger theoretical framework. Although the standards for judgment may be different, attention must be given to establishing validity and reliability. Because qualitative research depends so much on researcher interpretation, credibility must be assured through prolonged engagement, persistent observations, and the triangulation of data from multiple sources and investigators (Davis, 1992).

Qualitative research findings over the past decade have done much to reveal the diverse, creative, and intentional nature of literacy learning. Many more such studies are needed to understand the range and variation

of literacy activities among different groups—how literacy develops over time and how it is acquired spontaneously outside the classroom. If we are truly to understand literacy from the perspectives of adults like Lidia Nubile, however, we also need to find new, collaborative approaches to research that will involve learners more closely in the inquiry process. Learning more, for example, about the process through which successful learners overcome obstacles associated with illiteracy implies a process of mutual inquiry where learners feel free to reveal their closely held beliefs and life stories, thus helping to shape the direction of research.

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## ***Profiles of Adult ESL Literacy Programs***

**GLORIA J. A. GUTH**

*Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development*

- Adult ESL literacy programs are as varied as the organizations that house them, the approaches to literacy that inform their practice, and the learners' needs that ideally drive the program.

### **ORGANIZATIONS AND SETTINGS**

The settings for adult ESL literacy programs span a broad range: community-based organizations, community colleges, workplace settings, and adult schools. Programs at *community-based organizations* (CBOs) usually have several characteristics in common. They frequently are located in and draw members of their staff from the community they serve (thus ensuring that they are well tuned to the needs of their students), and they often have the luxury of serving a population that speaks the same native language. For example, the literacy program at the Haitian Multi-Service Center in Dorchester, Massachusetts, combines both of these aspects: Many of the literacy teachers come from the surrounding Haitian community, and the literacy curriculum focuses on the Haitian experience in Massachusetts. All the learners have a similar background of Haitian Creole as their native language, thus facilitating the program's support for native language literacy.

*Community colleges* may offer second language literacy classes to large numbers of students and may be the main provider for learners who seek preacademic classes. These classes are often considered preparatory for

further academic work within the community college system or elsewhere. However, at some community colleges, such as the City College of San Francisco, literacy classes are nonacademic and are provided in community centers throughout the city.

*Workplace literacy programs* usually operate on site to provide specific language and literacy skills to improve the job performance of employees. Some of the learners served by Project Workplace Literacy Partners for the Manufacturing Industry in Cook County, Illinois, for example, are far more proficient in speech than in writing. So their curriculum is geared toward aspects of the manufacturing environment: reading safety signs and memos, reading a factory move ticket, keeping a log, and filling out scrap cards.

*Adult schools* draw students from a wider area than most CBOs and frequently have an ethnically diverse mix of students. Therefore, they are challenged with providing ESL literacy activities that are appropriate to all. At the Arlington Education and Employment Program, an adult school in Virginia, the literacy teachers make use of magazines for a number of activities: Even the lowest level students, regardless of native language, can cut out pictures illustrating "I like/I don't like," and magazine pictures are used to encourage all students to express themselves (e.g., a picture of an angry looking man might elicit the comment, "boss bad") in order to develop general language skills that can later be applied to learners' specific purposes.

Yet it is well to remember that, when referring to an "adult ESL literacy program," most sites administer more than one type of literacy program. For example, the Arlington site has both workplace and general ESL literacy strands. At El Paso Community College in Texas, the literacy center runs prevocational, workplace, and JOBS (Job Opportunities and Basic Skills; welfare-reform) literacy programs. They also have a video-based literacy program augmented by tutors and, until recently, a family literacy program. Many CBOs similarly preside over a complex array of literacy and education services.

## APPROACHES

*Chaos is a chance you have to take* [in developing a participatory approach]. (J-M Jean-Baptiste, Executive Director of the Haitian Multi-Service Center, quoted in Guth & Wrigley, 1992, p. 105)

Funding constitutes one important factor that influences the educational approach that a program can take. *Workplace literacy programs*, often funded by the employer, are inevitably constrained by the agendas of the employer who funds the program. Because *family literacy programs* are typically funded by offices of education or by private foundations aimed at serving children, the focus is not surprisingly on parent involvement in children's schooling (see Taylor, this issue). For example, a family English literacy program run by the Lao Family Community in Minnesota, for Hmong

refugees incorporates issues such as dealing with the U.S. school system into their basic literacy classes with tasks such as learning how to write a note to a child's teacher.

*State funding* for adult ESL literacy programs often entails competency-based education, a movement rooted in the states' need for accountability. Training for economic and social self-sufficiency is often the goal of state-funded efforts. Whereas programs often find ways to be flexible within the constraints of their funders (see Wrigley, this issue), clearly the funding source necessarily has an impact on what is possible within a program.

The philosophies underlying program design determine which funding sources are pursued, and how ESL literacy programs approach their mission. El Barrio Popular Education Program in New York City espouses a *participatory view* of the educational process with an emphasis on producing biliterate graduates. The program aims to nurture community leaders in a number of ways: entrepreneurial efforts such as a student-run sewing co-op are tied to classroom instruction, leadership training provides learners with the skills to participate in community affairs, and students participate actively in all facets of the program. The learners' own knowledge and culture are reinforced by beginning with Spanish literacy and then transitioning to English literacy. Literacy is seen as a foundation for full economic, social, and cultural participation in the community.

The philosophy underlying the ESL literacy classes at the International Institute of Rhode Island is an example of curriculum and practice that is *learner centered*. This program's curriculum derives its structure from "recurrent events" rather than a prespecified series of topics. In recurrent events, learners generate writing, which is expanded into different kinds of reading materials, which can then form the basis for future reading and writing. As the learners share whatever they know about the topic at hand, the facilitator uses the language experience approach to capture the discussion in sentences or a paragraph. This is typed and given to the learners and becomes reading material for the next class. The curriculum is thus created through a process of interaction of facilitator and learners, within a framework of recurrent events and cross-topics.

## LEARNERS' NEEDS

*At the welfare office, if you say you don't speak English, they hand you something written in Spanish. But if you can't read Spanish, then you still don't know. (Learner at El Barrio Popular Education Program, quoted in Guth & Wrigley, 1992, p. 203)*

The unique needs and characteristics of learner communities provide the driving force for program development at some ESL literacy sites. The degree to which a process of needs assessment has been implemented determines the extent to which this is possible. A number of programs have responded to these specific needs and resources by developing special curricula and by beginning with native language literacy among other



strategies. The Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA) in Seattle, for example, has developed two innovative curricula that make the most of common experiences that refugee women learners share by focusing on topics that transcend any one culture. The first is a storytelling curriculum during which classes tell, retell, and finally write traditional folk tales from their native cultures. The second is an oral history curriculum in which the learners develop stories about their families, something that happened when they were young, or wedding customs in their native countries. Both of these curricula are particularly appropriate for classes with learners from many communities.

Some programs, particularly those whose learners all have the same native language, have approached literacy by providing literacy opportunities in the learners' native language before attempting to teach literacy in English. The goals for native language literacy vary, however, and this affects the intensity with which the native language is taught. El Barrio Popular Education Program has the goal of graduating learners who can read and write competently in both Spanish and English. In contrast, for some Haitian adults, learning to read and write in Creole is seen as the first step toward English literacy. The attitudes towards language, role of language in the community, and purposes of the learners may all affect the role of native language literacy in the process of language acquisition.

## **CONCLUSION**

*Each new word [I learn] makes me feel better.* (Beginning literacy learner, quoted in Guth & Wrigley, 1992, p. 221)

Adult ESL literacy programs vary as the needs of individuals, communities, and society change. The more the needs of learners and the needs of the surrounding culture can be articulated and negotiated, the better we will be able to rise to the challenge of providing appropriate language and literacy resources for adults who need them.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

This profile is adapted from Guth & Wrigley (1992).

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Gloria J. A. Guth directed the first national study of adult ESL literacy programs. An educational researcher at Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development in San Francisco, she now directs the evaluation of the Galaxy Classroom project, an innovative nationwide intervention for at-risk elementary school students.

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## ***Profiles of Adult ESL Teacher Education Programs: Flexible Approaches to Staff Development***

**DENNIS TERDY**

*Adult Learning Resource Center*

■ Three factors have contributed to the increased need and interest in adult ESL staff development approaches in the U.S. First, there continues to be a tendency to use part-time instructors with minimal credentials for adult ESL instruction in many states (see Crandall, this issue). Second, with the recent passage of the National Adult Education Act, provisions for State Literacy Resource Centers and a National Institute for Literacy have been made. This has validated the need for, as well as increased the awareness of, staff development across the U.S. Finally, adult ESL enrollments have increased more than 50% nationally since 1986 (Olsen, 1991). This population may soon be increased considerably as the State Legalization and Impact Assistance Grants (SLIAG) Program is phased out and its participants join the rosters of adult education programs. This dramatic population change in adult ESL enrollments requires more trained instructors. The four approaches to adult ESL staff development described in this profile represent a sample of training approaches used to prepare effective instructors for the growing adult ESL population.

## **TRANSMISSION OF KEY TEACHING SKILLS**

One model for teacher education is the identification and transmission of key teaching skills. At the ESL Teacher Institute in California, for example, a primary objective of the training is to develop specific techniques of listening, speaking, reading, and writing for both new and experienced adult ESL teachers while providing an understanding of competency-based education and the skills needed to develop a competency-based ESL lesson plan. This program is operated under the auspices of the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), Foundation for Educational Administration and funded through Section 353 (of

the Federal Adult Education Act) funds administered by the California Department of Education (CDE).

The institute has developed 20 training modules; 2 modules on competency-based classroom management (e.g., lesson planning), 12 modules on specific ESL techniques (e.g., focused listening, Total Physical Response, role play), 4 modules on cooperative learning, and 2 modules for mentor teacher training. The training is presented through a series of sequenced workshops which consist of at least two sessions, approximately 3–4 weeks apart. This sequencing enables participants to apply the new knowledge in their own classrooms between sessions and to discuss its application in the follow-up session.

Given California's large geographic area and the size of its adult ESL teaching population, the ESL Teacher Institute plays an important role by providing a systematic training of trainers model that can expand to accommodate growing needs. After a competency-based process for trainer certification, certified institute trainers deliver training through regional workshops, through district or agency contracts and through in-house training and conferences.

## **STATE INITIATIVES FOR REFLECTIVE TEACHING**

Another approach to practitioner development is to encourage teachers to share experiences and reflect collectively on their practices. At the statewide System for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES) Project in Massachusetts (Pelavin Associates, 1991), the purpose is to “strengthen and expand the capacity of adult education programs throughout the state” (p. 59). This staff development project is part of the Massachusetts state plan for adult basic education (ABE) and incorporates ESL, ABE, GED (Graduate Equivalency Diploma), and other literacy staff development goals. Task forces composed of adult education teachers, counselors, administrators, and staff from the state Bureau of Adult Education collaborate to identify needs in the field and to systematically address them.

Included in the SABES structure are four supportive functions: staff development, program development, a clearinghouse, and a research and design component. Working in collaboration with the Massachusetts Bureau of Adult Education are a Central Resource Center at World Education and five Regional Support Centers, located at community colleges, which combined their resources to conceptualize and implement SABES. World Education's involvement as a central resource center was based on its experience in providing training, evaluation, materials, and technical assistance to international, national, and local literacy programs.

Modeling a participatory structure, SABES also includes a 14-member advisory council which provides input into staff development and program development needs and assists in overall policy and direction. The SABES staff structure was conceived initially as having few full-time staff and instead used experienced practitioners as consultants to provide training and technical assistance. The variety of instructor and other staff develop-

ment activities are incorporated into a delivery structure based on the belief that single workshops do not have a lasting impact on teachers; rather, activities that build on one another have more long-range effect on practice, especially when mentoring, peer coaching, study circles, or teacher support groups are used. The SABES "study-plan-practice-share-evaluate" model also motivates teachers to try out what they have learned.

SABES is implementing a program-based staff and program development process. A facilitator from each program is trained to lead staff in an integrated process which assesses, prioritizes, and develops plans for meeting both program and individual practitioner needs. Other activities include an orientation for new staff, minicourses, and teacher-researcher projects. This provides a provocative model for practitioner development, where the practitioners themselves are the best sources for identifying needs as well as for working together to find appropriate solutions.

### **REGIONAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT THROUGH MENTORING AND PARTNERSHIP**

Fostering connections between providers can be a powerful tool for staff development. The Illinois ESL Adult Education Service Center, a project of the Adult Learning Resource Center, was established in 1974 through the Federal Adult Education Act (Sections 309, 310, and later 353) staff development funding. The center offers staff development activities for more than 1500 Adult ESL teachers, literacy providers, staff development personnel, and program administrators located in local education agencies and community-based organizations in Illinois. In addition to regional activities on pressing topics, local adult ESL activities are developed and implemented based on local needs, administrator requests, local instructor input, and level of local program development. More recently, follow-up sessions to locally initiated training activities have been encouraged. Programs and their representatives may request consultation services, which are provided through telephone contacts, by mail, and through service center visits, as well as consultation meetings at one of the center's offices in Des Plaines or Chicago.

Initiated through local program interest in 1988, a variety of special interest Provider Groups began. These informal groups, which generally meet on a bimonthly or quarterly basis, bring together local directors, administrators, coordinators, practitioners, and lead teaching staff to discuss self-selected topics. In addition, these meetings provide networking, information sharing, and training opportunities. The service center provides support for these meetings by facilitating the meeting logistics and announcements. Current Provider Groups include: ESL Providers, Voluntary Literacy Providers (including ESL), Family Literacy Providers, Spanish Literacy Providers, and Work force Network.

The center provides other resources as well. More than 20,000 adult ESL titles from the Adult Learning Resource Center library are available through the public library interlibrary loan system. In addition, a com-

puter software collection is available for preview at the Adult Learning Resource Center. Most important, the ESL Service Center cooperates with a variety of literacy and other service providers throughout the state. This coordination includes joint sponsorship of activities, participation in planning councils, and overall implementation of staff support activities to all programs delivering adult ESL services in Illinois. With coordinated efforts, the collective result is far more effective than that of any single provider alone.

### **ACADEMIC PREPARATION PROGRAMS**

Many ESL teachers are trained in master's degree programs at universities throughout the country. Whereas the majority of these programs concentrate on preparing teacher trainees for academic programs serving foreign students, there is a growing recognition of the need to prepare instructors for work in nonacademic settings among adults.

In one TESOL teacher preparation program at San Francisco State University, graduate students themselves voiced their interest in community work after graduation. In response, the program faculty decided to incorporate a focus on adult literacy among the choices for its TESOL master's degree and demonstrated their commitment by hiring a specialist in this area. Among the array of TESOL preparation courses, a seminar in adult second language literacies is now an option. Furthermore, adult literacy programs are acceptable practicum settings for teacher trainees. It is hoped that other university degree programs will follow suit by broadening TESOL teacher preparation to better serve our increasingly diverse immigrant and refugee communities.

Given current demographic trends, the growing demand for qualified adult ESL instructors will surely continue. The nature of employment, staff turnover, and vastly differing staff experiences require a diverse, flexible preparation and support system. Whether a staff development program uses certified trainers, facilitators, highly experienced staff, or university professors, it is essential that teacher education approaches recognize the uniqueness of the adult ESL field and the needs of its communities in order to provide or facilitate preparation that improves instruction to effectively meet those needs.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

This brief profile is based on data contained in Pelavin Associates (1992).

### **THE AUTHOR**

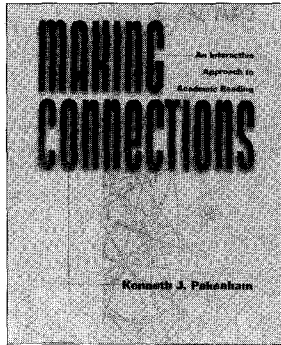
Dennis Terdy is Director of the Adult Learning Resource Center in Des Plaines, Illinois. Two of the center's projects include the Illinois Adult ESL Service Center and the Adult Education Service Center of Northern Illinois. These projects provide staff development and support to adult education and literacy projects throughout the region and state.

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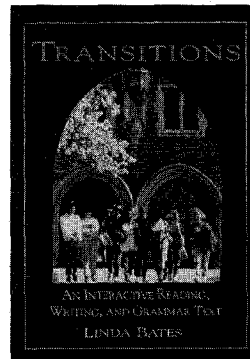
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## WOLVES IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

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In place of The Forum, in this issue distinguished colleagues revisit commonly used terms whose meanings are contested.

### *Putting the P Back in Participator*

**ELSA AUERBACH**

*University of Massachusetts at Boston*

■ The fact that participatory approaches to adult ESL are becoming increasingly popular is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it is heartening to see that participatory approaches are coming to be accepted as cutting edge rather than fringe views and that the field may even be on the verge of a paradigm shift. On the other hand, I am uncomfortable when the term *participatory* is used loosely to describe any approach that claims to involve learners in the shaping of curriculum goals or classroom processes. Often, the terms *participatory* and *learner-centered* are equated despite the fact that they have potentially different ideological implications, the former focusing on social transformation and the latter on self-realization. Although participatory pedagogy is rooted in a social change perspective, its inherently political nature is often obscured. As Edelsky (1991) says, "Buzzwords and movements not only can promote change; they can prevent it" (p. 161); my fear is that this may be the fate of participatory ESL.

Whereas the learner-centered orientation puts primary emphasis on participants' involvement with curriculum development processes (i.e., on students setting their own goals, exploring their own experiences, shaping the curriculum, and evaluating their own learning), the participatory approach emphasizes drawing curriculum *content* from the social context of learners' lives as well as involving them in curriculum development processes. Whereas putting learners at the center of pedagogy is common to both views, they differ as to how and why this is done. The main tenet of the learner-centered approach is that adults learn best when they direct their own learning and their education is tailored to needs they have determined themselves. Further, the learner-centered approach posits a shift in the teacher's role from transmitter of information to facilitator of classroom dynamics and negotiator of the curriculum. As such, this approach is clearly a step forward from earlier ones in which experts determined curriculum content for learners and specified objectives based on the needs of



the dominant social or economic order (see Auerbach & Burgess, 1985).

The key tenet of participatory education, based on the work of Freire (1970), is that marginalized people (such as immigrants and refugees in adult ESL classes, who often have the worst jobs, if any, and the poorest housing conditions) will only be able to affect change in their lives through critical reflection and collective action. Freire contends that powerless people will remain powerless if they act only as individuals. As such, the goal of participatory education (first developed in Latin America) is not to promise people that through education they can be assimilated into the very system which required their marginalization but rather is to create the basis for transforming that system into a more equitable one. The teacher's role in this process is to identify problematic aspects of learners' lives, re-present them to learners as content for dialogue and literacy work, and guide reflection on individual experience to more critical social reflection that eventually could lead to collective action. Thus, changes in teacher-student roles are not an end in themselves but a rehearsal for changing power relations outside of class.

Adult educators concerned with social change criticize the learner-centered approach for a number of reasons. As Mead (1991) argues, adult learners' marginalization itself may inhibit self-directed learning and relying on it may actually disempower learners: Either they may opt only for goals and choices with which they already are familiar (thus, reinforcing the status quo), or worse, they may be at a total loss without the resources to make choices. Mead goes on to argue that the emphasis on individual choice and goal setting, while claiming to promote a value-free education, may in fact support the values of the dominant culture. The effect of leaving all curricular choices to the students is not likely to result in questioning of the social order. "Dominant culture values are so pervasive and implicit that it is a major task to surface them and be critical of them. That, essentially, is the role of the teacher" (Mead, 1991, p. 46). Further, emphasizing individual goal setting without any accompanying social analysis reinforces the specific Western mainstream value of individualism—that through hard work and individual effort, learners can change the basic conditions of their lives. This vision of individual self-betterment may be a false promise in a society where race, ethnicity, gender, and the general vicissitudes of the economy play such a prominent role in the distribution of jobs, social status, and income. Working with students on job-finding goals without also incorporating analyses of factors such as employment discrimination and the recession can only reinforce self-blame and demoralization.

Likewise, the learner-centered approach has been criticized for cele-

brating and validating learners' individual experiences, cultures, and histories without also situating them in a broader social context, thus unwittingly reinforcing the status quo. As Simon, Dippo, and Schenke (1991) argue, "We must avoid the conservatism inherent in only confirming what people already know. Experience should never be celebrated uncritically. School is a place within which to explore the problematic character of experience" (p. 9). Again, this suggests that the role of the teacher must go beyond that of facilitator or negotiator: It is the teacher's responsibility to guide learners through a process of comparing experiences, analyzing their commonality and root causes, and most important, imagining alternatives.

Thus, as we potentially move toward a paradigm shift, it is important to keep in mind that participatory education means more than just changing classroom dynamics and curriculum development processes. It is the *P* that stands for politics—critical analysis of the social context of learners' lives—that is the guiding principle of participatory education.

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Elsa Auerbach teaches in the Bilingual/ESL Graduate Studies Program at the University of Massachusetts at Boston. She has taught ESL to adults in community and union programs as well as coordinated several university-community collaborations, including family literacy and bilingual community literacy training projects. She is the author of *Making Meaning, Making Change: Participatory Curriculum Development for Adult ESL/Literacy* (Center for Applied Linguistics/Delta, 1992).

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## ***Critical Thinking: A Learning Process for Democracy***

**SARAH BENESCH**

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■ What is critical thinking and how is it different from uncritical thinking? Is it a set of logical operations and skills? Or is it a process

of questioning the status quo and of challenging existing knowledge and the social order? The view presented here is that critical thinking is not simply higher order thinking. Instead, it is a search for the social, historical, and political roots of conventional knowledge and an orientation to transform learning and society (Brookfield, 1987; Giroux, 1978; Moriarty, 1992; Shor & Freire, 1987; Wallerstein, 1983). In this view, those who think critically focus on social inequities and probe the disparities between democratic principles and undemocratic realities (Bigelow, 1990; Christensen, 1992; Graman, 1988).

### **CRITICAL THINKING AS SKILLS**

In the ESL literature, critical thinking (or critical reading) is often listed as one or more of a number of hierarchically ordered cognitive skills. Eskey and Grabe (1988), for example, define critical reading as evaluating the author's arguments, a skill they say sometimes follows skimming for the main idea and scanning for specific kinds of information. Richard-Amato and Snow (1992) also include evaluation, along with analysis and synthesis, in a list of critical thinking skills required of high-intermediate to advanced language minority students in content classes. Shih (1992) mentions "critically react[ing] to the content" as one of the demands on ESL students of academic classes, along with "recall[ing] main points and details" and "synthesiz[ing] information from reading" (p. 290).

What the above authors label *critical*, others call *cognitive skills*. Short (1989), for example, refers to analysis as *synthesis* and clarification as *cognitive*, not *critical*, thinking skills. Chamot and O'Malley (1987) use both *critical* and *cognitive*, yet the distinction between these terms is not clear. "Critical reading" appears in a table of language and content activities as an example of an "academic, cognitively demanding, context-reduced" (p. 238) activity. Critical reading is categorized in this chart as both a cognitively demanding activity and a "higher level reading comprehension skill" (p. 238). But what is "critical" and how is it different from "cognitive"?

Because clear distinctions are not made between critical and cognitive thinking in the literature that defines thinking as skills, these terms are used interchangeably. For example, evaluation, inference, analysis, synthesis, and comprehension, all defined as higher order skills, can be found in both the cognitive and critical thinking categories. The special meaning of critical is lost.

### **CRITICAL THINKING FOR SOCIAL CHANGE**

For the special meaning of critical in ESL education we can turn to Cummins (1989), Graman (1988), and Wallerstein (1983). These writ-

ers define critical thinking as a democratic learning process examining power relations and social inequities. In classrooms that feature critical thinking, students are encouraged to participate actively, raising issues of concern in their daily lives, such as work, school, housing, and marriage, as topics for class scrutiny (Auerbach & McGrail, 1991). The impact of public policies on these personal issues is the crux of critical thinking:

Critical thinking begins when people make the connections between their individual lives and social conditions. It ends one step beyond perception—towards the action people take to regain control over social structures detrimental to their lives. (Wallerstein, 1983, p. 16)

Some argue that this type of teaching is “political.” But Cummins (1989) and Shor and Freire (1987) would answer that all curricula are political, either encouraging or discouraging students from questioning the status quo. We can adopt a cognitive orientation, inviting ESL students to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate topics divorced from the social origins of these themes. Or, we can ask them to investigate their experience and its relationship to the language, politics, and history of the new culture. According to the view presented here, the latter approach is critical; the former is not.

## THE AUTHOR

Sarah Benesch is Associate Professor of English and ESL Coordinator at the College of Staten Island, The City University of New York. She has edited and contributed to two collections of essays, *ESL in America: Myths and Possibilities* (Heinemann, 1991) and *Ending Remediation: Linking ESL and Content in Higher Education* (TESOL, 1988).

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## ***Whole Language in Perspective***

**CAROLE EDELSKY**

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■ Whole language (WL) is, first of all, a perspective-in-practice, anchored in a vision of an equitable, democratic, diverse society. A WL perspective highlights theoretical and philosophical notions about language and language learning, knowledge, and reality. In a WL perspective, language is an exquisite human tool for *making* (not finding) meaning. The WL view is that what people learn when they learn a language is not separate parts (words, sounds, sentences) but a supersystem of social practices whose conventions and systematicity both constrain and liberate. And the way people acquire that system or are acquired by it (Gee, 1990) is not through doing exercises so that they can really use it later but rather by actually using it as best they can with others who are using it with them, showing them how it works and what it is for (Smith, 1981). (A lengthy discussion of what WL is and is not is provided in Edelsky, Altwerger, & Flores, 1990. Rigg, 1991, offers an excellent description of WL focused on concerns of second language education.)

There are certain instructional practices that are especially congruent with such theoretical principles, such as literature studies, writing

workshops, and investigative projects in science and social studies. But these activities are not what constitute WL. Rather, it is the teacher's theoretical perspective as enacted in the activity—the theoretical perspective in practice—that makes a WL classroom.

Whole language is not a recipe, however. There is no one way to create a WL classroom. Whereas WL teachers operate from core WL principles, they vary in how they bring those principles to life. WL is not, then, a set of methods or activities (e.g., Big Books or literature studies). It is how that activity is developed, how the material is used, that renders it WL practice. A literature study can be conducted from a skills perspective; on the other hand, basal readers can be used from a WL perspective (e.g., as historical documents in a study of the construction of gender in the U.S.). If used as intended by publishers, however, instructional materials for language education (full of exercises), even those now labeled whole language, are not WL because language exercises do not fit a WL perspective.

If WL is not something to do (an activity, a package, a set of materials), it is certainly not a slot in the schedule (as in “We do WL on Thursday morning”). A WL perspective cannot be adopted at 9 a.m. and abandoned at noon. Whole language is not another term for the whole-word approach to teaching reading. The only thing these two have in common is the word *whole*; they depend on two radically different conceptions of reading and language. Neither, for the same reason, is WL a new way of saying “teaching skills in context.” WL does not focus on getting students to use “language skills”; rather, WL focuses on skilled language use. Nor is WL a more up-to-date label for other progressive alternatives in education such as the language experience approach or open education, both of which incorporate views of language and language learning that were current at one time but that have been superseded by newer views, some of which are the foundation of WL.

Whole language is not simply about teaching reading or language arts. It is a pedagogy for education in general and is certainly not an excuse for *not* teaching. WL teaching frequently entails close observation and collaboration, and it also includes direct instruction (and yes, attention to phonics). However, what distinguishes direct instruction (and phonics) in a WL classroom from the same lesson in a traditional classroom is purpose. A WL teacher might directly teach a child how to use semicolons (or she might draw attention to sound/letter relationships) because the student needs them for the letter she is writing to get a refund on a badly printed book but not because using semicolons (or phonics) is a skill required by the curriculum guide or by the teacher's “skills” notion of literacy.

Whole language is a from-the-inside-out affair not a designation

that can be imposed from above by administrative mandate. It is an educational way of life—beliefs and values enacted through practice. Appropriating the label, the jargon, or the typical materials and activities of WL without taking on the liberator (and therefore status-quo-disrupting) political vision, and without adopting a WL theoretical perspective, is a sure way to *prevent* genuine change.

### THE AUTHOR

Carole Edelsky is Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at Arizona State University, Tempe. She has written about gender and language, second language acquisition, whole language, writing in bilingual programs, and the politics of literacy and language education.

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## ***Family Literacy: Resisting Deficit Models***

### DENNY TAYLOR

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■ In the flyer for the 1993 National Conference on Family Literacy, arranged by the National Center for Family Literacy, prospective participants are told that “problems promulgated by intergenerational undereducation are far reaching and devastating, leaving families in a constant crisis within the cycle of poverty.” Few of us would argue with the idea that members of the community who are poor and have not had the opportunity to become educated face serious problems in their everyday lives (see Kozol, 1991). The difficulties faced by families who live in poverty are “far reaching and devastating.” However, the understanding that society constructs the conditions of poverty in which many are forced to live seems to have been missed by those who are championing the growing national family literacy movement in the U.S.

If one reconstructs the rhetoric of the National Center for Family Literacy, one would think that the “problems promulgated” are caused by the people themselves, that it is their own fault that they are poor

and their children “undereducated.” In a special report on Family Literacy published by the National Center on Family Literacy (1990), the problems which are promulgated are clearly explicated: “Undereducated parents usually do not pass on positive educational values to their children. Neither, in many cases, do they provide an adequate economic, emotional or social environment” (p. 2). Clearly, from this deficit perspective, parents are blamed for the conditions in which they live with their children.

Many researchers and educators who work within the field of family literacy are deeply concerned by the political implications of the rhetoric of the national family literacy movement and by the way in which the concept of family literacy has been co-opted and used to reify deficit-driven views of families who live in poverty, some of them African American families and families for whom English is a second language.

Sixteen years of ethnographic research in families and communities have taught me that sex, race, economic status, and setting cannot be used as significant correlates of literacy (Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). Like other researchers working in the field, I have found that many so-called undereducated parents are highly literate and that many have developed complex problem-solving skills that enable them to survive in circumstances that most of us cannot even imagine. But more than this, I have found that there are more similarities between the ways in which people use print than there are differences. The African American families living in poverty with whom I worked with Catherine Dorsey-Gaines used reading and writing in similar ways to the white middle-class families who were the focus of my doctoral dissertation in which I coined the phrase *family literacy* (Taylor, 1981). We are more alike than we are different, and the differences are often of our own making.

Moll and Greenberg (1990), building on the idea that every household is an educational setting, write:

Without a focus on social relationships and persons-in-activities, it is very easy for outsiders (educators) to underestimate the wealth of funds of knowledge available in working-class households. Funds of knowledge are available regardless of the families’ years of formal schooling or prominence assigned to literacy. (p. 327)

In developing educational opportunities for families, it is essential that we begin by learning about their lives so that together we can build meaningful connections between everyday learning and school learning. We need to understand, from the personal and shared perspectives of individual family members, the extraordinary funds of knowledge



that they bring to any learning situation. Above all, we need to abandon the prepackaged programs of “experts” and turn instead to the wealth of information that we can gain from educators and researchers who work with families in naturalistic settings. The research and writings of Moll (1990) and Pedraza (1992) would make a good beginning. Gillespie (this issue) provides further insights and references. Lytle and Cantafio’s (1993) research on women’s literacies adds another dimension to our understandings, Gadsden’s (1993) research with African American families another. Auerbach (1989) is another educator to whom we should listen. Her classic article in the *Harvard Educational Review*, which distinguishes between school transmission models of family literacy and social-contextual models provides a critique that invites second language literacy educators to reflect on the assumptions of their practice. Add to these perspectives the writings of Willett and Bloome (in press), Solsken (1992), and Weinstein-Shr (1990), and it becomes evident that as researchers and educators working with families, we need to create situations in which we can establish exchanges of information about life in general and literacy in particular. In this way we can work to increase our understandings of family life while at the same time we can support family learning as parents and children work to both maintain and change the circumstances of their everyday lives.

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Denny Taylor has spent the past 17 years continuously engaged in ethnographic research in family, community, and school settings. She is the author of five books on family, community, and school literacy and the founder of the Progressive Center for Literacy Research in North Sandwich, New Hampshire.

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## ***The Worker, Work, and Workplace Literacy: Missing Links***

**JUDY ALAMPRESE**

*Cosmos Corporation*

■ As the number of employers engaged in some form of workplace literacy training grows, the capacity of these organizations to enhance workers' skills and knowledge as well as improve productivity becomes more challenging. Two factors that appear to influence an organization's capacity to achieve these workplace literacy program goals are the fit of the instructional program to the workplace and the types of organizational support that are given to workers participating in programs.

The importance of fit has been discussed in terms of the relationship of a workplace literacy program to an organization's mission (Cornell, 1988), the ways in which workplace literacy fits into the workplace context (Program Planning Consultant Group, 1992), and the breadth of skills that are taught in a workplace literacy program (Stein, 1991; Sticht, 1991). Workplace literacy program managers and evaluators seem to agree that the closer the alignment of a workplace literacy program to an organization's mission, the greater the likelihood that an organization will continue to sponsor a program. They also acknowledge that the more that workplace literacy instruction approximates the tasks that must be performed in a workplace, the greater the likelihood that workers in a program will be able to learn the skills needed to perform these tasks.

One aspect of workplace fit about which there is much discussion, however, concerns the range and specificity of the skills that are taught in workplace literacy programs. Stein (1991) and others have argued that the ultimate success of a workplace literacy program in preparing its workers for current and future workplace jobs depends, in part, on an instructional approach that goes beyond the teaching of specific skills needed for specific workplace tasks. Rather, the curricula used in workplace literacy programs should focus on the teaching of transferable skills to workers that can be applied in their current work situations as well as in other life and work contexts. By providing workers with an opportunity to learn skills that can be utilized across work activities, employers will strengthen workers' abilities to carry out diverse tasks.

A component of fit that often is overlooked in the development of workplace literacy programs is the relationship between workers' educational goals and assumptions about instruction and programs' specification of content and format. Whereas many programs claim to serve the needs of workers, they frequently do not consider workers' prior experiences or their goals both for and beyond the workplace in the design of materials and instructional formats. Workers' willingness to participate in programs is determined, in part, by the extent to which they perceive that their own needs are being met (e.g., Sarmiento & Kay, 1990). A program that does not consider workers' needs in creating curricula is less likely to retain interested, engaged workers.

Another factor related to workplace literacy program implementation that is important but often narrowly defined is the type of support that is provided by the sponsoring organization. The necessity of support from senior management in an organization carrying out a workplace literacy program has been noted in recent studies (e.g., Southport Institute, 1992). A factor that has not been well recognized, however, is the role of workers' immediate supervisors in providing opportunities for workers to demonstrate the skills learned in a workplace literacy program. Whereas it is expected that workers participating in such programs have a commitment to learning, sponsoring organizations also must have a commitment to allowing workers to use the skills that they learn. This is particularly the case in workplace literacy programs teaching English as a second language to workers. For example, if workers are not given tasks that require the use of spoken English, there will be limited occasions for skill reinforcement and recognition for workers' accomplishments. The role of management support in a workplace literacy program not only extends to senior level support for a program, but also to the encouragement of front-line supervisors to assist workers in utilizing skills learned in a workplace literacy program.

## THE AUTHOR

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## ***What's Wrong with CBE?***

**K. LYNN SAVAGE**

*City College of San Francisco*

■ "The United States Office of Education defines competency-based education (CBE) as "a performance-based process leading to demonstrated mastery of basic and life skills necessary for the individual to function proficiently in society" (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1982, p. 80). Work in the mid- 1970s by the Adult Performance Level (APL) Project at the University of Texas (APL Project Staff, 1975) identified five knowledge areas—occupational, consumer, health, government and law, and community resources—in which an adult should be able to function successfully in today's society.

Unfortunately, both the United States Office of Education definition and the work of the APL Project has led to misinterpretations, resulting in errors in implementation. These errors include the following: (a) limiting the range of competencies, (b) emphasizing knowledge rather than use, and (c) using a phrase-book approach to teaching language. For each error, this article cites theory and provides contrasting exam-

pies to support the premise that the above characteristics are not inherent in the CBE approach itself.

### **CBE DOES NOT LIMIT THE RANGE OF COMPETENCIES**

CBE caught the attention of adult ESL instructors in the early 1980s when its use was encouraged in programs for refugees. Those programs were frequently required to focus on basic survival or entry-level employment skills and targeted to students with very limited proficiency in English. As a result, some critics have equated the CBE approach with the content of and students served by those programs.

In fact, CBE is a Process used in designing and delivering curriculum. It may be used with any content and with students at any level of language proficiency. Cyclical in nature, it includes four steps: assessment of student needs, selection of competencies based on those needs, instruction targeted to those competencies, and evaluation of student performance in those competencies (California Competency-based Adult Education (CBAE) Staff Development Project, 1983).

Students whose goal is to succeed academically may need to take notes in an academic lecture. Students whose goal is employment may need to follow directions for performing a vocationally related task such as tuning up a car or conducting a laboratory experiment. Students whose goal is self-enrichment may need to explain their position on an issue or distinguish between fact and opinion in a newspaper editorial. The CBE process allows for a broad range of competencies.

### **CBE DOES NOT EMPHASIZE KNOWLEDGE RATHER THAN USE**

Sometimes materials that present themselves as CBE emphasize knowledge rather than use. That is, they emphasize the presentation of information (usually focused on basic survival skills) rather than the development of student skills in doing something in English.

A competency is, in fact, an instructional objective described in task-based terms. Competencies begin with "students will be able to. . . ." Verbs that complete the statement must be demonstrable such as *follow* directions to a place, *answer* personal information questions, *interpret* a bus schedule, or *write* a check. Verbs such as *understand* and *know*, which are not demonstrable, are unacceptable.

A reading about banking, although on a life-skills topic, is not competency based because the task emphasizes knowledge rather than performance. In contrast, although their focus is academic, performance-based tasks such as "use an index to locate a passage in a textbook"

and “identify the main idea and supporting details in a persuasive writing” are competency based.

### **CBE DOES NOT REQUIRE A PHRASEBOOK APPROACH**

In attempting to implement CBE, some programs have developed a phrase-book approach. For example, the curriculum identifies the competency, “to express misunderstanding,” and provides sample language, such as the formulaic, *I'm sorry, I don't understand*.

There is nothing in the CBE approach that precludes replacing such a formulaic approach with one that builds student capacity to generate language. For example, in response to directions (e.g., *Make 16 copies*), the curriculum might present clarification strategies, such as repetition (*Make how many copies?*), or questions (*Did you say 60 or 16?*) and *wh* questions (*How many copies did you say to make?*).

Nor does a CBE curriculum need to preclude higher order thinking skills. In fact, steps in the problem-solving approach—“identify a problem,” “identify the causes of a problem,” “identify solutions and consequences,” and “decide on a course of action”—are stated in competency terms.

Programs may choose a particular approach to language teaching because of the philosophy of their instructional staff, but no one language teaching methodology is inherent in CBE.

### **CONCLUSION**

In summary, then, CBE is *not* survival life skills; it is *not* talking about language; and it is *not* memorization of formulaic expressions. Rather, programs in which implementation is congruent with CBE theory and with current researching language teaching will offer a wide range of competencies, provide task-based activities that encourage performance, and utilize approaches that develop the ability of students to express their own thoughts in English.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

This contribution contains excerpts from the author's presentation to the adult-level interest section at CATESOL 1991 and from Savage (in press).

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Foresman, 1982), one of the first competency-based ESL textbook series, and has worked on a number of CBE programs.

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## ***What Kind of Alternative? Examining Alternative Assessment***

**LENORE BALLIRO**

*Adult Literacy Resource Institute*

■ Whereas the use of the term *alternative assessment* has become commonplace in the field of adult ESL literacy, it has also become problematic. A critical analysis of how the term is used can help clarify an increasingly complex area in the field.

First, alternative to what? The notion of alternative assessment has developed considerably from its origins in practitioners' generalized dissatisfaction with standardized tests, which fall short in areas such as adequately documenting learner strengths or capturing actual progress (Johnston, 1988; Meier, 1981). Some alternatives to standardized tests include, but are not limited to teacher-designed tests, competency checklists, benchmark systems, individual education plans, teacher observations, student self-evaluations, peer evaluations, portfolios, and progress profiles.

However, this catalogue of alternative methods falls short of providing a coherent view of alternative assessment methods and their purposes, making the simple distinction between standardized versus alternative assessment of limited use. There is an emerging model in language and literacy theory in which the term *alternative assessment* is used in a more specific way—one that is reflective of a particular conceptual framework that is gaining acceptance and recognition among researchers and reflective practitioners. Lytle and Wolfe (1989)

contrast an *alternative assessment* with what they call a *current traditional model*, in which the historically dominant mode of Western literacy, literacy-for-school, or the “essayist” tradition is central. Lytle and Wolfe, among others, challenge this model, viewing literacy as a set of social practices embedded in particular social institutions (Gee, 1986; Scollon & Scollon, 1981; Street, 1984). A variety of “alternatives” are associated with the alternative framework: ethnographic as an alternative to the psychometric tradition; literacy-as-social-practices as an alternative to literacy-as-discrete-subskills; the acceptance of many “literacies” as an alternative to one privileged, monolithic view of literacy; and a preference for primarily qualitative data as an alternative to reliance on quantitative data alone. Within an alternative framework, new variables may “count” such as changes in affective factors, metacognitive strategies, reading and language behaviors, social interaction and pursuit of personal/community goals.

It is not possible to discuss assessment without also considering proficiency. Lantoff and Frawley (1988) suggest that “there is nothing even approaching a reasonable and unified theory of proficiency” (p. 180) in the field, making measurement of students’ language abilities against fixed proficiency guidelines problematic. They suggest that we look more closely at socially defined, context-embedded uses of language and examine proficiency (or rather, proficiencies) within that framework. Such a view calls for an alternative practice to the assessment of proficiency, one that eschews closed, fixed, and predetermined systems in favor of more open and investigative approaches.

At its best, the alternative process calls for the following: establishment of criteria about what counts in the areas of literacy and language acquisition based on current, state-of-the-art research; collaboration and negotiation among participants in a program, including students (see Brindley, 1989); development and use of teaching strategies that help achieve progress in those areas; recursive, ongoing investigation into and evaluation of the teaching/learning process; and the application of assessment information to inform changes in practice. This process involves the collection of evidence of change/progress from multiple sources over time and the analysis of data to help inform teachers, students, programs, and ultimately, policy makers who need to compare findings across programs.

But how do you do it; how do adult literacy professionals carry out alternative assessment? Whereas there are well-established models for whole language evaluation through the public schools and holistic scoring models for process writing in higher education, it is only recently that resources have become available for adult ESL/literacy practitioners (Auerbach, 1992; Wrigley, in press; Wrigley & Guth, 1992). Many problems impede implementation of well-conceptualized and



well-designed alternative assessment practices in the still-marginalized field of adult education. As H. S. Wrigley (personal communication, 1993) has suggested, “alternative assessment, if done right, takes work—rethinking, reconceptualizing, hashing things through with others, building consensus on what counts.” Fortunately, there are now documented examples of this process at the individual program level (e.g., Isserlis, 1991); at the state level (e.g., McGrail, 1992); and most recently at the national level (Resnick, 1993). Such rethinking and consensus building takes time, commitment, and funding. However, when trained teachers agree on what to look for, learn how to analyze it, and how to use the information to improve practice, the results can only be more valid and reliable than a decontextualized test or application of proficiency levels.

I’m not convinced that *alternative assessment* is a useful term. We need to begin to name assessment approaches more descriptively in terms of what they are and what they do, not simply posit them against standardized tests. A more useful term as an umbrella concept might be *congruent assessment*, a process by which the assessment fits the goals of the adult education program—goals negotiated among the principal participants: teachers and students. The resulting assessment system may not always reflect the “alternative” view of literacy in the rich, multifaceted context described by Lytle and others, although that’s what many of us in the field strive towards. But it allows for naming those ubiquitous paradoxes in the field—those tricky areas such as GED (Graduate Equivalency Diploma) preparation, vocational skills training, and other areas where the expressed goals of the students are singular and focused and may in fact require passing a standardized test. Naming *assessment approaches* congruent as opposed to alternative might point to the variety of ways we actually address the needs of learners for particular literacies or proficiencies—from preparing students for a high school equivalency certificate to helping them read to their babies at night.

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## REVIEW ARTICLE

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The *TESOL Quarterly* welcomes evaluative reviews of publications relevant to TESOL professionals. In addition to textbooks and reference materials, these include computer and video software, testing instruments, and other forms of nonprint materials.

### ***Reading, Writing, and Roles in U.S. Adult Literacy Textbooks***

**MARY McGROARTY AND SUZANNE SCOTT**

*Northern Arizona University*

■ What should teachers look for in a text for adult literacy classes, what are they likely to find, and what are promising future directions? Here we examine a few of the many available texts to note trends evident in the treatment of reading and writing, the nature of content, and the roles portrayed. To obtain our sample of widely used adult literacy textbooks, during the summer of 1992, we polled editors at eight commercial publishing firms and seven administrators of adult ESL programs in five states with large ESL/adult literacy programs (California, Florida, Illinois, New York, Texas). From their nominations, we selected those texts mentioned by a least two experts, either editors or educators. We have included one newer text published in 1992 to illustrate promising directions. Our comments here should be viewed as suggestive of current trends, not as an exhaustive commentary on all currently available texts. We make no claim that the texts discussed here are the best or the most pedagogically sound. Furthermore, because of the wide range of language skill levels typically included in literacy materials and the ambiguity surrounding the term *literacy* itself, we realize that some of these texts would not fit the definitions of literacy used in some adult education programs. Nevertheless, all the texts discussed qualify as literacy materials in more than one program or area of the U.S. and represent the range of instructional materials now in use in literacy classes.

We aim to alert ESL literacy instructors to issues in textbooks that influence development of the language and literacy skills of the adult students in their classes. Fortunately, many new and innovative textbooks are being published in the fret-growing field of adult literacy; we applaud this development and hope this review will stimulate informed discussion of the diverse and often lively materials now becoming more

widely available. Full publication information for textbooks discussed here is provided in Appendix A.

### **HOW IS LITERACY DEFINED IN TEXTBOOKS?**

Materials for adult literacy span a great range, not only because of the diversity of student backgrounds and goals, long a given in adult ESL classes but because of the ambiguity surrounding the term *literacy*, which has been defined diachronically as well as cross-culturally (Wagner, 1992). Literacy suggests a range of reading and writing abilities (Kaestle, 1985); placement of students into literacy classes is often messy (J. Wigfield, personal communication, February 9, 1993). This diversity of interpretations is reflected in the textbooks examined here, some of which contain many pictures and relatively little print, whereas others provide more text, require more reading, and demand some writing. The multiplicity of levels and skills represented in the texts testifies to the lack of consensus in the field about what constitutes beginning literacy. For instructors, one of the greatest initial challenges is to determine which of the many possible skill ranges presented in these books best fits the profiles of the learners with whom they work.

### **WHAT PRIOR KNOWLEDGE DO LITERACY TEXTBOOKS ASSUME?**

Student heterogeneity, a perennial fact of classroom life, is magnified in adult ESL programs where some learners, already well educated and literate in their native language, may be in classes with preliterate learners who have never spent much time in school. Perhaps because of this heterogeneity, most texts do not specify students' initial language level very clearly. One text, *Side by Side*, is aimed at "beginners" with no further description (in fact, the language skills included place such an emphasis on speaking and listening that veterans of literacy education were surprised to see this nominated as a literacy text); another, *Starting to Read*, is directed towards nonliterate and semiliterate students with "a recognition of basic English survival vocabulary" (Teacher's Book, p. i) not further described. The most detailed explanation of students' presumed knowledge comes in *Personal Stories*, which assumes a "basic level of survival English," defined in part as the ability to "identify and describe family members, housing, and

daily activities” (Teacher’s Book, p. i). The vagueness in specifying students’ prior language ability, a direct result of the broad and elastic definitions of literacy used in policy and practice, presents a challenge for teachers, particularly those new to the field. Consequently, teachers inexperienced in assessing and drawing out prior student knowledge might benefit from the use of collaborative efforts conducted with their students (and also, perhaps, with the assistance of more experienced colleagues) to discover the extent and accuracy of students’ background knowledge and linguistic resources.

## **HOW MUCH TEACHER GUIDANCE IS PROVIDED?**

Given the high turnover rate of instructors and the typically large class sizes in adult ESL literacy courses, the need for some initial guidance, particularly for new instructors, is considerable, yet guidance is often sketchy. None of the teacher’s guides explicitly discusses what teachers need to know or the kind of training they should have to succeed in teaching ESL literacy. Some teacher’s editions include very general rubrics (e.g., “Go over new vocabulary”) without suggesting a possible range of instructional alternatives to accomplish this. No teacher’s edition offers a rationale for sequencing across chapters; in general, teachers are left to their own devices to design clear and creative ways to present and practice the material in the lessons.

Some teacher’s guides, however, (*A New Start, In Print, Real-Life English*) provide extensive direction for teachers, suggesting ways to present activities, extend them in class, and give students feasible practice activities. Although the relevance and value of detailed pedagogical guidance can only be judged in practice, it is encouraging to see that some teacher’s editions make clear and numerous instructional options available, thus increasing the likelihood of varied and meaningful classroom activities.

## **HOW DO THE TEXTS TEACH READING?**

Those texts which teach beginning skills start with practice recognizing upper or lower case letters, word length, letter order and spelling (*Real-Life English, ESL Literacy, In Print, A New Start*). Students circle, match, trace, and copy to gain these early skills, working within thematic units. Teaching sight words, or environmental print, is common;

for this the texts use maximally relevant survival words (*Don't Walk, Enter, Men, Women, Stop*).

Texts vary in the variety of techniques used to teach decoding. *In Print* offers key words, syllabic instruction, and structural analysis of words, but most other texts are less systematic. Not all of the texts teach sound/symbol correspondence directly. Phonics is used selectively, mainly to focus on initial consonants: Students rehearse reading, saying and writing words that begin with a particular letter. Some texts appear to choose the letters presented arbitrarily; others base choices on vocabulary used in the chapter or on research indicating a presumed order of acquisition (*In Print*).

For students whose literacy skills are truly at the beginning stages, all the books surveyed incorporate visual support, often extensive. *Before Book One*, as the title implies, provides many activities based on pictures and recognition of numerals and letters which allow for extensive comprehension building (see Stevick, 1986) prior to student production. Visuals range from simple black-and-white line drawings (*A New Start, Basic English for Adult Competency, Before Book One, ESL Literacy, In Print, Side by Side*) to more detailed two-tone renderings and black-and-white photographs, some portraying people similar to ESL learners in age and ethnic background (*In Print, Real-Life English, Starting to Read, Stories to Tell Our Children*), some depicting "typical Americans" of varied age and ethnic groups (*Personal Stories*).

Contributing further to the degree of challenge in these materials is the amount and type of text presented for learner use and the amount of written text production expected. *Before Book One, Basic English for Adult Competency, and Side by Side* have a predominantly aural/oral focus. Other texts emphasize reading and writing, starting with tracing letters (*ESL Literacy*, the preliteracy text in the Real-Life English series), but others jump into reading full sentences immediately (*Starting to Read, Personal Stories, Stories to Tell Our Children*). Two texts (*Personal Stories, Starting to Read*) assume a "psycholinguistic" approach to reading, in which students are not expected to read every word, but instead sample texts, make predictions, then confirm or correct their ideas.

## HOW DO THE TEXTS TEACH WRITING?

Several texts are aurally/orally focused, and the use of writing is minimal. In *Side by Side*, a grammatically focused conversation text, writing consists of filling in a few lines at the end of chapters. Elsewhere

(*Personal Stories, In Print, Real-Life English, ESL Literacy, Stories to Tell Our Children*), writing figures centrally. Most texts begin by having students copy writing, whether it is letters, parts of words, whole words, or sentences. *Personal Stories*, in fact, calls copying “writing,” telling students: “Write your own story. Copy the Yes sentences” (*Personal Stories 2*, p. 6), a technique also used in *Stories to Tell Our Children* as preparation for more open-ended writing and discussion. Students move from copying words and sentences relevant to the chapter theme to filling in blanks with their own words, clauses, and ultimately, sentences. Much of the reading and writing taught in these texts revolves around preprinted forms (grocery store receipts, utility bills, modified job applications): Students read forms to locate pertinent information, such as the amount to be paid, and then use it to write a sample check. Charts of personal information are used extensively in *Stories to Tell Our Children* to encourage student involvement. Most such activities work to integrate writing with reading, listening, and speaking.

### **WHICH TYPES OF WRITING ARE EXPECTED?**

These texts emphasize development of writing by asking students to write answers to questions; a typical example is *Starting to Read*, which requires one-sentence responses. At times the topics for writing are limited and repetitive (students are asked to write on variations of the theme of their weekend seven times in a chapter of *Personal Stories 2*). *Personal Stories* and *Stories to Tell Our Children*, though, encourage creative storytelling in later chapters, the former allowing five to seven blank lines for student text, the latter requiring additional paper for student stories. *In Print* uses the language experience approach, with a modified version encouraged in *Stories to Tell Our Children*. *In Print* goes the farthest in writing, promoting oral problem solving with subsequent, sometimes collaborative, writing, also encouraged in *Stories to Tell Our Children*. These three texts embody newer ideas regarding the relationship between reading and writing; by providing activities that require both generation of personal meanings and recursive experience with connected texts longer than a sentence, they should, in theory, help to build reading comprehension (Zamel, 1992).

There is little emphasis on extensive revision in most writing activities. Writing is often used as a springboard for group discussion or pair work, but the ensuing oral activity is not linked to the student's written product. Hence student writing is used to promote oral communication, but the ideas generated in oral communication are not used



to revise the writing, contradicting the writing process pedagogy now recommended at the secondary and postsecondary levels.

### **WHICH READING AND WRITING STRATEGIES ARE ENCOURAGED?**

Few of the texts include discussion of and practice with reading and writing strategies. Although it is apparent from some of the exercises (and the instructions in teacher's editions) that reading strategies like scanning are used, most of the student texts do not discuss reading or writing strategies per se. *In Print* is the only student text that includes a focused discussion of varied purposes and settings for reading and writing in the native language and in English, reflecting an awareness that learners might want to understand *why* using literacy skills makes sense. Because research indicates that the most successful strategy training is both explicit and regularly integrated into class activities (Oxford, 1992/1993), this is a prime area for expansion in future literacy materials.

### **HOW IS GRAMMAR TREATED?**

Explicit grammar instruction is largely absent from these texts, with the exception of *Side by Side* and *Real-Life English*; the latter has separate grammar workbooks in its series. Overall, then, basic literacy texts suggest that classroom attention to grammatical accuracy or repeated practice of formal conventions has a minimal role to play in literacy instruction. *Personal Stories* includes activities correcting ungrammatical sentences lacking capitalization or punctuation but gives no instructions or correct models in the student text, an omission that deprives students of the chance to use the book as a reference for correct forms in or outside class. *Stories to Tell Our Children* uses scrambled sentences to help raise student awareness of formal aspects of written English, but the sentences and cloze exercises are not systematic in their grammatical focus. In this area, too, textbook writers are searching for some balance between encouraging students not to be intimidated by the written word and helping them develop awareness of the formal conventions of language structure.

## WHICH TOPICS ANIMATE THE TEXTS?

Survival—shopping, using U.S. money, going to doctors and clinics, finding jobs and housing, and going to school to learn English (a focus which can constitute up to one quarter of the text). In topic choice, authors have had the difficult task of treating adult topics (housing, health, money, personal relationships) while using language that must be simple but not condescending to learners. Units within books are arranged thematically but the order appears essentially arbitrary, not guided by any continuing theme or story line, although *Personal Stories* follows the same group of people throughout.

## WHAT IS MISSING?

Some areas are notably absent from all the texts, leaving gaps for which teacher knowledge might well be called upon to compensate. Lack of childcare, a known barrier for adults participating in ESL and literacy classes (Hayes, 1989), is not covered. Despite current enthusiasm for learner-centered, participatory, and problem-solving approaches (Wrigley & Guth, 1992), most of the books reflect the short-term service encounters typical of a competency-based orientation.<sup>1</sup> Literacy is nearly always portrayed as a skill to be employed for individual, not social, ends; the texts rarely venture into the rhetoric of personal (and never into the social) rhetoric of transformation historically dominant in national literacy campaigns (Arnone & Graff, 1987). Uses of literacy to create and maintain social linkages (Wrigley & Guth, 1992) appear only in some of the newer texts, such as *Stories to Tell Our Children* which includes lessons on neighbors and other kinds of helpers. Controversial or overtly political topics almost never appear, although *In Print* tackles such issues as crime and discrimination, using a problem-solving methodology. While we do not advocate the overt evangelizing typical of the civics- and history-oriented texts used for ESL earlier in this century (McGroarty, 1985; Singh, 1992), texts which

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<sup>1</sup>Problem-posing approaches have been most systematically applied to somewhat higher level ESL Materials, often those offering possibilities for in-depth exploration of common experiences and problems such as neighborhood or community concerns (Wallerstein, 1983) or workplace issues (e.g., Auerbach & Wallerstein, 1987). Although Freire's participatory pedagogy can certainly be adapted for second language students, it is crucial to remember that it was first developed for students becoming literate in a language they already spoke with native proficiency. This is not the case in ESL classes, where the heterogeneity of oral language skills must be taken into account in determining the role and value of any instructional approach, problem posing included.

omit or slight social goals and overemphasize instrumental, work-a-day concerns may perpetuate the marginal status of many ESL learners (Auerbach & Burgess, 1985). Some more recent texts deal vividly with sensitive personal issues of loneliness, aging, discrimination, and job loss likely to affect at least some adult students, but there is scant effort to move toward collective acknowledgement or action related to these problems. The relative absence of a social—and complete absence of a political—context, broadly defined, is somewhat disquieting, particularly if few students will be able to advance to higher instructional levels where such themes might appear.

### **WHICH ISSUES, THEN, SHOULD LITERACY INSTRUCTORS BEAR IN MIND AS THEY SELECT TEXTBOOKS?**

A number of general guidelines for language text evaluation (e.g., Skierso, 1991) are available. Appendix B offers a list of issues to consider when evaluating prospective textbooks.

### **A FINAL CAUTION**

Gaps, omissions, or inaccuracies in a text do not necessarily lead to bad instruction; to assume that the format and content of literacy texts control instruction is far too strong. As curriculum theorists note (Apple, 1992), it is not the text itself but the nature of the dialogue created around the use of the text that determines the tenor and quality of the educational experience. The textbooks examined here demonstrate differential treatment of instructional guidance, differential emphases on reading and writing, differences in types of practice provided to students, and variability in topics addressed. All of these are areas for instructors and teacher educators to scrutinize as they decide what kinds of materials will best start students off on the many paths to English literacy.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Our thanks to the Organized Research Program of Northern Arizona University for a research assistantship supporting the second author, to the educators and editors who answered our queries about adult literacy texts, to Linda Hellman

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## APPENDIX A

### Literacy Textbooks Discussed

- A New start: A functional course in basic spoken English and survival literacy.* Linda Mrowicki and Peter Furnborough. San Diego, CA: Dormac, 1982. Pp. 141.
- Basic English for adult competency.* Autumn Keltner, Leann Howard, and Frances Lee. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents, 1983. Pp. vii + 98.
- Before book one: Listening activities for prebeginning students of English* (2nd ed.). Mary Ann Boyd and John Boyd. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents, 1991. Pp. iv + 108.
- ESL literacy.* Yvonne Nishio. White Plains, NY: Longman, 1991. Pp. vi + 183.
- In print: Beginning literacy through cultural awareness.* Lynellyn Long and Janet Spiegel-Podnecky. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1988. Pp. vi + 186.
- Personal stories: A book for adults who are beginning to read.* Kamla Koch, Linda Mrowicki, and Arlene Rutenberg. Palatine, IL: Linmore, 1985. Pp. 78
- Real-life English: A competency-based ESL program for adults.* Julia Jolly and Lynne Robinson. Austin, TX: Steck-Vaughn, 1988. Pp. iv + 124.
- Side by side: English through guided conversations* (Book 1A). Steven Molinsky and Bill Bliss. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents, 1983. Pp. ix + 104.
- Starting to read.* Linda Mrowicki. Palatine, IL: Linmore, 1988. Pp. 84.
- Stories to tell our children.* Gail Weinstein-Shr. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle, 1992. Pp. vii + 88.

## APPENDIX B

### Issues in Evaluating Adult Literacy Textbooks\*

#### Matching Learners and Textbooks: Learner-Focused Questions

1. Are your students literate in another language?
2. Are your students familiar with the Roman alphabet?
3. What levels of education are represented in your class?
4. What types of attitudes and perceptions about literacy do your students hold?
5. What literacy goals do your students have? Does the textbook's focus match these?
6. Are the topics covered relevant to your students' needs?
7. Does the text realistically portray the lives and roles of your adult students? Are immigrants and/or refugees portrayed in the textbook?
8. Does the text acknowledge and address cultural diversity? Does it stereotype by age, gender, or ethnicity?
9. What prior knowledge does the textbook assume your students have, and does it match your students' prior knowledge?

#### Examining the Textbook: Textbook-Focused Questions

1. Are reading, writing, listening, and speaking integrated?
2. Is reading systematically taught? Is there a balance between letter and word identification and whole language activities?
3. Is writing systematically taught? Are stages of writing introduced?
4. Does the text logically progress both within and across chapters?
5. Are opportunities given for students to practice writing? Are both accuracy and fluency addressed?
6. Are metacognitive strategies and issues considered? Does the text talk about reading and writing—their purposes and varieties?
7. Does the text work to activate students' prior knowledge?
8. Are strategies for reading and writing included?

### Using the Textbook: Instruction-Focused Questions

1. What types of exercises and activities are included? How many and what variety appear? Do they allow for variety in teaching and learning styles?
2. Can a focus on meaning be easily developed?
3. Are there activities designed to encourage critical thinking or problem solving, generating authentic student text?
4. Does the text or teacher's guide allow room for, or model, ways to expand the activities and/or topics?
5. Does the text link reading and writing in the classroom with literacy in the community?
6. Are student experiences incorporated into exercises and activities?
7. Will students feel both successful and challenged using the text?
8. Is the text interesting, lively, fun?
9. Is the layout readable, inviting, accessible?
10. Is there appropriate and sufficient use of graphics to support the written context, or will use of the text require additional graphics (charts, pictures, maps)?
11. Does the text or teacher's edition give guidance about assessment?
12. Does the textbook's philosophy match yours as an individual and that of your institution?

\* Most questions are based on Wrigley and Guth (1992), pp. 48–51, 73–75.

NEW

## Analyzing the Grammar of English

*A Brief Undergraduate Textbook*

Richard V. Teschner and Eston Evans

This comprehensive textbook presents a descriptive analysis of the indispensable elements of English grammar in eight equal-length chapters. Written for prospective teachers of ESOL, upper-division undergraduates in linguistics analysis courses, and advanced ESOL students, the authors assume only that the student user reads English and possesses at least an advanced command of the spoken language. Because *Analyzing the Grammar of English* takes nothing for granted, instructors do not have to backtrack and invent supplementary material that explains missing information.

The book includes a substantial number of frequently interspersed exercises that test promptly what is taught. Perforated pages allow exercises to be torn out and handed in to instructors. A single concise volume, *Analyzing the Grammar of English* can be taught in a single semester.  
320 pp. ISBN 0-87840-242-X Paper \$23.95 October 1993

**GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY PRESS**

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**City Polytechnic of Hong Kong** is a well established degree granting institution in Hong Kong. Its current student population is 13,700 and the number is expected to grow to 15,000 by the mid-1990's. The Polytechnic is committed to excellence in teaching and research and to close relationships with the community and industry. The medium of instruction is English. Applications are invited for the following position:

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Candidates should have the following qualifications: (a) appropriate academic qualifications and distinguished achievement in research and scholarship; (b) outstanding reputation and contribution as a teacher with a background in course administration; (c) demonstrated academic leadership in higher education; and (d) successful involvement in relevant professional and community activities. Experience in the management of an academic department would be an advantage.

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#### **Further Information and Application**

Further information concerning the post and the Polytechnic can be obtained from the Personnel Office, City Polytechnic of Hong Kong, Tai Chee Avenue, Kowloon, Hong Kong (Fax: 852-7881154 or 852-7889334 or by E-mail at [PORECRT@CPHKVX.CPHK.HK](mailto:PORECRT@CPHKVX.CPHK.HK)). Please send your application with a current curriculum vitae and the names and addresses of three academic referees at full Professor level to the Personnel Office by 31 December 1993.

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## BOOK NOTICES

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The *TESOL Quarterly* welcomes short evaluative reviews of print and nonprint publications relevant to TESOL professionals. Book notices may not exceed 500 words and must contain some discussion of the significance of the work in the context of current theory and practice in TESOL.

### ***Professional Books***

The books listed in these notices reflect some of the ways that literacy is being understood, discussed, and practiced by a variety of authors and practitioners in North America. Selections were included either because they were new and made important contributions to the field or because they have withstood the test of time. Although we were able to choose only a few, we hope that looking at these worthwhile books will help to start our dialogue.

**LOREN McGRAIL**, Guest Editor  
*World Education*

***Bringing Literacy to Life: Issues and Options in Adult ESL Literacy.*** Heide Spruck Wrigley and Gloria J. A. Guth. San Mateo, CA: Aguirre International, 1992. Pp. xvi + 301.

■ As the result of a 2-year research study funded by the Federal Department of Education, *Bringing Literacy to Life* reviews current thinking about and practice of adult ESL literacy. Presented in an accessible format, the text's combination of literature review, case studies, and teacher-developed curriculum modules make it a solid resource for adult ESL educators.

The volume emphasizes the social construction of literacy or literacy as a meaning-making process. The opening chapter helps to contextualized the more pragmatic elements of the book by exploring the history, definitions, and theoretical frameworks of the field. This chapter seems most valuable as a way into the conversation about literacy; more experienced literacy workers may not find the distillation of ideas challenging enough.

To their credit, the authors avoid a recipe approach to ESL literacy. Instead, they weave sections entitled Background and Reflection, alongside Practice into most of the chapters. Many of these nine chapters reflect pressing concerns of practitioners, including multilevel classes, assessment, native language literacy, and curriculum development. With a few exceptions, the curriculum modules provide some answers to the question, But how do you *do* it? Deidre Freeman's unit on housing is particularly clear and comprehensive as an illustration of a student-cen-



tered curriculum unit; Pat Rigg's contribution on environmental print shows that meaning-making activities need not be overly complex or fussy.

There are other practical uses of this volume. Administrators can cite the research and recommendations (sanctioned by the federal Department of Education) as a way to validate program design to funders, especially in the area of alternative assessment and nontraditional curriculum design.

**LENORE BALLIRO**

*Adult Literacy Resource Institute*

***Sociopolitical Aspects of ESL in Canada.*** Barbara Burnaby and Alister Cumming (Eds.). Toronto, Canada: OISE Press, 1992. pp. 329.

■ A short book notice could never do justice to the depth of critical analysis encompassed by this book's 21 articles on social-contextual aspects of ESL in Canada. Articles in the first section take a broad, macrolevel view of such diverse issues as official language training, sexism in language education, the failure of postsecondary language testing, and interestingly, Mayan resistance to power relations implicit in ESL pedagogy. Section 2 brings together analytical national surveys of changing demographics (immigrant women, immigrant/refugee children in Canadian schools), types of service provision (citizenship instruction), and frameworks for further analysis (immigrants in the labor force). The final section takes a closer, more detailed look; through case studies utilizing ethnographic and interview methods, authors illuminate the experiences of particular ethnic groups (IndoCanadian women, Latin American adults with limited education) and analyze the dynamics of specific interfactional contexts (cross-cultural interviews) or instructional contexts (rural, workplace).

Whereas the articles differ in terms of their ideological perspectives, taken together they illuminate a broad spectrum of issues, present a powerful critique of existing policies (or lack thereof), and make a strong case for structural, attitudinal, and policy changes to ensure more equitable and pluralistic ESL education in Canada. It is a valuable book for practitioners precisely because it does not focus primarily on what happens inside the classroom: It looks at learners' lives in the outside world and how ESL education does or does not meet their needs. One of the great strengths of the volume is its documentation of the systematic barriers to educational, occupational, and service accessibility (often based on ethnic and gender biases) and its call for equality of access. While the articles all focus on the Canadian context (and thus, the detailed statistical analysis may be somewhat cumbersome for non-Canadian readers), they provide models of the kinds of questions and frameworks which might well be applied to studies of other contexts. I look forward to the publication of a similar volume about the social context of ESL in the United States.

**ELSA AUERBACH**

*University of Massachusetts at Boston*

***Worlds of Literacy.*** David Barton, Mary Hamilton, and Roz Ivanic (Eds). Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters, in press.

■ Literacy is often regarded as context bound, leaving both practitioners and students with the pervasive impression of a varied literacy world. The editors and contributors to *Worlds of Literacy* acknowledge the contextualization of literacy but go beyond this widely held view to show the links and parallels between specific worlds.

The editors have done a tremendous job of arranging the various sections without losing the unity of the “signposted” themes and issues. The five sections are Bringing Together our Worlds of Literacy; Different Voices: Handling Multiplicities of Literacy; Constituting Identities; Choice and Change; and Collaboration and Resistance: Challenging Words. The worlds presented are dynamic rather than fixed, making it more difficult to define literacy. Brian Street captures this persistent dilemma in the field of literacy in his contribution, “Struggles with the Meaning(s) of Literacy,” by illuminating the dilemmas in navigating the definitional maze.

This collection presents the wide spectrum of literacy from the institutionalized, formal school system to the nonformal literacy/adult basic education system. Through the use of case studies, in addition to themes such as change and dilemmas in choices, various contributors discuss issues including bilingualism, multiculturalism, gender and literacy, consciousness-raising, ethics, feminism, native tongue literacy, motivators (“guiding lights”), distance education, the literacy world of children, and linkages (“positive correlations”) between literacy and social issues such as unemployment.

*Worlds of Literacy* provides a veritable panorama of the vibrant and varied nature of literacy. These well-documented articles link the worlds alluded to in the title, making this book a worthwhile addition to the field.

#### **ISHMAEL DOKU**

*Ontario Institute for Studies in Education*

***A Handbook for ESL literacy.*** Jill Bell and Barbara Burnaby. Toronto, Canada: OISE Press, 1984. Pp. 140.

■ Bell and Burnaby’s pathbreaking handbook has withstood the test of time. It was published at a point when the field was confronted by the need to provide ESL literacy to learners who had little previous education in their native countries and for whom regular ESL classes seemed inappropriate. The past 9 years have seen remarkable development in the field of ESL literacy; those of us working with adult nonnative speakers of English have come to take for granted the groundwork laid during the past decade.

The authors situate the need for ESL literacy, contextualizing who the learners are and what their range of needs and learning styles might be.

The book presents still-valid and useful information about reading and writing theory, ranges of approaches to working with adult learners, assessment, and integrating oral skills with literacy work. Writing in a “non-technical language . . . [that does] not presuppose any prior knowledge of the field” (p. 2) and without being condescending to their readers, the authors cover their subject matter clearly and coherently. These are people you want to come to your site to do in-service training. You want them to work with new teachers, to train volunteers, and you want to talk to them about questions and problems you are having in your classroom today.

The handbook is useful for people new to the field and provides a useful vehicle for reflection for others who have been working in literacy for any length of time. From their insightful views on the uses of reading and writing to very practical and demystifying lesson plan suggestions, the authors combine theory and practice seamlessly into a very accessible text. Implicit throughout the work is a respect for learners and their strengths and a commitment to helping practitioners work better with these learners. This valuable handbook is an essential resource for ESL literacy programs.

**JANET ISSERLIS**

*International Institute of Rhode Island*

***Cuentos de amor a Borinquen: Conversations with Puerto Rican Activists.*** Danielle Fauteux and Proyecto Cultural Morivivir. Boston, MA. 1991. Pp. 135. (Available from Boston Adult Literacy Fund, c/o Boston Public Library, 666 Boylston St., Boston, MA 02116)

■ *Cuentos* is a record of 11 interviews conducted by a group of Puerto Rican women in a Spanish literacy/ESL class at a housing project in Boston. As a result of their desire to reconnect and strengthen their ties with their homeland of Borinquen (the native Arawak name for the island), these women collectively raised the money, and seven were able to return to the island with their children. During their visit, they conducted interviews with activists from grassroots organizations throughout the island. These were then edited by Danielle Fauteux, the teacher at Proyecto Cultural Morivivir, where the idea of the project originated.

The strength of this book lies in the narratives of the activists talking about themselves and others. At least four of the groups that are featured focused on issues having to do with the contamination of the environment and its effect on the living conditions of the poor and working people of Puerto Rico. It is evident from the accounts in *Cuentos* that these women achieved their goal of gaining a deeper understanding of the issues that affect Puerto Ricans living on the island today. For the reader outside of their circle, however, the why and how of this collection are not so clear. It is also not clear what actual role the women played in conducting the

interviews, including who did the actual interviewing and who transcribed them. It would be valuable for ESL and adult basic education teachers to learn more about the role of these literacy activities in the process and to find out how the women implemented what they learned in the classroom while doing the project.

Giving more context to the text of the interviews can enhance works like this for audiences beyond the authors themselves. Even in manuscript form though, *Cuentos* is an important addition to the growing number of learner-generated materials available to the fields of native language and ESL literacy.

**MARIA E. GONZALEZ**

*Adult Literacy Resource Institute*

***Writing our Lives: Reflections on Dialogue Journal Writing with Adults Learning English.*** Joy Kreeft Peyton and Jana Staton, (Eds.). Washington, DC & Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Center for Applied Linguistics/Regents/Prentice Hall. 1991. Pp. 136.

■ This collection of pieces on using dialogue journals with adults is wonderfully practical. Almost every contributor actually teaches in an ESOL or adult basic education setting, so their reflections are based on the reality of the classrooms and their examples come from real exchanges with adults grappling with literacy and English.

This book is divided into five sections of unequal length: The first lays out the basic theoretical foundation and the basic methods; the second explores variations on the basic method of teacher and student writing to each other regularly; the third includes two articles on working with the newly literate (here called *semiliterate*—a term I find unintentionally pejorative); the fourth looks at dialogue journals in teacher education; and the last section comprises one chapter on the benefits of using these journals.

Some of the authors are well known to teachers in adult education for ESOL students. Jack Wigfield, who has taught huge classes of newly arrived ESOL students in San Francisco, addresses some of the questions asked by teachers new to journal writing. Smokey Wilson works with native-speaking adults in the U.S. whose language and literacy abilities have traditionally been devalued. He explores how audiotaped dialogue journals can be used as literature logs, developing self-esteem at the same time that they develop facility with reading. Loren McGrail, who now trains others in using the participatory approach, writes about using dialogue journals as beginning reading-thinking-discussion material.

I, too, have used dialogue journals for years, with a wide variety of students and with fellow teachers, always with good results. I highly recommend this excellent book about why and how to do the same.

**PAT RIGG**

*American Language and Literacy*

***A Handbook for Practitioners: ESL/Literacy for Adult Non-Native Speakers of English.*** Francine Filipek Collignon, Janet Isserlis, and Sara Smith. Providence, RI: International Institute of Rhode Island. 1991. Pp. 164.

■ I was glad to find that the *Handbook for Practitioners* was not just another how-to text for teachers; it is rather a compilation of materials on all aspects of Rhode Island International Institute's ESL/literacy program, including a discussion of the process that the authors went through in implementing the program. They report evenly about program successes and failures and discuss how hiring circumstances caused them to reshape the program design. They admit that the new program did not integrate as fully with the existing programs as they had hoped, and they hypothesize why. I hope they have started a trend that other administrators will follow by writing about their practices.

Another valuable aspect of this book is the section Collaboration, a title drawn from the writers' conviction that learning and teaching are collaborative endeavors—a philosophy they carry out in staff development activities as well as in the classroom. This section offers a variety of information on staff training at the institute. The action research theme is carried out in two dimensions: Samples of two teachers' writings about their practice are included within the framework of two of the authors' reflections on their own experiences. Also included is a one-page needs assessment for teachers interested in ESL literacy that can be used as a model for needs assessment around any tightly focused topic. Collaboration is essential reading for all those involved in staff development and/or volunteer training.

The handbook does include what one would expect from the title: a toolbox of methods and ideas for activities, an annotated bibliography of good materials, and an excellent section on evaluation—all coming from a participatory perspective. The handbook is long, which is one drawback, and it moves from topic to topic without clear transitions. But the book rewards the reader's effort.

**BARBARA GARNER**  
*World Education*

***Talking Shop: A Curriculum Sourcebook for Participator Adult ESL.*** Andrea Nash, Ann Cason, Madeline Rhum, Loren McGrail, and Rosario Gomez-Sanford. Washington, DC & McHenry, IL: Center for Applied Linguistics/Delta. 1992. Pp. 80.

■ *Talking Shop* is a valuable sampling of stories about shared learning of students and teachers alike. The common thread of taking time to learn from personal experiences to develop meaningful, participatory classrooms is explicitly expressed in this collection of anecdotal accounts. As

stated in the introduction, this sourcebook is not intended as “recipe-style instructions that can be implemented in other settings” (p. 2). Yet the authors have so clearly reflected on their reservations, surprises, successes, and disappointments that teachers could easily utilize these reflections within the context of their own classrooms.

Teachers’ accounts are organized into four categories: Getting Started, expressing feelings as a classroom survival skill; Immigrant Experiences, acknowledging respect for different cultures, points of view, and daily concerns as content for critical thinking literacy lessons; Mothers and Their Children, empowering parents to address family and education concerns as their literacy goals; and Redefining Learning and Teaching, reconceptualizing education and evaluation issues, connecting process writing with purpose, and avoiding opinions about the effectiveness of the classroom.

Each account follows the process of how themes that surfaced in class were developed into lessons and the learning that resulted. I was most impressed with the deep respect for language and culture that flowed throughout these reflections. The authors elaborate on their process of negotiated decision making concerning all aspects of learning (what languages are spoken in the classroom and when, validation of native languages as a means of communication, purpose of oral and written storytelling activities) while viewing communication as the ultimate goal.

This book serves its purpose well: to stimulate and guide teachers in examining their own thinking processes, thereby exploring new possibilities of growth for their students and themselves in language classrooms. The value of teachers being able to relinquish control and let the class direct itself is a worthwhile message.

**GLORIA WILLIAMS**

*Sunnyside UP (United with Parents) Family Literacy Program*



## **CALL FOR ABSTRACTS**

### **Qualitative Research in ESOL**

The *TESOL Quarterly* announces a call for abstracts for a special-topic issue on qualitative research. We are interested in including in this issue full-length, previously unpublished articles which represent exemplar qualitative studies that inform language policies, curriculum development, and/or teaching practices. Studies may focus on any of a variety of settings (e.g., community, classroom, school) and topics (e.g., oral/social interaction, literacy, equity issues). In addition, we encourage contributions from all geographic and language regions.

Although studies must exhibit a clear understanding of qualitative theory, contributions representing various methodological approaches are encouraged.

In addition to full-length articles, we are interested in short reports of either some aspect of a larger qualitative study or a qualitative theoretical or methodological issue.

At this stage, we are soliciting two-page abstracts for full-length articles and one-page abstracts for short reports. For all submissions, send three copies, a full mailing address, and daytime and evening telephone numbers (along with fax and e-mail information, if available).

Abstracts should be received at the address below no later than December 3, 1993.

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# INFORMATION FOR CONTRIBUTORS

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## EDITORIAL POLICY

The *TESOL Quarterly*, a professional, refereed journal, encourages submission of previously unpublished articles on topics of significance to individuals concerned with the teaching of English as a second or foreign language and of standard English as a second dialect. As a publication which represents a variety of cross-disciplinary interests, both theoretical and practical, the *Quarterly* invites manuscripts on a wide range of topics, especially in the following areas:

1. psychology and sociology of language learning and teaching; issues in research and research methodology
2. curriculum design and development; instructional methods, materials, and techniques
3. testing and evaluation
4. professional preparation
5. language planning
6. professional standards

Because the *Quarterly* is committed to publishing manuscripts that contribute to bridging theory and practice in our profession, it particularly welcomes submissions drawing on relevant research (e.g., in anthropology, applied and theoretical linguistics, communication, education, English education [including reading and writing theory], psycholinguistics, psychology, first and second language acquisition, sociolinguistics, and sociology) and that address implications and applications of this research to issues in our profession. The *Quarterly* prefers that all submissions be written so that their content is accessible to a broad readership, including those individuals who may not have familiarity with the subject matter addressed.

## GENERAL INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS

### Submission Categories

The *TESOL Quarterly* invites submissions in five categories:

**Full-length articles.** Manuscripts should generally be no longer than 20 double-spaced pages. Submit **three copies** plus three copies of an informative abstract of not more than 200 words. To facilitate the blind review process, authors' names should appear only on a cover sheet, not on the title page; do not use running heads. Manuscripts should be submitted to the incoming Editor of the *TESOL Quarterly*:

Sandra McKay  
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**Reviews.** The *TESOL Quarterly* invites reviews of textbooks, scholarly works related to the profession, tests, other instructional materials (such as computer software, videotaped materials, and other nonprint materials), and other journals concerned with issues relevant to our profession. Comparative reviews, which include a discussion of more than one publication, and review articles, which discuss materials in greater depth than in a typical review, are welcome. Reviews should generally be no longer than five double-spaced pages, although comparative reviews or review articles may be somewhat longer. Until further notice, submit **two copies** of reviews to the Review Editor of the *TESOL Quarterly*:

H. Douglas Brown  
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Graham Crookes and Kathryn A. Davis  
Department of English as a  
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University of Hawaii at Manoa  
1890 East-West Road  
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**Research Issues:**

Anne Lazaraton  
Department of Speech  
Communication  
234 Sparks Building  
The Pennsylvania State  
University  
State College, PA 16802

**Teaching Issues:**

Bonny Norton Peirce  
Academic Support Programme  
University of the Witwatersrand  
Private Bag 3  
WITS 2050  
Johannesburg, South Africa

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Because of the educational role the *Quarterly* plays modeling research in the field, it is of particular concern that published research articles meet high statistical standards. In order to support this goal, the following guidelines are provided.

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1. A clear statement of the research questions and the hypotheses which are being examined
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9. Tests of the assumptions of any statistical tests, when appropriate
10. Realistic interpretations of the statistical significance of the results, keeping in mind that the meaningfulness of the results is a separate and important issue, especially for correlation

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**Interpreting the results.** The results should be explained clearly and the implications discussed such that readers without extensive training in the use of statistics can understand them. Care should be taken in making causal inferences from statistical results, and these should be avoided with correlational studies. Results of the study should not be overinterpreted or overgeneralized. Finally, alternative explanations of the results should be discussed.

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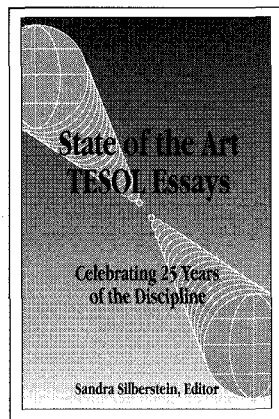
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