



MCAEL

Montgomery Coalition for

Adult English Literacy

TEACHER TOOLKIT

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TEACHER

TOOLKIT


Produced by the Montgomery Coalition for Adult English Literacy (MCAEL)

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Introduction



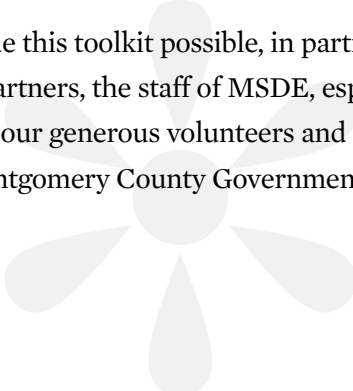
The Montgomery Coalition for Adult English Literacy (MCAEL) is a vibrant network of adult English language and literacy providers in Montgomery County, Maryland, who collectively help over 20,000 adult learners annually to improve their English literacy and workforce skills. Founded in 2006, MCAEL is part of a national movement of literacy coalitions and was formed to bring a community-wide, collaborative focus to building awareness and infrastructure to support adult English language learning in Montgomery County, Maryland.

MCAEL's mission is to strengthen the county-wide adult English literacy network with resources, training, collaboration and advocacy to support a thriving community and an optimal workforce. Our vision is a community where all adult residents are employable, engaged, and empowered by literacy to achieve their full potential, and where all local businesses have access to an English literate workforce. To achieve this vision, MCAEL focuses on building capacity, leveraging resources, and promoting English-language learning and literacy as key to creating a just, vibrant and equitable community.

In 2006, MCAEL was awarded a three-year Presidents Grant from the Comcast Foundation, focused on building the capacity of community based providers of adult ESOL through instructor training and the development of an outcomes and assessment framework.

Our experience offering trainings brought to light the critical need for a simple reference toolkit for the passionate and dedicated professionals and volunteers who provide instruction to adult English language learners in Montgomery County. We offer our deepest gratitude to the many instructors who bring skills, hope, and opportunity to adult learners each and every day.

MCAEL also wishes to thank those who made this toolkit possible, in particular Christian Clausen, Melissa Zervos, our provider partners, the staff of MSDE, especially Patricia Bennett and Karen Lisch Gianninoto, and our generous volunteers and donors, in particular the Comcast Foundation and the Montgomery County Government.



Introduction From the Author

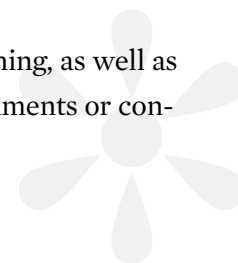
MCAEL funds a varied group of organizations, both large and small. The teachers and tutors who work and volunteer for these organizations also have diverse backgrounds and experiences. Some of them are trained and certified language teachers, while others have only the training provided to them by the program for which they work and perhaps also gained through workshops presented by MCAEL. This document is primarily designed as a reference for those beginner and untrained teachers in the MCAEL system. If you fall into that category, it will provide a convenient reference to some of the basic concepts in teaching adult English language learners. However, I also hope it will also be useful to more experienced instructors who want to review their knowledge or sharpen their skills in some area. If you fall into that group, the various bibliographies should provide useful references to help you pursue your own professional development.

The manual is made up of ten chapters, plus the introduction and this forward. Each chapter is designed as a short introduction to some important aspect of second-language teaching practice. As such, it introduces some of the basic concepts without going into very much detail. However, each section also has a bibliography of print-based and online resources that discuss the relevant concept in more detail. Please investigate these references if you want to pursue more in-depth knowledge in that particular subject area.

The manual concludes with a bibliography that provides information about books and websites that you can refer to in order to further your professional development. The bibliography also includes links for several sources of online training in adult ESOL and related topics. It concludes with useful contact information for local and national professional organizations.

Finally, there are appendices that contain useful forms for lesson planning, unit planning, needs assessment, etc., as well as lesson examples.

I hope that this document will be a useful reference for your teaching, as well as lead you deeper into further areas of investigation. If you have any comments or concerns, please contact me by e-mail at chrivika@yahoo.com.



The Adult Learner

AS A TEACHER, the first problem that you will need to address is your general philosophy of language teaching. When beginning as an instructor or tutor, many volunteers and untrained teachers hearken back to their own early educational experiences and teach their students in the way they themselves learned as children. However, this can be a mistake, as working with adult learners is substantially different from working with children.

In recent years, some research has been done related to adult learners and the most effective methods of teaching them. For a review of recent relevant Language Acquisition research, see Moss & Ross-Feldman (2003). Malcolm Knowles and his theory of “andragogy” (as opposed to pedagogy, the teaching of children) has been very influential in the recent discussion about how adults should be most effectively taught.

According to Florez & Burt (2001):

Malcolm Knowles’ principles of andragogy, the art and science of facilitating adult learning, are still seminal to many of today’s theories about learning and instruction for adults.

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

In general, this picture of the practical, purposeful, self-directed learner is representative of adults, whether they are native or nonnative English speakers. All adult learners need adult-appropriate content, materials, and activities that speak to their needs and interests and allow them to demonstrate their knowledge and abilities.

The implications for the classroom are that adult learners learn more effectively when they feel that the teaching is responsive to their immediate or long term needs. In general, they are not highly motivated by external factors, such as the need to attain a high grade to pass the course. Instead, they want practical infor-

mation. Therefore, if the learners do not feel the information that they are learning is of use to them, they will abandon the class. Hence, the high attrition rates often seen in adult education classrooms.¹ In order to retain adult learners, it is crucial for the teacher to know what his/her learner’s needs are and respond to them in planning lessons for the course (Moss & Ross-Feldman, 2003).

The literature additionally suggests that adults will be more motivated, and more successful at learning, when they have some say in what they are being taught. Therefore, it is frequently recommended that teachers of adults follow a *learner-centered* model of instruction, which is to say that the teacher should identify the learners’ needs and interests in learning and incorporate these into his or her lesson planning, and allow the learners to learn from each other as much as, or even more than, the teacher. The instructor should see him- or herself as a partner in the students’ learning process, rather than as an absolute authority, and the curriculum should be developed as a collaboration between the learner and the teacher.

Also, adults usually bring a wealth of personal experience to the classroom that younger learners do not have. This brings both advantages and disadvantages. The advantages are that adult learners already possess the knowledge of how to learn, in many cases how to behave in the classroom, and have some ability to self-discipline. The disadvantage is that they may have pre-conceived notions about education that may run counter to the teacher’s own teaching methods.

Even though learners may be more accustomed to a teacher-centered classroom, a learner-centered class is generally recommended. This includes activities such as pair- and group-work, as they allow the adults to take more responsibility for their own learning and incorporate the teachers as partners, rather than authorities. Project-based learning is also often recommended, as it allows adults to pursue their own interests during the process of studying English. Furthermore, authentic material should be incorporated wherever possible, as this material relates more directly to the adult learner’s daily lives (more on this topic in later chapters).

It may be difficult for you to convince your learners to accept a learner-centered teaching style if they are conditioned to a traditional, teacher-centered one

1. In my experience, attrition rates of 40-50% or even more are not unusual for adult ESOL classes.

(Florez & Burt, 2001). However, it is important for you to try. Both research and practical experience have shown that this is the best method of teaching adults.

FURTHER READING

Online

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CHAPTER 2

Learner Needs Assessment

GIVEN A LEARNER-CENTERED model, it should be clear that needs assessment is a key feature of planning for teaching adults, whether in a classroom or tutoring situation. Needs assessment is the process by which the teacher determines the various needs of his or her learners in order to develop a curriculum that is responsive to them. Such needs can include such factors as learning, social needs, and learning styles (Peck 1991).

However, assessing the needs of your adult learners may have some difficulties. According to Grant & Shank:

Effective needs assessment is vital because adult ESL learners who feel they are not learning what they need to know in English class are more likely to drop-out than to express their discontent. Eliciting need assessment information from Limited English Proficient (LEP) adults and applying that information to course planning presents a challenge. Traditional questionnaires ... may not be appropriate or effective for all learners, particularly those with limited literacy skills. In addition, the concept of participating in instructional goal-setting can be strange to adults from other cultural

backgrounds where learners expect the teacher to set the course objectives.

Often, when you ask your learners what they want to achieve in your class, they will respond that they want to “improve their English”, however this goal is so vague as to be almost meaningless. The learners’ needs must be clarified. Obviously, the first step of being responsive to a learner’s needs is understanding what those needs are (Weddel & Van Duzer 1997).

You will find it most effective to assess your learners’ needs early. Doing needs assessment in early lessons or first meetings will help foster the feeling that you, the teacher, and your learners are collaborators in the learning process. As discussed in the previous chapter, it is important to give adult learners the feeling that they are in control of their own learning and that what they are learning is relevant to their needs. It will also give you a basis for planning future lessons.

Peck (1991) gives a list of information that it would be useful to know about your students which includes the following (p. 364):

- * *Preference for learning alone, in small groups, or in large groups*
- * *Ear/eye preference*
- * *Preference for observation vs. participation*
- * *Use of language analysis, rules, and explanations*
- * *Preference for immersion*
- * *Use of translation*
- * *Use of visuals*
- * *Uses of rote learning*

This is a long and diverse list, and one tool won't be enough to assess all, or even many, of these factors. It may be necessary to use multiple instruments. Fortunately, there are a large number of tools that you, as the teacher, can use for such purposes. A few common ones include:

- **Written assignments** such as compositions, reports, narratives, etc.
- **Skills checklists** Lists of skills in which the learners indicate the particular skills that they want to work on.
- **Picture assessments** The learners circle or point to pictures which show the areas of language on which they wish to work.
- **Inventories of language use** The learners write about the places and situations where they have trouble with using English.
- **Questionnaires**
- **Sentence starters** The students are provided with short prompts, which allow them to write sentences indicating the topics that they wish to work on.
- **Interviews** These can be done teacher-student, student-student, or among the whole class as a group discussion.
- **Informal Observations**

Keep in mind that there are unlimited numbers of tools for needs assessment, not just the handful that I listed above. Sometimes I assess my learners' needs by merely having them make a list of objectives on the back of an index card, and I have found this to be quite successful.

If you reflect on the previous list, you will realize that some tools are more appropriate for beginner learners, some are more appropriate for advanced learners, etc. Of course, there is no rule against doing the needs assessment in the learner's native language, if that is possible, given your resources. Whichever tools you use, the result should be a list of clear, obtainable objectives that your students can achieve in the course of their studying English. Both you and your learners should be in agreement about these objectives.

As you will see in future chapters, it will be important to regularly re-visit the objectives with your learners to demonstrate how much progress they have made. Also, keep in mind that needs assessment is an ongoing process. As a student learns more and his or her life situation changes, his or her goals will also change. Therefore, his or her needs should be re-assessed periodically.

FURTHER READING

Online

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Second Language Acquisition

IN THE 19TH and early 20th centuries, language teaching was based on the model of translating classical Greek and Latin texts, and was not really based on any theory of how language was learned. However, in the 20th century, linguists have begun to focus studies on how languages are learned and especially on the similarities and differences between how adults learn second languages and children learn their first one. In the first part of the 20th century, the main model was behaviorism, which viewed language use as a learned behavior. However, more recently, linguists have focused on the skills that users need to communicate using language, known as “communicative competence” (Lightbown & Spada 2006).

With the shift in scientific models has come a shift in language teaching methodology. The work of Steven Krashen has been very influential in providing a theoretical basis for many modern language teaching approaches, starting with his own *Natural Approach* to language teaching. Krashen’s language theory is known as the “Monitor Model”. According to Lightbown & Spada (2006) “[his] ideas were very influential during a period when second language teaching was in a transition from approaches that emphasized learning rules or memorizing dialogues to approaches that emphasized using language with a focus on meaning (p. 38)”.

On of the most influential aspects of Krashen’s theory has been his differentiation between *language learning* and *language acquisition*. In his view, *language learning* is the process of formally learning a language through studying grammar, word lists, translations, etc. *Language acquisition* is a largely unconscious process through which learners gain the ability to actually communicate in the second language, in much the same way a person gains his first language. Interestingly, some years ago, what Krashen calls “language learning” was regarded as the entire process of second language education. However, in his view, “learning” is nearly useless for actually gaining communicative ability in the second language. Instead, the ability to communicate is acquired by the student being exposed to a level of language just above what the student is already able to understand (Krashen calls this “L+1”, with L being the current ability level of the student in the second language) (Krashen, 1982).

Many modern language-teaching techniques take these ideas into account in that they see language learning as a process of unconscious acquisition rather than conscious memorization of rules and formulas. However,

Krashen’s model emphasizes receptive skills. On the other hand, contemporary communicative approaches emphasize the productive process by which two (or more) learners communicate in the target language thorough trial and error (see *Focus on Basics*, 2005) rather than the receptive process that Krashen emphasizes in his work.

Krashen’s biggest contribution to modern communicative language teaching is to recommend that learners be active participants in their own language learning, rather than passively memorizing rules and repeating dialogs. This idea dovetails well with recent thought about how adults can best be taught (as discussed earlier). Also, such models tend to focus on communicative competency, rather than formal learning of structures. In fact, many versions of Communicative Language teaching do not include explicit teaching of grammar at all. Instead, they set up activities where learners work together to create meaning in cooperative activities (see the section on **Communicative Language Teaching**, p. 10 for more on this). This “negotiation of meaning” is the way by which they gain ability and make progress in their second language.

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Online

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Coté, R. A. (2004). *Adult Second Language Acquisition in Negative Environments*. Available from: [http://www.u.arizona.edu/~rcote/SPH541/Adult Second Language Acquisition in Negative Environments.pdf](http://www.u.arizona.edu/~rcote/SPH541/Adult%20Second%20Language%20Acquisition%20in%20Negative%20Environments.pdf)

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Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching, 2nd ed.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lightbown, P. M. & Spada, N. (2006). *How Languages Are Learned, 3rd ed.* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Teaching the Four Skills

THE ABILITY TO use a language in a communicative way, however, is not just a single unified skill. Most recent thinking has divided language ability into four separate skill areas; *listening, reading, speaking, and writing*. Listening and reading are known as the *receptive skills*; while speaking and writing are known as the *productive skills*.

According to SIL International (1999). The four basic skills are related to each other by two parameters:

the mode of communication: oral or written

the direction of communication: receiving or producing the message

SIL's webpage further represents the skills using the chart reproduced below:

	Oral	Written
Receptive	Listening	Reading
Productive	Speaking	Writing

Most teachers try to incorporate all four skill areas into their planning, though some classes may focus more on one set of skills or the other, due to the course and learner objectives (Oxford, 2001).

When learning new language material, the order of acquisition is generally this, for both second language learners and children learning their first language:

Listening: The learner hears a new item (sound, word, grammar feature, etc.)

Speaking: The learner tries to repeat the new item.

Reading: The learner sees the new item in written form.

Writing: The learner reproduces the written form of the item.

When you are planning to present a new teaching item (sound, grammar point, vocabulary word, etc.) keep the order of acquisition in mind. It is best to expose the learners to the item in that same order, so that they are exposed to it as a listener before they are called on to use it as a speaker, and that they hear it before they see it in text. In this way, the order of learning a second language is similar to the way a child learns his or her first language. He/she will be able to understand the new item for quite a while before he/she is able to produce it and use it in communication (Laubach Literacy Action, 1996).

In technical terms, the difference between being able to understand an item and being able to produce it is known as *passive* versus *active knowledge*. So it is important to

expose learners to a large amount of material using the new item before they are able to actually employ it in communication. Even though it is not apparent, your learners will be absorbing the new items on an unconscious level.

Consequently, you should expect that the learners will go through a period of being exposed to new language and internalizing it before they can produce. They will be able to understand, but will not be able to produce. It is because of this so-called “silent period” that many recent approaches to language teaching are “comprehension-based”. This means that the instructor presents material that does not require the students to respond verbally, but rather allows them to show comprehension without having to actually produce speech in the target language (Larsen-Feeman, D. 2000).

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Laubach Literacy Action (1996). *Teaching Adults: An ESL resource book*. Syracuse, NY: New Reader's Press.

Larsen-Feeman, Diane. (2000). *Techniques and Principals in Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nunan, D. ed. (2003). *Practical English Language Teaching*. New York: McGraw-Hill

Activities

Teach English in Asia — ESL and English Games and Activities Directory. <http://www.teachenglishinasia.net/tefl-tesl-games-and-activities-directory>

EFL/ESL Lessons and Lesson Plans from The Internet TESL Journal: <http://iteslj.org/Lessons>

Lesson Planning

IN ORDER TO improve your learners' four skills of listening, reading, writing, and speaking, and to meet their learning objectives, you should present the material in a structured, pre-determined fashion. This is commonly known as a "lesson plan." A well-structured lesson plan will help your learners to build on their previous learning to achieve the goals that they have set at the beginning of the learning process.

There are many different lesson-planning formats available, but a majority of them follow the basic five-part structure of *warm-up, presentation, practice, evaluation, and extension*, with some variation. Here are the definitions of the various stages (Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Centers, 1998):

Warm-up: Reviews the material and helps to connect the new material to the learner's previous knowledge.

Presentation: Presents the new material in some form.

Practice: Allows the learners to practice the new material in a structured setting.

Evaluation: Assess the learners to see if they have properly learned the new material.

Extension: Allows the learners to use the new material in a less-structured format, often relating it to their own lives.

Of course, this rough, five-part format is flexible. For example, the lesson might call for several different practice activities before the evaluation. Or, if during the evaluation activity, it becomes obvious that the learners haven't understood the material, it may be necessary to go back and present it in another way. There are also some variations on this format. The EL/Civics Online Lesson Planning Tutorial divides the first stage into "Purpose" and "Engagement", where engagement draws parallels with the lesson topic and the learners' own life experiences (Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2006). The REEP Adult ESL Curriculum includes a "Reflection" stage at the end of the lesson (Arlington Education and Employment Program, 2003), etc. *The ESL Starter Kit* (Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Centers, 1998) gives a variety of lesson planning formats in addition to the five-stage system above.

Another factor to take into account in lesson planning is the degree of choice that learners have in how they respond to the activity. All activities fall into a range between guided and free activities. On the guided end of the spectrum, the learners have few choices in how they respond, and there is often

a definite right and wrong answer (as in a drill). On the free end of the spectrum, the learners might have a nearly infinite choice of how to respond (as in a role-play activity). Generally, as you move through the course of the lesson, the activities should move from the guided to the free end of the spectrum.

Whatever format you follow, whether it is the above one or some other, and however much detail you provide, it is important to have some kind of structure in which to present your material. The plan should be made with the student's objectives in mind, and with the aim of helping your students to achieve these objectives. This is key to helping your students to have a valuable learning experience.

FURTHER READING

Online

U.S. Department of Education/Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) & the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services/Office of Citizenship (USCIS). *EL/Civics Online: Lesson Planning Tutorial*. Retrieved 04/2008 from <http://www.elcivicsonline.org/course/history/31>

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Hubbard, P. et. Al. (1983). *A Training Course for TEFL*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Laubach Literacy Action (1996). *Teaching Adults: An ESL Resource Book*. Syracuse, NY: New Reader's Press.

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For several examples of lesson planning forms, see **Appendix B, pg. 24**

Communicative Language Teaching

AS DISCUSSED EARLIER, modern applied linguistics has focused on a speaker's "communicative competency." In other words, it looks at how well the speaker can use the language to communicate in various situations. A growing body of research shows the way learners gradually improve their abilities by attempting to use the target language to successfully communicate. As they gain practice in making successful communications in the target language, their ability to do this in future gets better and better, slowly approaching the skill of a native speaker (Moss, 2005).

The linguistic concept of *communicative competence* has been mirrored by a change of emphasis in language teaching (see Moss, 2005 for more information). For this reason, modern language teaching approaches, such as the *Communicative Approach*, have focused on improving the learner's ability to communicate in the target language.

According to Galloway (1993):

The communicative approach could be said to be the product of educators and linguists who had grown dissatisfied with the audiolingual and grammar-translation methods of foreign language instruction. They felt that students were not learning enough realistic, whole language. They did not know how to communicate using appropriate social language, gestures, or expressions; in brief, they were at a loss to communicate in the culture of the language studied.

In order to do this, the activities that learners perform in the classroom have been changed to more resemble activities that the students will actually be called on to perform in their daily lives. Therefore, the use of "communicative activities" has become increasingly prominent.

Communicative activities try to get students to talk in ways that approximate the way they will actually have to use the language outside of the classroom (Galloway, 1993). Many of these activities depend on one student having information that the second student doesn't have. The first student has to get the information from the second student by using English, to the best of his or her ability (Moss, 2005). The process by which the students work together to communicate that information is where language is learned, or more specifically, *acquired*. It is the role of the teacher to set up and manage the activity, but the students actually help one another to learn. "The teacher's role is primarily to facilitate communication and only

secondarily to correct errors" (Celce-Murcia, 1991, p. 8).

There are several features that make an activity communicative, including *meaningful communication*, *information gap*, *choice* and *feedback*. *Meaningful communication* means that there is an actual purpose for the learners to communicate in the target language, *information gap* means that one learner has a piece of information that the other one doesn't. *Choice* means that the learner has a choice of how to communicate, and *feedback* means that the learner receives some response as to whether or not he/she has successfully communicated.

For example, two learners might have copies of maps, each with different locations on the map labeled. By giving each other directions, the learners find the names of the unlabeled buildings on their own map (without looking at each other's maps). Once they have labeled the unlabeled buildings, the learners are allowed to look at each other's maps to see if they have marked them correctly. In this example, the meaningful communication is giving street directions; the information gap is that the learners each know the names of different buildings on the map. The learners can use any means that they have available to communicate with each other, and when they see each other's maps, they will know if they have successfully communicated (See appendix C). The features of this communicative example are present to a greater or lesser degree in every communicative activity.

Some other common types of communicative activities include:

- * Conversation grids
- * Questionnaires
- * Games
- * Information gap activities
- * Problem-solving activities
- * Discussion
- * Role-plays

(See Moss, November, 2005)

Setting up a successful communicative activity requires a great deal of planning and preparation on the part of the instructor. First, and most importantly, the teacher must make sure that the learners already have the appropriate vocabulary with which to complete the activity. These activities often break down because the learners don't have the required language. Then, the teacher must make sure that the learners don't look at each other's information,

because if that happens, meaningful communication will no longer be taking place (Moss, 2005).

It is often a problem that some learners don't see this type of activity as a learning activity, since they tend to resemble games. This may run counter to the learner's expectations of what learning and teaching are like. However, as the teacher, you should make some effort to convince the learners of the usefulness of communicative learning, as these types of activities can be some of the most powerful language learning tools.

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ESL speaking activities: communicative activities for oral fluency <http://www.eslgo.com/resources/sa.html>

Games & Activities for the ESL/EFL Classroom — A Project of The Internet TESL Journal: <http://iteslj.org/c/games.html>

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CHAPTER 7

Using Teaching Aids

BESIDES THE TEXTBOOK and associated workbooks, there are a wide variety of teaching aids available to the language teacher. You should consider employing a range of these in your own teaching. One of the most commonly used teaching aids is the blackboard or white board. Besides this, you will find visual aids such as flash cards, postcards, and magazine photos very useful. Finally, many recent methods of teaching have focused on the use of *authentic material*.

While the blackboard is probably the most commonly used visual aid and most teachers would find teaching without one to be a challenge, it is also the case that teachers frequently do not adequately consider how to present material on the board. It is generally considered a good practice to list the lesson's objectives on the board and leave them up throughout the session, for the students to refer to. It is also helpful to leave a running list of vocabulary on one part of the board. The central part of the board can be used for examples, charts,

drawings, etc., which will generally only be left up for one part of the lesson (Hubbard, P. et. Al., 1983).

Also consider the range of *visual aids* that might help you with your teaching. Photos from magazines, postcards, books, etc can be very useful for teaching if chosen carefully. Many teachers find it useful to collect a file of these materials for easy access. These can be used for discussion, illustrating grammar points, description, for the basis of role-plays, etc (see Wright, 1989 for a book-length discussion of a range of possible visual aids that might be used in the language classroom).

Various types of *flash cards* are also useful for teaching activities. Flash cards generally have words, pictures, or a combination of the two. There are commercially available cards, cards that can be made by cutting pictures from magazines, etc., or the teacher can make them him/herself with drawings and writing. They can be used for a wide variety of activities, from drills to matching activities, to different communicative activities.

As discussed in previous chapters, many modern methods of teaching have emphasized communicative competency, the ability to communicate in the target language. *Authentic materials* are very useful for this purpose. What makes a piece of material “authentic” is the fact that it is designed to be used by a native speaker, not by a language learner seeking to learn a second language. Any document that is intended for a native speaker can be used authentically in a language-learning lesson. Some common items include newspapers, job application forms, envelopes, medicine labels, etc. These materials are sometimes also known as “realia” and, according to Berwald (1987, p 3):

Realia refers to real objects, not copies, models, or representations—from a particular culture [and]...are designed for use in real-life situations, not for use as instructional tools...Although not designed for instructional use, realia and other authentic materials... provide a wide range of printed and spoken messages that can be used as primary or secondary material in a...language classroom.

No matter what the source, the important thing is that they be actual items used by native speakers in a real context. The advantage of using these items is that they present language realistically, as it is used, and help the learners develop the actual skills that they need to function in a real environment.

For example, when teaching a unit on how to find a job, you might use the classified section of a newspaper. Once you have taught the learners key vocabulary, you might have the learners work in small groups to find an appropriate job for one of the students in the group using the classified listings. After that, you might have the learners report to the class on which job they chose for each learner and why they feel the student’s skills, experiences, and talents suit them for that job.

Holt (1995) provides the following “basic kit” of teaching aids, including objects, games, and materials.

1. **Realia:** clocks, food items, calendars, plastic fruits and vegetables, maps, household objects, real and play money, food containers, abacus, manual for learning to drive, and classroom objects;
2. **Flash cards:** pictures, words, and signs;
3. **Pictures or photographs:** personal, magazine, and others;
4. **Tape recorder** and cassette tapes, including music for imagery and relaxation;
5. **Overhead projector,** transparencies, and pens; video player and videos;
6. **Pocket chart** for numbers, letters, and pictures;
7. **Alphabet sets;**

8. **Camera** for language experience stories to create biographies and autobiographies;

9. **Games** such as bingo and concentration: commercial or teacher-made;

10. **Colored index cards** to teach word order in sentences, to show when speakers change in dialogue, to illustrate question/answer format, and to use as cues for a concentration game;

11. **Cuisenaire rods** to teach word order in sentences, to use as manipulatives in dyad activities, and to teach adjectives;

12. **Colored chalk** to teach word order, to differentiate between speakers in a dialogue, and to illustrate question and answer format;

When working with adult learners, even if you use a textbook, you should consider a range of teaching aids to supplement the work from the text. This range will help you to address the varying learning styles and modalities of the learners and also, especially in the case of authentic material, help prepare them for communication in the real world.

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Testing and Assessment

LEARNERS COMMONLY FIRST encounter tests when they register for classes. At that time, they are often given a placement test to determine in which level class they should be enrolled. Once they are enrolled, they may be periodically given progress tests to determine the learning gains that they have made. At the end of the term, semester, or year, they are often given an achievement test to determine how well they have learned the class material and if they are ready to move on to the next level of instruction (Harmer, 2007). Furthermore, the instructor may also administer less formal assessments throughout the term to determine how well his or her learners are picking up the material presented in class.

Testing results can also serve purposes other than the reasons mentioned above. “Learner assessment is conducted ... for many reasons—to place learners in appropriate instructional levels, to measure their ongoing progress, to qualify them to enroll in academic or job training programs, to verify program effectiveness, and to demonstrate learner gains in order to justify continued funding for a program” (Burt and Keenan, 1995). There can be many different types of assessments to serve these ends, but they generally can be divided into two categories: formal, standard assessments and informal assessments developed by the teacher.

Formal assessments are often commercially available standardized tests that are developed by a commercial testing organization or sometimes by the program itself. Most commonly, they are used to place learners, determine if learners are eligible to move to the next level of instruction, and to provide data for program funders. The specific assessment used is often mandated by the program or by funders. Some commonly used examples are:

The Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (**CASAS**): A multiple-choice competency-based test that assesses primarily listening and reading skills.

BEST: An assessment that measures both literacy and listening/speaking skills. The oral assessment section is interview-based.

English as a Second Language Oral Assessment (**ESLOA**): An interview-based oral assessment test.

(Burt and Keenan, 1995).

These tests often divide the learners into levels based on the NRS (National Reporting System) guidelines, which provide six learning levels. Recent commercially available textbooks often correlate their chapters to one or more of

the commonly available standardized tests.

Although standardized tests present concrete, quantifiable data, they have several disadvantages. It is often the case that the skills measured by the standardized tests are not congruent with the learners’ goals in taking the classes. It is also often a problem that the tests only assess one aspect of the learner’s language development and try to generalize the results to all four skills. Despite the problems that standard tests create, it is often necessary for the tutor or teacher to be familiar with the standards that the tests measure in order for the students to show progress on the test. On the other hand, care should be taken that passing the test does not become the sole purpose of the instruction (“teaching to the test”).

Informal assessments are usually developed by the teacher, and can be graded more subjectively than the standardized tests. Informal assessments serve to demonstrate to both the learner and the instructor how much of the material the learner has learned. As such, they are valuable guides to learner progress and can enhance motivation. Besides the obvious written tests, there are a huge number of activities that can be used for informal assessment. Here are a few common examples (Van Duzer & Berdan, 1999):

Project-based assignments in which the learners are asked to complete some kind of task, for example, a multi-media presentation. Such tasks are commonly assigned to groups of learners in a cooperative-learning type situation.

Written assignments such as compositions, reports, narratives, etc.

Oral presentations, which the learner often gives in front of the class. These presentations are frequently assessed by the other learners in addition to, or instead of, the teacher.

Portfolios, various examples of the learners’ work which are collected periodically and show the learners’ progress over time.

These assessments are often graded based upon a rubric, which rates the learner based upon different categories, for example an oral presentation might be rated based upon categories such as fluency, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, use of appropriate vocabulary, how well the learner fulfilled the terms of the assignment, etc.

It is important that the learner be regularly assessed, to give both the teacher and the learner an

idea of the progress that they are making. A common practice is to give the learners a standard assessment at both the beginning and ending of each class term, to ensure that they have been placed in the proper level and to provide data to report to the funder. Meanwhile, the teacher gives informal assessments periodically throughout the term to measure gains and ensure that their learners are learning the material. "Assessment is an ongoing process, and no single test can do it all. Adult instructors and learners should use a variety of assessments to determine learning needs, demonstrate progress, and guide instruction" (Office of Vocational and Adult Education 2006).

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Web pages related to specific assessments:

BEST Literacy test

<http://www.cal.org/topics/ta/bestliteracy.html>

CASAS test <https://www.casas.org>

ESLOA test <http://www.newreaderspress.com/Items.aspx?hierId=4090>

Information about the National Reporting Standards (NRS)

<http://www.nrsweb.org>

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Working with Multilevel Classes

ONE OF THE greatest challenges faced by both novice and experienced teachers alike is working with classes of mixed ability levels. However, just about any group of learners is mixed to some extent. Either they have different skill levels, they learn at different speeds, or their motivation to learn varies. In programs with limited resources, this problem can be compounded by the need to serve a large group of learners or by the practice of putting learners of different ability levels in the same class (Shank & Terrill, 1995).

Many teachers simply try to “teach to the middle” in this kind of situation. This solution is rarely satisfactory because it is difficult to keep the more advanced level learners engaged, while not losing the lower-level learners. All too often, the result of teaching to some middle level is that the teacher winds up losing a good percentage of his/her class, sometimes with disastrous results (Saldana, 2005).

However, there are a number of strategies that a teacher can employ in such a situation. It is important to know your learners and their relative levels to decide which strategies to use and how to proceed with them. It may be very useful to come up with a list of students and their relative levels to decide how to group them. For example, you may have an “A” group of learners at the highest level, a “B” group of learners at the middle level, and a “C” group of learners who are at the lowest level. This list will prove useful when you divide your learners into groups to do activities, particularly if you have a large class.

It is also important to consider learners’ various ability levels while planning your lesson and to adapt the activities to appropriate levels of difficulty. Often the best way to approach this is to use the same basic material as a source and adapt the related activities to several levels so that each student is doing an assignment appropriate to his or her level. This practice is often known as “differentiated instruction” (Saldana, 2005). “Teachers can use a variety of techniques and grouping strategies and a selection of self-access materials to help all learners be successful, comfortable, and productive for at least a portion of each class time” (Shank & Terrill, 1995).

Having the learners work as a **whole class** will be useful for warm ups, wrap-ups, and large projects. It is also often an effective strategy to present new material to the entire class before breaking them into smaller groups to complete follow-on assignments (Shank & Terrill, 1995).

Small groups may be the most useful configuration in working with mixed-ability classes. There are several different grouping strategies that you can employ. The first is to place the learners into mixed-level groups and give each group a different project or assignment to complete. Your learners can be strategically placed in groups so that they have complimentary skills and levels, as is often done in cooperative learning. At the end of the assignment, each group should report back to the class on their completed project.

Another way to organize groups is to divide the students by level and then, using the same source material, give each group a different assignment appropriate to their level. For example, if the material is a video, a lower level group might be asked simple true/false questions about the content. The middle level group might be assigned to answer questions that require longer, more involved answers. Finally, the advanced group might be given more open-ended discussion questions to answer. The important thing is to meet each learner in his or her area of need (Hubbard, 1983).

Having **pairs of learners** work together is advantageous in that it gives each learner the maximum opportunity to practice using his or her English in a communicative way (Shank & Terrill, 1995). Like group work, the pairs can be either equal or mixed in terms of ability level. Like levels should have interchangeable roles, as in an information gap activity. Mixed levels work best when the higher-level student has a tutoring role.

For a more individualized approach, you can assign each learner a reading, for example, and come up with a set of tasks in ascending order of difficulty, from simple true/false questions to complicated discussions that involve interpretations or presenting and defending a point of view. These tasks can be printed out on pre-prepared index cards. The students should be given a set amount of time to finish the activity. As they finish each task, they can be given the next card with the task at the next level of difficulty. In that way, the more advanced learners will quickly complete the lower-level tasks (which will also serve as a warm-up) and move on to the higher ones, while the lower-level learners will have the time that they need to complete the tasks which are appropriate to them (Hubbard et. Al., 1983).

As you can see, mixed level groups require a great deal of thoughtful planning on the part of the teacher. However, the problem can be overcome to provide a satisfying learning experience for the students at all levels.

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CHAPTER 10

Working with Limited Literacy Learners

ANOTHER CHALLENGING SITUATION is working with learners who have limited literacy in English and/or their native languages. Often EL learners whose literacy is limited in their first language and who also speak little or no English make slow progress in class, much slower than those who have higher native language literacy. However, if the teacher is patient and he/she has a good set of tools, this problem can be mitigated. The ability that the learner gains in navigating his or her day-to-day life can be more than enough reward for both the learner and the teacher.

The teacher may encounter learners with all levels of literacy issues, from those who merely don't know the English alphabet, to those who are not literate in their native language. (See Cunningham-Florez & Terrill, 2003 for a more specific list of the different levels of illiteracy.) For each level, it will be important to break the teaching down into increasingly smaller steps. Those learners who are not literate in their native language are likely to provide the greatest challenge. Since they are probably not educated in their first language, they will need to work to achieve even basic literacy skills. Studies have shown that it is often more effective to teach pre-literate learners to read in their native languages before teaching them English literacy skills. However, given limited program resources, such an approach is not always practical.

According to Cunningham-Florez & Terrill (2003):

At the most basic level, literacy learners need to understand that texts have a beginning, a middle, and an end; that English is read from left to right and from up to down; and that written words can represent a story, just as pictures do... Pre-literate learners may find two-dimensional graphic literacy-letters, maps, graphs, charts, even pictures-difficult to interpret ...Because of the difficulty some learners experience with these basic tasks, instructors may be tempted to spend all the classroom time working to master these skills. However, in order to apply literacy skills to real tasks, such as reading and understanding a note from a child's teacher, a work schedule, or safety stickers on a medicine bottle, instruction must balance basic skills development with the fostering of higher-level comprehension skills.

It will probably be necessary to do some activities such as using flashcards to help the learners understand which letters represent which sounds; mechanical practice of copying letters; and possibly even teaching the learner how to hold a pencil or pen. There may be a temptation to only engage in these low-level activities. However, such a practice might not be satisfactory to either the instructor or the student in the long run. It is important to balance basic literacy skills with

global comprehension skills and authentic practice, such as recognizing common types of written documents (forms, letters, signs, etc.), and even “whole-language”-type approaches, where the instructor helps the students to transcribe texts based on their own experiences (Peyton & Crandall, 1995). To this end, it is important to incorporate authentic materials as early as possible, even if it is as simple as giving the learner a postmarked letter and asking them to point out specific letters on the front (Burt, Peyton & Adams, 2003).

Please remember that, though your learner may have limited or no literacy skills, he or she is not a child and is facing common adult concerns of daily survival. Therefore, everything that has been said earlier about working with the adult learner is even truer in working with this group. A balance must be struck between the long-term goal of teaching the learner to read and his/her more immediate survival needs in a literate society.

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Center for Applied Linguistics

<http://www.cal.org>

The website of the Center for Applied Linguistics contains a wealth of information related to ESL, foreign language, and literacy education.

ERIC Digests.org

<http://www.ericdigests.org>

The ERIC Digests online includes materials that cover a wide range of topics on ESL and adult literacy education in short, easily digestible form.

Internet TESL Journal

<http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj>

An online journal for Teachers of English as a Second language that contains, among other things, research papers, lesson plans, and useful teaching materials.

National Institute for Literacy (NIFL)

<http://www.nifl.gov>

Provides research information and resources on literacy (including EL) education, including a number of relevant discussion lists.

Thinkfinity Literacy Network

<http://literacynetwork.verizon.org/TLN>

Verizon sponsors this useful website which provides professional development and resource materials for adult education teachers, programs, and volunteers.

Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Centers

<http://www.valrc.org>

The website of the Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Centers provides an extensive array of resources, including information on training, teaching material, and an extensive and well-organized set of links.

The National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL)

<http://www.ncsall.net>

A website for the promotion and dissemination of adult literacy research which, among other things, archives online issues of the Focus on Basics publication.

ONLINE TRAINING/PD

Basics of Adult Literacy Education

<http://www.c-pal.net/course>

A free online training course for adult educators, which contains units on many of the topics, covered in this document.

EL/Civics online

<http://www.elciviconline.org>

A training website for EL/Civics developed by the U.S. Department of Education/Office of Vocational and Adult Education and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services/Office of Citizenship. Even if you are not teaching EL/Civics, the lesson planning and adopting materials tutorials might be helpful.

PBS Teachers

<http://www.pbs.org/teachers>

ProLiteracy

<http://www.proliteracy.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=406&srcid=346>

Offers online training courses, both free and paid, in numerous aspects of adult ESOL

ONLINE LEARNING

English for all

<http://www.myefa.org/login.cfm>

A website of online English language learning materials, funded by the United States Department of Education.

Quia Web

<http://www.quia.com/web>

A site that allows you to easily create online classes, quizzes and materials. A free 30-day trial is available.

USA Learns

<http://www.usalearns.org>

An online English course for low-level ESOL learners, created by the U.S. Department of Education.

CONTENT STANDARDS AND TESTING

CASAS Website

<https://www.casas.org>

Contains information and resources for the CASAS test standards

Maryland Content Standards for Adult ESL/ESOL

<http://www.umbc.edu/alrc/standards.html>

This page contains PDFs and training material for the Maryland Content Standards.

REEP ESL Curriculum for Adults

<http://www.apsva.us/15401081182015517/lib/15401081182015517/reepcurriculum/lessonplanindex.html>

The Adult Education Content Standards Warehouse

<http://www.adultedcontentstandards.ed.gov>

Archives content standards from a range of states and various organizations.

LINK COLLECTIONS

Dave's ESL Cafe

<http://www.eslcafe.com>

One of the most popular ESL sites on the Internet, Dave's Café provides information for both students and teachers, job listings, and a very extensive collection of links to ESL-related sites.

The ESL Loop

<http://www.linguistic-funland.com/esloop/esloop.html>

Internet TESL Journal Links Page

<http://iteslj.org/links>

An extensive set of links maintained by the Internet TESL Journal.

Western/ Pacific LINCS: ESL Special Collection

<http://www.literacynet.org/esl>

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PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Maryland Association for Adult, Community, and Continuing Education (MAACCE)

<http://www.maaccemd.org>

Maryland Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (MdTESOL)

<http://www.marylandtesol.org>

TESOL—Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

<http://www.tesol.org>

Washington Area Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (WATESOL)

<http://www.watesol.org>

APPENDIX A

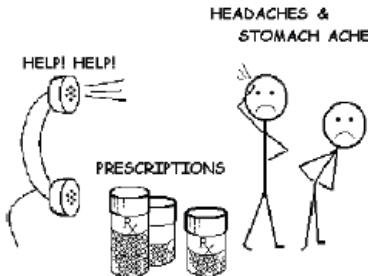


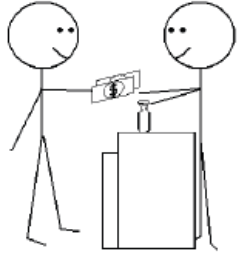
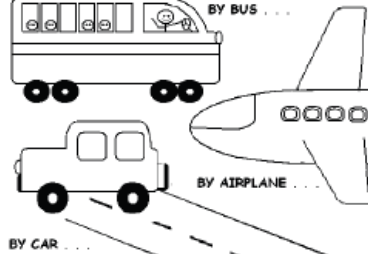
Sample Needs Assessment Forms

BEGINNING LEVEL QUESTIONNAIRE

Student Name: _____

Date: _____

What do you want to study? Circle three Topics

 <p>COMMUNITY</p> <p>BANK</p> <p>SCHOOL</p> <p>LIBRARY</p> <p>FIRE STATION Local 51</p>	 <p>HEALTH</p> <p>HELP! HELP!</p> <p>HEADACHES & STOMACH ACHES</p> <p>PRESCRIPTIONS</p>
 <p>WORK</p> <p>COOK</p> <p>RECEPTIONIST</p>	 <p>HOUSING</p> <p>APARTMENT</p> <p>TOWNHOUSE</p> <p>HOUSE</p>
 <p>MONEY & SHOPPING</p>	 <p>TRANSPORTATION</p> <p>BY BUS . . .</p> <p>BY AIRPLANE . . .</p> <p>BY CAR . . .</p>

SOURCE: Lieshoff, S. C. et. Al. (2004). *Practitioner Toolkit: Working with Adult English Language Learners*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics

ESL ADULT LEARNERS NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Student Name: _____

Instructor Name: _____

Date: _____

Program: _____

GENERAL GOALS

My goals are (check all that apply)

- get a job
- get a better job
- get a high school diploma
- get a GED
- speaking
- reading
- writing

other: _____

HOT TOPICS

First, I want to learn English for the following reasons (Check the 3 most important)

- finding a job
- on the job
- community (bank, post office, library)
- shopping for food and clothes
- housing
- transportation
- health

other: _____

I have problems with (check all that apply)

- pronunciation
- writing
- grammar
- American culture
- reading
- conversation

other: _____

SOURCE: Colorado Certificate of Accomplishment

ESOL LEARNER NEEDS ASSESSMENT

This portion should be filled out at registration

Name: _____

Date: _____

Level: _____

Term: _____

1. When did you come to the U.S.? _____

2. How long will you be living in the U.S.? _____

3. Where did you hear about our program? _____

4. What is your main reason for coming to the United States?

Work Study Family Tourism

5. Are you currently employed? Yes No

If YES, what is your job and where do you work?

6. I am a: Faculty member Graduate student
 Researcher Staff member with (college or university)

7. Did you work in your home country? Yes No

If YES, what was your job?

8. Where have you studied English before? _____

9. For how long did you study English? _____

10. How do you need to use English?

11. In what neighborhood do you live? _____

SOURCE: The Greater Homewood Community Corporation

ESOL LEARNER NEEDS ASSESSMENT, CONTINUED

This portion should be filled out on the first day of class

Name: _____

Date: _____

Level: _____

Term: _____

What do like to do in your free time?

Your goals are to...

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> get a job | <input type="checkbox"/> improve your speaking | <input type="checkbox"/> learn more about American culture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> get a better job | <input type="checkbox"/> improve your writing | <input type="checkbox"/> other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> get more education | <input type="checkbox"/> improve your pronunciation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> improve your reading | <input type="checkbox"/> improve your grammar | _____ |

Which activities are most helpful to your English learning?

- | | | |
|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> conversation | <input type="checkbox"/> listening to tapes | <input type="checkbox"/> writing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> field trips | <input type="checkbox"/> pair/group work | <input type="checkbox"/> other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> games | <input type="checkbox"/> pronunciation drills | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> grammar practice | <input type="checkbox"/> reading | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> idiom practice | <input type="checkbox"/> songs | |

Where do you want to speak better English?

- | | | |
|---|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> at work | <input type="checkbox"/> at the doctors | <input type="checkbox"/> other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> on the bus/train | <input type="checkbox"/> on the telephone | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> with friends | <input type="checkbox"/> in stores | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> with neighbors | <input type="checkbox"/> at your children's school | |

Do you want to read/write better English for...?

- | | | |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> checks | <input type="checkbox"/> maps/directions | <input type="checkbox"/> other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> bills | <input type="checkbox"/> forms | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ads in newspapers | <input type="checkbox"/> job applications | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> catalogs | <input type="checkbox"/> your children's report cards/
school notes | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> work notices | | |

What other things do you want your teacher to know?

SOURCE: The Greater Homewood Community Corporation

APPENDIX B

Sample Lesson Planning Forms

LESSON PLAN FORMAT

Class : _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Lesson Objective

Language Skills: _____

Life Skills: _____

Materials:

Equipment:

Stages of the Lesson

Warm Up/Review: _____

Introduction: _____

Presentation: _____

Practice: _____

Evaluation: _____

SOURCE: Lieshoff, S. C. et. Al. (2004). *Practitioner Toolkit: Working with Adult English Language Learners*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics

LESSON PLANNING FORM

Topic/Title	
NRS Level: (Beg. Literacy, Low Beg., High Beg, Low Intermediate, High Intermediate, Advanced)	
Objectives: (What the student will know and be able to do)	
Competencies: (CASAS or MELT in competency section of CS document)	
Language Standards: (Listening, speaking, reading, writing, pronunciation, and grammar; found in the CS document under the tab CS by level or CS by skill)	
Procedures: * Motivation: (Introduction that creates learner interest for the lesson) * Presentation: (Introduction of the competency, language standards and other skills) * Practice: (Learners use the new language through controlled activities) * Application: (Learners use the new language for their own real reasons) * Evaluation: (Activity that aligns with the objectives to determine learner progress)	
Other: (Cultural, workplace, meta-cognitive skills, and technology standards; found in CS document and each area has a tab.)	
Possible Materials: (Texts, authentic materials, video etc.)	

SOURCE: Maryland Content Standards for Adult ESL/ESOL. Developed by the Maryland State Department of Education Adult Education and Literacy Services Branch, <http://www.umbc.edu/alrc/standards.html>

APPENDIX C

A Communicative Activity

Procedure

Review the relevant vocabulary for giving directions (go straight, turn left, turn right, next to, behind, between, etc.) Present and have the students practice the following dialog:

At the Train Station

A: Excuse me, can you help me?

B: Sure, what's the problem?

A: Can you tell me how to get to the Town Hall?

B: Sure, it's not far. Go outside and turn right on Broad Street. Take the first left on Liberty Street and it will be on your left, across from the park. You can't miss it.

A: Thanks!

(You could also substitute an appropriate dialog from your textbook)

Divide the students into pairs. Give one member of each pair map A, the other map B. Make sure that the students don't see each other's maps.

Have the students take turns asking their partners for directions to the following places. When they have found the places on the map, they should label them.

Student A

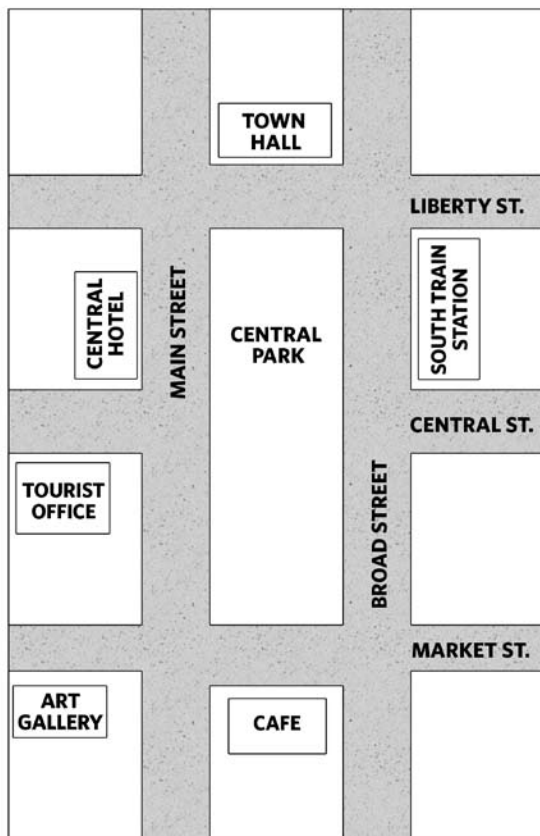
Restaurant, Natural History Museum, Covered Market, Book Shop

Student B

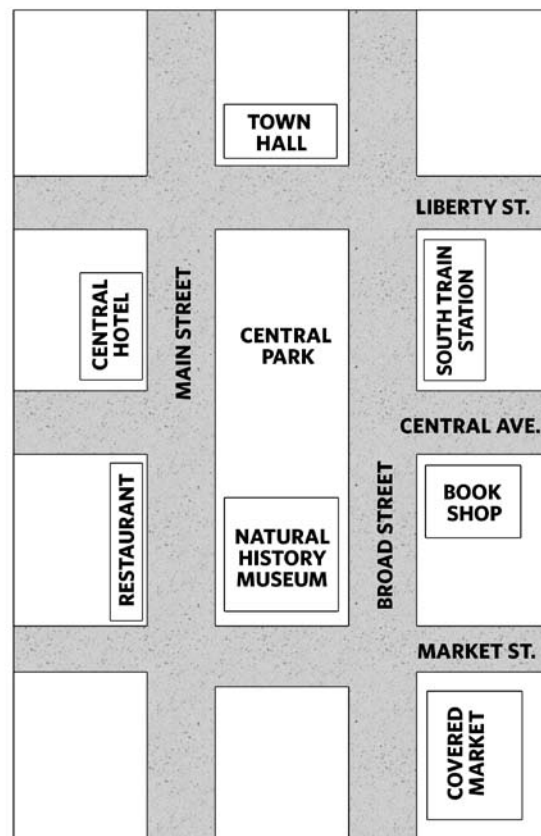
Tourist office, Art Gallery, Central Hotel, Café

When they are finished giving directions, allow the students to compare their maps to see how well they have done.

Student A Map



Map B



A Sample Lesson Plan Using Authentic Material

Time: approximately 2 hours, **Level:** Intermediate

Lesson Objective:

Language Skills: Reading, evaluation of employment skills

Life Skills: Finding a job

Materials

- * Classified Job listings from a newspaper
- * transparency of one example

Equipment

- * Chart paper
- * Overhead projector

STAGES OF THE LESSON

Warm Up

Ask learners which of them has a job. Ask several volunteers to tell the class where they found out about their current jobs.

Introduction

Mention to the learners that one common place to find jobs is in the classified section of the local newspaper.

Give the students examples of the classified ads and allow them to study them.

Presentation

Show a sample ad that has been blown up on a transparency. Read the ad with the students and help them with any vocabulary issues. Draw the job grid (see below) on the board. Analyze the ad to fill in the blanks on the grid.

Practice

Have the students work in pairs or small groups. Ask them to study the classified sections and chose a job that one of the group might be interested in applying to. Ask them to copy the grid onto a piece of chart paper.

Evaluation

Have each group present their job to the class. Ask each student to choose the job that they are most interested in or qualified for and explain why to the class.

Extension

For homework, have each learner write a cover letter applying for the job that they are most interested in.

JOB GRID

Description	
Requirements	
Pay	
Hours	
Contact information	
Other	

SOURCE: Adapted from McKay, H. & Tom, A. (1999). *Teaching Adult Second Language Learners*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Notes on Content Standards

SINCE THE LATE 1980s, standards-based education has been a hot issue in k-12 education. More recently, content standards have been developed for adult education programs. Many states, including Maryland, have developed sets of content standards for adults, and various national content standards have been developed as well, including Equipped for the Future (EFF), the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), and the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) standards (Young and Smith, 2006).

According to Stites (1999), "content standards describe the range of desirable knowledge and skills within a subject area... The content standards for adult literacy being developed through the Equipped for the Future (EFF) Initiative ...[for example] define a set of knowledge and skills needed for competent adult performance in the roles of worker, community member, and parent or family member". So, ideally, content standards should define a set of knowledge and skills that adult learners should have at each level, to both ensure uniformity between programs and provide a basis for accountability for each program. They are not intended to mandate exactly what a teacher should present, but rather to "provide a guiding framework for what students should know and be able to do as a result of instruction" (Shaetzel and Young 2007).

Your program may mandate a set of content standards for you to follow, or you yourself may decide to adopt a set. As a teacher, content standards should provide you with a set of guidelines, showing you both what your student should know at the various levels of instruction and what they are expected to know when they complete that level. Together with learner needs assessment and your texts; they should provide you with a guideline for developing an appropriate learning plan for your students.

REFERENCES

Stites, R. "A User's Guide to Standards-Based Educational Reform: From Theory to Practice". *Focus on Basics, Volume 3, Issue C, September 1999*. Available from: <http://www.ncsall.net/?id=352>

Young, S., & Smith, C. (2006). *Understanding Adult ESL Content Standards*. Washington, DC: Center for Adult English Language Acquisition. Available from: http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/briefs/contentstandards.html

Schaetzel, K. and Young, S. (2007). *Using Adult ESL Content Standards*. Washington, DC: Center for Adult English Language Acquisition. Available from: http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/briefs/usingcontstandards.html

FURTHER RESEARCH

Adult Education Content Standards Warehouse
<http://www.adultedcontentstandards.ed.gov>

Adult Literacy Education Wiki Web site on Standards
<http://wiki.literacytent.org/index.php/Standards>

CASAS Website
<https://www.casas.org>

Equipped for the Future Content Standards
www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/recordDetail?accno=ED437557

Maryland Content Standards for Adult ESL/ESOL
<http://www.umbc.edu/alrc/standards.html>

REEP ESL Curriculum for Adults
<http://www.apsva.us/15401081182015517/lib/15401081182015517/reepcurriculum/lessonplanindex.html>

Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS)
<http://wdr.doleta.gov/SCANS>

40 Helpful Hints & Tips, for Making Your ESL Teaching Easier and More Fun!

This article appeared in the July/August 1994 issue of *Hands-on English*, and was one of our all-time, timeless hits! It includes tips from many different teachers. We're including the article here because it is so useful, and hope that you will find it inspiring.

1. Join a professional organization

Teaching can be a lonely occupation. Connect yourself to a network of people who do what you do and who share your concerns. You'll usually receive newsletters and reduced fees at conferences as a benefit. But consider joining also as a way of lending strength to an organization that can speak up on behalf of immigrants' rights and educators' concerns!

TESOL is the international organization for ESL/EFL teachers with over 20,000 members. (Call 703-836-0774 for information, or go to their website <http://www.tesol.org>). There are dozens of smaller, regional TESOL affiliates that you can join as well—your state probably has its own affiliate. And there are other organizations that might relate to the kind of work you do, so keep looking until you get connected!

2. Attend work shops and conferences

Even if you haven't joined an organization, you can still go to conferences, and there's no better way to meet fellow teachers, get some inspiring ideas and see ESL books and materials on exhibit. (*Note:* if you only want to see the book exhibit, some larger conferences will sell you an exhibit pass for a reduced fee.)

If you can't make it to a conference, try at least to attend some teachers' workshops. Most school districts and community colleges offer training sessions or workshops you can attend. But don't limit yourself just to ESL! You can get good teaching ideas from other areas as well.

3. Start your own support group

Find some fellow instructors who are willing to meet occasionally or have lunch together for the purpose of exchanging thoughts and ideas. A long-term relationship with other teachers can be very beneficial! The members of your group don't have to be from the same school—in fact it some times works better if they are not.

4. Get online

If you have access to the Internet through work or through a commercial e-mail service, sign up for some discussion

groups, called "lists." One that we know about is called TESL-L, which provides an opportunity to talk with thousands of ESL professionals internationally. To sign up for this list, go to <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/~tesl-l>. You'll find information on what to do next.

A note of caution: This form of communication is addictive and can take up a lot of your time! You may want to get started during a school break.

5. Get a pile of catalogs

Finding just the right ESL materials for your students can sometimes be a challenge! Get yourself on the mailing list with lots of different publishers so you'll receive their ESL catalogs. You'll find it useful to have a library of catalogs to browse through when you need to.

Start with Addison-Wesley, Heinle & Heinle, Oxford University Press and Regents-Prentice Hall, but also seek out the smaller companies, as they often have great materials. And don't overlook literacy organizations as a source for materials—New Readers Press (Laubach) and Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) both have extensive catalogs.

Note: Hands-on English published an updated list of ESL publishers and their addresses in the July/August 1997 issue (Vol. 7, No. 2).

6. Get book distributors' catalogs

To get your hands on ESL materials quickly, sometimes it's best to call a book distributor such as DELTA in Illinois (1-800-323-8270), ALTA in California (1-800-ALTA/ESL) or BOOKLINK in New Jersey (201-947-3471). They carry books from many different publishers (although not all) and can usually ship you your order in a couple of days.

7. Get examination copies

Many publishers offer "examination copies" of certain titles to teachers who might be adopting a text for their classes. You usually must submit your request for these on school letterhead; see individual publishers' catalogs for details.

8. Make friends with a librarian

Start a steady relationship with a librarian, either at your institution or at a public library. These people are amazing in terms of what they can find out for you and the services they can provide for your students!

Tell them the kinds of things you are interested in or that you are looking for, and then stop in once a week (with cookies) to pick their brains. You won't regret it.

9. Make friends with the secretarial staff

If you are lucky enough to have secretarial help where you work, they are likely to be overworked and very unappreciated. However, they can provide vital help and information to you and your students, so treat them well and bring cookies.

10. Make friends with a custodian

The other truly powerful person at your school, who can really help you when you need it, is the custodian. Sue Sandeen recommends you get to know the custodial staff before Day One, and again, remember them with cookies.

11. Get a business card

Why is it that so few teachers have business cards? Give yourself a self-esteem boost and order some. They are usually around \$25 for a box of 500. This will make it easier for you to network when you go to conferences and meetings.

If you don't have a fancy title, you still deserve a business card! One card we saw said simply: "Bill Smith, Teacher" with the home address and phone number below. Another one we've seen said: "Susan Jones, English as a Second Language Instructor." Volunteer tutors can often get business cards with the logo of their organization printed on them. This is a great way to introduce yourself as well as to spread the word about your agency.

12. Enroll in a foreign language class

Put yourself in the position of a student and learn what it feels like to struggle with a new language. This experience will improve your teaching in both large and small ways. And by the way, this exercise is worth repeating every few years—even if you already speak a foreign language, you've probably forgotten what it felt like when you started.

13. Keep a private teaching journal

This might sound like extra work, but if you keep a record of what works with your students and what doesn't, you'll find it invaluable in future years when looking for ideas.

We recently looked through some old lesson-plan books and found comments we'd written like "Great lesson!" and "Terrible day" to be extremely unhelpful. Take the extra time to write down what exactly you did and what the students' response was. (This exercise will help you prepare for the next day's lesson at the same time, by reflecting on what has happened so far.)

14. Organize lessons by topic

Adult programs can be especially chaotic. One very effective way to organize what the students are learning is by topics, which the students themselves can determine. Within one topic (whether it's grocery shopping or world peace) there is plenty of room for adjusting to different students' levels and for offering help in all the skill areas the students might need (such as reading, pronunciation, spelling, fluency, etc.) This

will be more cohesive from the students' point of view than a series of unrelated language activities.

15. Adopt a textbook series

If your program needs even more structure, Shirley Ostler recommends your program adopt a graded series of ESL texts. The benefit of this is that everybody can clearly see progress, and when students miss a class they can see what they've missed in the book. Many students understandably prefer to have the security of a textbook they can take home and look at or study from. Lesson planning is a little easier when such a text is in place, and yet there is still room for supplementing the material with other creative activities.

16. Always give clear guidelines

When teaching a course, Fiona Savage says one should always give clear guidelines to students at the beginning. These should include not only what course work is expected from students, but also the teacher's expectations as to attendance, punctuality, homework, etc. This will help prevent misunderstandings and problems later.

17. Always have a lesson plan

There is nothing worse than being unprepared, says Michele Bowman. Some people may be able to do lessons "off the cuff" after years of teaching—however, even these people probably have some kind of lesson plan jotted down some where.

18. Always have a backup plan

You never know what's going to go wrong and when, especially in adult programs! Fiona Savage suggests always having a spare exercise or language game up your sleeve. She also suggests preparing more materials than you strictly need for a lesson, as it is sometimes unpredictable how fast a class will work from day to day.

Rick Rosenberg keeps a short-duration activity file on hand at all times, for this reason. His file includes two lists of riddles and answers (students memorize one part and move around the room to find the person with the matching riddle or answer). He also keeps a password-like game called "Just-a-Minute" (by Elizabeth Claire) handy, with his own adaptation of it with vocabulary the class is working on, and a packet of short interesting articles about topics of interest to students.

He keeps this file on hand to reinforce the language or activities of the class, or as something to fall back on if he sees the students want a break or a change of pace.

19. Use real language

Have students study the language that is going on around them. Janice Higdon has her students take Walkman-type tape recorders with them to the workplace, stores, restaurants, etc. and bring language samples into class to study. She also has them bring in written items or forms

which they must work with in their jobs or with government agencies.

Using the language the students find, she develops situations for role-playing about restaurants, stores, banks or other business and social situations.

20. Invest in 3x5 cards

There are millions of language activities you can do with plain 3x5 cards. Emily Thrush says she could happily teach English with nothing more than these cards and some markers or pens!

Some of their uses include: flash cards, concentration games, matching games, word order practice, pair work, information-gap activities, and on and on and on. (Pro Lingua Associates has two books with detailed descriptions of card activities—Index Card Games, and More Index Card Games.)

21. Save time by photocopying less

We need to think about saving time and resources in preparing for classes. Abbie Tom points out that one way to do this is to avoid photocopying as much as possible. Instead of copying ten exercises, copy one and think of ten activities you can do with it! Also use dictations in class and newsprint sheets as alternatives to copying.

22. Milk every activity to its fullest

This suggestion is both a time-saver and good pedagogy. Barbara Gottschalk has seen many teachers rush from worksheet to worksheet and textbook to textbook, wearing out themselves and the copy machine in the process! It's sounder teaching practice to fully expand on each item you present.

Here is a check list of questions which Barbara suggests we ask, for example about a story the students have read: Have they talked about it? Have they talked to each other about it? Have they written about it? Have they written about what some one else said about it? Have they read what other students have written about it? Have they done a dictation about it for listening practice? The repetition such activities provide is very important for language learning.

23. Explain the purpose of activities

Adults work better when they know why they are being asked to do something in a certain way. Fiona Savage points out that it's important to include students in your reasons for doing things—not necessarily for everything but at least from time to time. Particularly if students are resistant to the way you are doing something, it is helpful to explain the learning principles behind the method.

24. Reduce teacher talk

Pay attention to the percentage of class time devoted to your speech. Only at the very lowest language levels should you be talking more than your students.

25. Create a community

“Turning the class room into a community of learners” is a phrase we've heard before but may not know how to realize. Joy Kreeft Peyton, National Clearinghouse on Literacy Education (NCLE), says that in a classroom community, everyone has responsibility for seeing that learning happens. This may be hard to achieve at first, but a very helpful book with some guidelines is: *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace* by M. Scott Peck (1987 Simon & Shuster).

26. End with success

End every class with a sense of accomplishment, says Sue Sandeen. It's also nice to end with a laugh, or with a game. If possible, say goodbye to each student by name.

27. Have students write you a letter

To find out if students are learning, not getting lost and whether they understand what is going on, institute a regular feedback writing, suggests Susan Simon. Ask the students to write you a letter about what they've learned, what they are confused about, and what they still want to know. Students love getting a personal response, and it is well worth the time.

28. Write dialogue journals with your students

An expanded version of the above suggestion is an actual journal which each student keeps and which you respond to regularly in writing. Using dialogue journals to write back and forth with your students can keep you in touch with what they are really thinking underneath all that classroom talk. (For examples of this technique, see *Writing Our Lives: Reflections on Dialogue Journal Writing with Adults Learning English*, Joy Kreeft Peyton & Jana Staton, Eds., 1991 Prentice Hall Regents.)

29. Teacher movement

When you present something to students, be aware of your movement, which can convey a lot of meaning. Movement includes your posture, gestures, expressions and appearance, as well as visual aids both planned and unplanned. Karen Campbell reports that research has shown that 60% of the impact of a presentation is due to movement, 30% due to voice and only 10% due to words.

30. Use “right brain” activities, too

Try to incorporate rhythm, music, drawing, imagination and visualization into your lessons.

For example, Karen Campbell uses an incomplete picture (two wavy lines) which her students have to expand into a picture of something, then write about. Lloyd Rogers likes to invent simple jazz chants suitable for his students or a special occasion. And Shirley Ostler urges us to “sing, sing, sing.” Students love it, and it reinforces English intonation patterns and sounds, much as the jazz chants do.

31. Stories with holes

To encourage imaginative thinking, Michael Babayco reads incomplete stories to his students, or little-known fairy tales without the ending. Students have to try to figure out the rest of the story by asking probing questions. Sometimes the activity is done with only “yes” or “no” questions.

32. BINGO games

Lots of teachers have used Bingo games to reinforce language. With her beginning students, Helen V. Jones uses a variation that has AEIOU for the letters. The students get practice in distinguishing the vowel sounds and the numbers (such as sixteen and sixty) in an enjoyable game.

33. Unscramble the letters

As an end-of-class activity, Richard Taylor has a word game that is better than Hangman. He writes a scrambled word on the board (for example, the word ‘secretary’). The students try to see how many one-letter words, two-letter words, three-letter words, etc. they can find. They can do this in groups or as a whole class. Can any one (besides the instructor) use all the letters to make one word? This is a good vocabulary builder and can last from 5 to 45 minutes.

34. Question cards

Another filler activity comes from Michael Babayco, who keeps a recipe card box filled with 3x5 cards handy. On these cards he has written a variety of questions that are appropriate to challenge the students’ thinking or knowledge. Whenever he has a few minutes, he picks a card and reads it to see who can answer first. As cards get recycled, students get reinforcement.

35. Back-to-back

To encourage use of descriptive words, Michael has 2 students sit back-to-back. One is given a picture of abstract shapes, the other a blank page and a pencil. The first student must describe the shapes, their sizes and their location on the page so the other student can make a drawing that will match as closely as possible to the original. (*Tip:* For some prepared drawings for this activity, see *Talk-A-Tivities* by Richard Yorkey, Addison-Wesley).

36. Jokes

Humor is one of the hardest things to share with ESL students, but they love to learn about it. Richard Taylor says he’s had good luck with jokes from 8-year olds! For example, “There were thirty sick sheep and ten escaped—how many were left?” (*Note:* Richard didn’t tell us the punchline to this joke, so you’ll have to ask an 8-year-old.)

If you can find some 8-year olds to supply you with more jokes, you’ll have lots of good teaching material!

37. Guessing game

To review vocabulary, play a “yes”/“no” game, a variation on Twenty Questions. The teacher (or a student) thinks of a word. Other students ask, “Is it ____?” to which the answer can be only “yes” or “no.” Sharon Hennessy says this provides lots of fun pattern practice.

38. Vocabulary expansion

When presenting a new word, give not only its immediate meaning but expand on its uses as well. Jim Duber suggests when presenting a verb, always to indicate the prepositions it can take and the different meanings this results in. When presenting a noun, always include an article (a or an) and the term used for counting multiples of the noun, for example: a letter, lots of letters=mail.

Also give real-life examples of how we use this vocabulary.

39. “S” on a stick

Most ESL students have trouble at one stage of their learning remembering to use the 3rd person singular “s” at the end of verbs. Esther Robbins has a clever way to get the students to self-correct this error —she has a large cardboard “S” mounted on a popsicle stick, which she keeps in her briefcase. If the error occurs, she silently holds up the “S” as a reminder. Sometimes she will ask a student to pass the “S” to the one who needs it.

40. Oral history questionnaires

For discussion topics in class, Judith Snoke reports that she’s had very good luck with the “Southern Oral History Questionnaire” from the Department of History, UNC/Chapel Hill.

Some of the amazingly effective questions, she says, include: describe the house you grew up in or the home of someone you loved; describe a meal at your childhood home—who is at the table, what do you eat, who serves, who eats first, who shops, who cooks and who cleans up; where do family members sleep, who do they sleep with; what is the naughtiest thing you can remember doing; who supported the family, what kinds of jobs did family members have?

Most libraries have some information on oral history—ask your librarian to help you find similar materials.

BONUS TIP

41. A reading journal

Encourage students to read by having them keep a journal of what they’re reading and what they think about it, suggests Nicole Keshav. This can work for students at many different levels.

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