Instructor Toolkit

**Effective Classroom Strategies
for Adult English Language Learners**

MCAEL

Montgomery Coalition for
Adult English Literacy

Table of Contents

Introduction

An adult English language learner (ELL) is defined as an adult or out-of-school youth "who has limited ability in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding of the English language, and whose native language is a language other than English; or who lives in a family or community environment where a language other than English is the dominant language" (*Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA), 2015, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education). The term adult ELLs includes adult immigrants, refugees, asylees, migrant workers, and naturalized citizens who study non-academic English as a second language, (ESL). Adult ELLs differ from other adult learners of English as a second language, such as international students at U.S. universities. While adult learners in academic settings are extensively researched, data about adults in non-academic, non-credit programs remain scarce. Therefore, substantial numbers of adults enrolled in non-academic, non-credit programs are overlooked and understudied (Mathews-Aydinli, 2008).

One of the challenges that teachers working with adult ELLs are facing is the diverse nature of this population. Educational backgrounds range from no formal or interrupted schooling to holding advanced degrees. When language literacy levels are taken into account, students may be identified as pre-literate, semi-literate, functional or proficient readers in their native language. Correspondingly, needs of adult ELLs also range quite widely, from basic literacy and/or survival English skills to transitional classes helping them prepare for higher education in English. In addition to their level of educational attainment, there are other factors (e.g., immigration status, the length of residence in the United States and English language proficiency) that facilitate or limit their employability and income levels (CAELA, 2010).

The State of Maryland and other states (e.g., Texas, California), have seen a steady increase in the number of foreign-born residents. More recently, in addition to programs based on federal funding, the array of adult ESL programs has expanded to include services by volunteers, faith-based organizations, libraries, and community centers. According to Schaetzel, Peyton and Burt (2007), legal permanent residents are in need of language instruction to pass the naturalization test. To obtain work permits, unauthorized immigrants need knowledge of English. Immigrant youth aged 17-24 will need English proficiency to pass the GED exam. In order to better serve adult ELLs in non-academic, non-credit settings, there is a need to design, implement, monitor, and evaluate high-quality adult education programs. Teacher recruitment, training, and professional development opportunities are crucial in order to build the necessary instructional capacity while offering teachers ongoing theoretical and best-practice knowledge to update their craft.

Building instructional capacity refers to a collection of resources necessary to provide high quality instruction: 1) instructional knowledge (knowledge of content, pedagogy, and students' characteristics); 2) instructional materials (curriculum, instructional tools, textbooks, assessments and know-how in using the materials); 3) instructional relationships (fostering trust, mutual respect, recognition of instructional expertise and openness to interpersonal learning); 4) organizational structures (supporting the identification, development and use of instructional materials, teacher collaboration, and learning from experts and peers (Jaquith, 2013).

The Montgomery Coalition for Adult English Literacy (MCAEL) is committed to strengthening the capacity of adult English literacy service providers to deliver high-quality, effective programs that meet the needs of adult learners. It is a professional network of adult educators and program leaders who share knowledge and expertise to provide high-quality instruction and lead successful programs.

This publication is intended to provide a day-to-day resource to teachers of adult ELLs. It presents an overview of topics in key instructional areas. It includes principles of teaching and learning, second language acquisition concepts, an instructional design model, and research-based ideas on effective instruction, instructional strategies, and best practices.

Chapters are written in short summaries on different content areas. A theoretical rationale is combined with practical ideas and strategies that teachers can use in adult educational classes. The summaries are intended to provide an understanding of second language acquisition principles, including the developmental, constructive, and social aspects of learning a second language. There is a focus on ways teachers can foster intentional interactions among students. An important aspect described in this publication is the idea of providing a '*learner-centered*' environment where teachers and students co-construct meaning and learn from each other. In this sense, teachers are viewed more as facilitators who guide and scaffold lessons and provide genuine opportunities to learn through authentic, real-life tasks. A chapter on eLearning has been included with resources and websites that teachers can use to increase students' learning opportunities beyond the classroom. This chapter also provides a list of websites and resources for teachers seeking professional development opportunities on their own.

As the adult ELL population is diverse, and students' backgrounds vary, this resource emphasizes strategies on how teachers can tap into students' prior learning experiences and design meaningful and relevant instruction. Instructional knowledge is crucial to building teachers' capacity. Research on adult ELLs continues to be limited; however, research on the instructional process is extensive. This training guide covers important topics for planning and delivering instruction with references for anyone interested in teaching adult ELLs. It seeks to inspire and motivate new teachers to explore ideas on teaching and learning as a way to transform and enrich the lives of their students.

Principles of Language Teaching and Learning

THE GOAL OF ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS IS to make adults acquire the basic skills they need to be productive workers, family members, and citizens. Major areas of support are Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE), and English Language Acquisition (ELA). These programs emphasize skills such as reading, writing, math, English language competency, and problem-solving (Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE), 2016). Adult Education programs serve both native English speakers (NES) and non-native speakers, (NNS). NNS include students whose first language is other than English. Native English speakers attend Adult Basic Education (ABE) or Adult Secondary Education (ASE). Adult ELLs attend English as second language (ESL) classes.

An effective adult education program is designed on the basis that, in many respects, adults learn differently than children. Adults are goal-driven, task-oriented, individuals; they possess self-awareness and

"I never teach my pupils, I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn."

ALBERT EINSTEIN

bring their own experiences to the classroom. When teachers of adult learners plan, design, and deliver instruction on language and literacy, they have to take into account that language and literacy are social processes. The social nature of learning requires an intentional, deliberate process with focused engagement, and opportunities to practice. Students learn best when language and literacy are developed through interactions with selected tasks that require making sense of what is to be learned. Additionally, content has to be presented in connection with an overall topic, and it has to be challenging enough to provide an opportunity for growth.

Teachers and administrators working with adults need qualifications to serve in their adult education programs. Becoming a qualified and effective teacher requires knowledge of: 1) the students, their individual characteristics, backgrounds, and interests; 2) how students learn and what are the best practices to deliver instruction; 3) instructional techniques; 4) types of programs; 5) evidence-based practice (Smith, Harris, & Reder, 2005).

In order to design effective lessons, teachers need to integrate their own knowledge of what is effective for adults and incorporate findings from research. When teachers acquire knowledge of effective practices and apply them to design instruction, they begin to think about the implications their choices have for classroom practice. This added competence enables teachers to justify the strategy used and state the rationale for choosing one strategy over another.

Recently, research on how adults learn a second language (L2) and develop literacy in that language has become the center of attention. Research data can improve the quality and effectiveness of adult instruction. Designing and delivering effective ESL instruction require teachers to become familiar with *'guiding principles' (see box, below)*.

In addition to understanding the unique characteristics of adult learners and the principles of teaching and learning, teachers of adult ELLs need to have a solid foundation on how a second language is acquired and learned, research findings in the field of second language acquisition, what effective instruction looks like for adults learning English as second language,

and ways of fostering the development of English language proficiency.

The goal of ESL instruction is the development of oral and written language skills. Speaking and listening are essential to the adult learners' ability to participate effectively in the workplace and community. Talking with co-workers and employers, discussing children's education with teachers and school officials or negotiating an apartment lease are part of the *'communicative competence'* needed to function in society. *Communicative competence,* a term coined by Dell Hymes (1972), is defined as 'the ability to converse with a native speaker in a real-life situation with an emphasis on communicating ideas (meaning) rather than simply demonstrating knowledge of grammar rules (form). The term 'communicative' is multidimensional, (Hymes, 1972; Canale & Swain, 1980).

■ Communicative Competence

Linguistic competence: knowledge of how to use grammatical rules, syntax principles, pronunciation, and vocabulary of a language.

Sociolinguistic competence*: knowledge of socio-cultural rules; for example, how to use and respond to a language situation appropriately, given the setting, the topic, and the relationships between the people communicating.

Discourse competence*: knowledge of how ideas are linked across sentences (in written discourse) or utterances (in spoken discourse); it includes how to interpret the larger context and how longer stretches of language are constructed making up a coherent whole.

Strategic competence*: knowledge of how to recognize and repair communication breakdowns. Examples of strategic competence are paraphrasing, word coinage (inventing a new word), using *circumlocution* which involves defining an object, its purpose, or action. It is used when learners have limited vocabulary, (e.g., What do you call the little pieces of ice that fall out of the sky like rain?); asking for help, using pause fillers, (e.g., *'let's see', 'you know'*); mime, topic avoidance (the learner avoids or changes the topic); message abandonment (the learner simply stops in mid-utterance, lacking the proficiency to continue).

For a long time, researchers and practitioners have been looking for the '*best*' method to develop communicative competence. In the seventies, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was viewed as the definitive response to the shortcomings of previous approaches (e.g., Grammar Translation Method, Audio-lingual Method, etc). CLT was designed to address the communication needs of a global economic world. Gurunathan and Geethanjali, (2016) elaborate:

■ Communicative Language Teaching Principles

1 Second language learning is made easier when learners are engaged in interaction and meaningful communication.

2 Effective classroom learning tasks and exercises provide opportunities for students to negotiate meaning, expand their language resources, notice how the language is used, and take part in the meaningful interpersonal exchange.

3 The content presented must be interesting, relevant, (multi)culturally appropriate, purposeful and engaging. Once learners perceive the content as useful and appealing, they will participate meaningfully in communication.

4 Communication is a holistic process that often calls upon the use of several language skills (e.g., listening, speaking, reading and writing).

5 Inductive or discovery learning of underlying rules of language use and organization make language learning more productive because analysis and self-reflection on how language is produced add competence to learners.

6 Language learning is a gradual process that involves creative use of language, and that includes trial and error. Although errors are a normal product of learning, the ultimate goal of learning is to be able to use the new language both accurately and fluently.

7 Learners develop their own, individual path to language learning; they progress at different rates and have different needs and motivations for language learning.

8 Successful language learning involves the use of effective learning and communication strategies. This is highly dependent on ELL class demographics and performance levels and the teacher must select the most suitable strategy for the group as well as for individual learners.

9 The main role of the teacher in the language classroom is merely that of a facilitator, who creates a classroom climate conducive to language learning and provides opportunities for students to use and practice the language and to reflect on language use and language learning.

CLT has been considered a broad approach to teaching rather than a teaching method. It is based on a number of principles that promote language learning. CLT emerged in response to non-communicative approaches with the goal of developing communicative competence. Some classroom activities used in CLT include role-plays, interviews, information gap, games, language exchanges, surveys, pair-work, and learning by teaching.

Currently, researchers agree that it is no longer relevant to find the 'best' method for second language learners. They argue that the field of language teaching has evolved into a "*post-method era*". With technological demands, increased workplace competition, and higher expectations as a result of the implementation of college and career readiness standards for adult education, researchers claim that to develop communicative competence and function successfully in the workplace, adult ELLs need to have more than a basic command of the English language. Therefore, adult ELLs should be placed in classes with a contextualized curriculum. Such placement may help students to reach career goals and gain skills that would make them more competitive in the labor market and more employable. Limited fluency in English prevents career advancement and creates income gaps between immigrants with communication skills and those who do not possess them.

■ GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ESL

✳ **VIEWING LEARNERS HOLISTICALLY**—assessing academic and non-academic factors that impact learning. Adult ELLs face challenges when learning the target language because their prior knowledge may be extensive or limited. Creating a safe supportive environment is a starting point for promoting learning opportunities;

✳ **UNDERSTANDING LEARNING AS A SOCIAL ACTIVITY**— providing opportunities for students to teach each other in pairs or groups creates a sense of belonging and a wider community of learning;

✳ **STARTING INSTRUCTION WITH ORAL LEARNING**—teaching vocabulary orally before learners see it in print, thus helping students recognize words they already use;

✳ **TEACHING THEMATICALLY**—thematic units present content, vocabulary, and language structures in an integrative way rather than in isolation;

✳ **FOSTERING A PRINT-RICH ENVIRONMENT**—posters, pictures and charts contribute to developing visual memory;

✳ **ESTABLISHING A DAILY ROUTINE**—helps learners with time management and concentration;

✳ **MAKING LEARNING CONCRETE**—providing hands-on activities with tangible objects aid students to move from hands-on into minds-on (more abstract thinking);

✳ **PROVIDING EXPLICIT, DIRECT STRATEGY INSTRUCTION**— learning to read is a problem-solving activity and teachers need to model and teach reading strategies and help students recognize when comprehension fails (Bow Valley College, 2009).

Adult Language Learning

LEARNING A SECOND LANGUAGE DURING adulthood can be a daunting task. For some adult learners experiencing a new culture and attempting to learn a second language can be challenging and intimidating. Second language acquisition differs from first language acquisition in that individuals learning the *first* or *native* language seem to pick it up naturally from interactions with their caregivers at a very early age. It is a universal process regardless of the home language. However, when the same individuals learn a second language after puberty or during adulthood, a myriad of factors seems to have an impact on their rate of acquisition. Age; cognitive factors (e.g., the ability to recall information); affective factors (e.g., motivation, anxiety, or self-esteem); socio-cultural factors (e.g., knowledge of pragmatics, and sociolinguistic competence); level of education (e.g., literacy skills in the first language); and funds of knowledge greatly define or shape their possibilities to succeed. Second language acquisition is a developmental process where adults go through defined stages; a pre-production

"The Limits of My Language Mean the Limits of My World."

LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN

or '*silent period*', early production stage, speech emergence, intermediate fluency, and advanced fluency. When teaching adult ELLs, teachers need to know that this particular population is heterogeneous and that adults' experiences and background greatly differ from one another.

This chapter focuses on how adults learn a second language. The term '*second language*' or L2 refers to any language learned in addition to a person's first language, or L1; although the concept is named second language acquisition, it may also incorporate the learning of a third, fourth, or subsequent languages. Knowledge of second language acquisition principles is critical in understanding how to better serve adult ELLs in non-academic settings. One factor that greatly influences how

adults learn a language is the amount and quality of the '*input*' they receive. Input refers to the language adult learners are exposed to at a particular time. It might be the time they spend listening to a conversation or reading a passage. Learners become more advanced the longer they are immersed in the language they are learning, and the more time they spend doing free voluntary reading. Insufficient input or exposure to the language learned may result in *fossilization*, a term used to describe the lack of progress and persistence of the same errors even after extended exposure or instruction in the target language. To advance to later stages of language acquisition and to develop *communicative competence*—the ability to interpret the underlying meaning of a message, understand cultural references, to use strategies to keep communication from breaking down, and to apply grammatical rules—adult learners need to receive '*comprehensible input*'. That means that messages have to be understandable. Krashen (1982) suggests that this comprehensible input should be one step beyond the learner's current language ability, represented as *i* + 1, in order to allow learners to continue progressing with their language development.

Krashen (1982) makes an important distinction between two acquisition processes: *language acquisition* and *language learning* (the acquisition-learning distinction), claiming that acquisition is a subconscious process. When learners receive quality, understandable messages, language production happens in a casual, informal environment, without learners realizing it, as a function of the input they receive. The more input, the more opportunity to learn the language. Learning a language, on the other hand, is a conscious one. It may involve learning grammar formally or employing language learning strategies to problem solve.

Meaningful Communication

Krashen (1985) argues that second language acquisition takes place when teachers provide comprehensible, challenging, input but also when adult learners are taught in classrooms with a '*low affective filter*'. These environments are welcoming, stress-free, and provide safety nets for adults to take risks. Low affective filter means that teachers tap into adults' prior knowledge and experiences, respect their culture and work to reduce the different loads that adults face when learning the target language. The different loads are: the *cognitive load* which refers to the mental effort that is needed in completing an academic task; the *cultural load* which refers to the cultural background that gives words meaning within its language; and the *linguistic load* which refers to the phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic and

pragmatic knowledge that is necessary to acquire vocabulary, develop literacy skills, and understand discourse patterns. In addition, Krashen (1985) claims that effective instruction for adult ELLs includes tasks for '*meaningful communication*'. This happens when the language is used for communicating real and authentic ideas. In these classrooms there is a focus on what is said, rather than on how it is said. The debate over focus on '*form*' vs. focus on '*meaning*' is evident in the second language acquisition literature. Some researchers claim that there should be a focus on teaching grammatical patterns and others contend that the focus should be on meaning.

To conclude, Krashen (1985) notes that second language acquisition follows a '*natural order of acquisition*'. Some linguistic structures, for instance, inflection of number, (book-books) is acquired earlier as opposed to inflection of possessive (-'s) that occurs later.

So far, this chapter has addressed the developmental aspect of learning a second language, the notion of the natural order of acquisition, the role that quality input (i+1) plays in acquiring L2, the distinction between acquiring or learning the second or target language, the need to provide a low affective filter or a low-anxiety setting, the importance of acknowledging the multiple loads (cognitive, cultural, and linguistic), and the critical idea of focusing on meaningful communication rather than just teaching grammatical patterns. All of these concepts are vital for new teachers as they help them build background knowledge and reflect on their practice. Yet to expand on the second language acquisition process, other concepts or theories may be equally

important. Another significant notion is that of '*second language proficiency*'. Cummins (1979) coined two terms: '*Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills*' (BICS), and '*Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency*,' (CALP). BICS refers to conversational fluency or social language used for communication. It is context-embedded language and includes non-verbal behavior (body gestures, facial expressions, and eye movements). Cummins (1979) argues that it takes about two years to develop BICS. CALP refers to the academic language that is context-reduced with fewer or non-existing verbal clues. This is the '*language of the classroom*' and, from a linguistic point, it is based on Greek and Latin roots so the 'everyday language' is not transferable when understanding the academic language and its abstractness. Developing CALP may take five to seven years and its main source is written language. However, Cummins' notion of language proficiency is not limited to the ability to converse in the target language. To be fully proficient, adults need to acquire both competencies, BICS and CALP.

Another important concept coined by Cummins is the notion of '*common underlying proficiency*'. Cummins (1979) explains that rather than having two separate areas in the brain for different languages, for instance, an area for the first language (L1), and an area for the second language (L2), the two languages are stored together and the knowledge or academic content learned in either language is linked between languages and can interact. That means that if adults are literate in their L1, can problem solve, think abstractly and know concepts, ideas, content or have background knowledge in one particular subject, this knowledge is transferable across languages.

■ **Implications of Second Language Acquisition Theories to Classroom Practice**

1 **Second language acquisition is a developmental process**: Adult learners may need years to achieve communicative competence. Since learning a second language is a prolonged process the '*pre-production*' or '*silent period*' is expected. During the pre-production stage, students take in the new language but do not speak. Teachers can emphasize listening comprehension by using read alouds, visuals or act out vocabulary, speak slowly, and use shorter words. Students may be given opportunities to demonstrate what they know by using commands or body gestures (Total Physical Response).

2 **Second language acquisition happens as a function of the input students receive:** The more input and exposure to the target language, the more opportunity to learn.

Students have to listen to input that is comprehensible. Teachers can provide comprehensible input in many ways: the use of visual supports, videos, explicit vocabulary instruction, the use cognate words—words that are orthographically similar in both the first and second language—(i.e. information-información), and through scaffolds. Scaffolding includes asking students questions in formats that give students support in answering, such as yes/no questions, one-word identifications or short answers.

3 **Error correction does not foster language acquisition**: Adults who are just beginning to speak English are already nervous about using their new language skills and constant correction will not improve their ability. Minor treatment of errors in a low-anxiety environment is better. Teachers should treat only errors that interfere with communication and it should be done by modeling and paraphrasing standard language.

4 **Language proficiency is the ability to converse in the target language and the ability to read, learn content knowledge, and think abstractly in the second language**: Using everyday language is not enough to be proficient in the target language. Students cannot afford to learn the language in isolation then learn how to read afterward. Reading extensively in the second language is necessary to learn vocabulary and build background knowledge.

5 **Meaningful communication in authentic settings is crucial:** Adults need to be exposed to language that can be used in '*real life*' situations along with opportunities to problem solve. Meaningful communication means that students not only receive '*input*' but that they are afforded genuine opportunities to produce '*output*'. According to Swain (1995, 2005) producing language gives learners opportunities to test their hypotheses about how the target language works, and to consciously reflect on their learning. Providing opportunities for students to present their ideas is vital to elaborating on deeper levels of thinking.

Second Language Learning: What Teachers Need to Know

Second language acquisition is a developmental, constructive, and social process. Adult English language learners go through different stages of language acquisition. The pre-production or "silent period' is expected. At this stage, students cannot produce language. Teachers can provide opportunities for students to demonstrate an understanding of the language by using nonverbal behaviors or body gestures; for example, by

using the Total Physical Response (TPR) approach, students can listen and respond to commands (e.g., Sit down, hold your pencil, etc). Another way students can demonstrate an understanding of language without producing it is to engage in tasks such as sorting, labeling, classifying or categorizing words or objects. In addition, students can sequence actions or respond to pictures. At this stage, teachers should focus attention on listening comprehension activities and on building a receptive vocabulary. The fact that students cannot produce language does not mean students are not learning it.

In learning a second language, students construct their own understanding of the language by accessing their prior knowledge. Teachers can activate this knowledge by brainstorming, using pictures or real objects, pre-teaching vocabulary words, showing a video, asking key questions, or using cognate words.

Another aspect of learning a second language is its social nature. Students learn from interacting with peers and teachers. Teachers can deliberately form groups to promote learning. These groups can be pairs, small groups, or whole groups. When students are paired with

a more skilled peer they benefit from that interaction. Groups can be of mixed ability or flexible groups. Flexible groups can be based on a particular interest. Teachers can find out about what the students' interests are by conducting simple interviews or asking students to bring their own family pictures or objects from their country.

Students learn a second language best when the messages are understandable. This is what is called, "comprehensible input" or "optimal input." Comprehensible input can be provided using level-appropriate reading, utilizing concrete objects, labeling pictures or objects, sequencing a story, listening to songs that provide simple lines, and a consistent repetition of words.

An important concept in second language acquisition is that concepts are transferable. When students learn content, reading skills, and concepts in their own language, that knowledge does not need to be relearned when learning a second language. For instance, if students know geography, math facts, or how to decode, that contributes to their learning and acquisition of the second language.

Instructional Design

TEACHING ADULT LEARNERS IS DIFFERENT FROM teaching children. When designing instruction for children, the term used is '*pedagogy*' which is Greek for "teaching of *child*". When teaching adult learners, the term used is '*andragogy*' which derives from the Greek words '*teaching of man*'. The concept of andragogy implies self-directness, an active student role, and the promotion of problem-solving activities. Adults differ from children in that they decide for themselves what is important to be learned since they need to validate the information based on their beliefs. They also expect what they are learning to be immediately useful. Planning for effective instruction in any adult education classroom requires taking into consideration the individual differences and needs of adult learners.

This chapter focuses on instructional design and planning effective lessons. *Instructional Design* is a broad term and it refers to the purposeful and systematic

"A goal without a plan is just a wish."

ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPERY

planning of a course (or parts of it). The process includes an analysis of the intended student learning outcomes, identifying teaching strategies and student activities best suited to achieve those outcomes, and the development of multiple methods to assess whether, and to what extent, the outcomes are achieved.

In understanding instructional design, reviewing some terminology is useful. '*Course planning*' generally includes the development of a syllabus used to guide the entire course. Adult education classes are designed for adults to acquire new skills, learn information, and improve job-related skills. Each language course outlines a description, goals and objectives, materials, requirements, and a timeline. *Units* are

subsets of courses and focus on a set of related goals and objectives. Units consist of a number of short lessons. To deliver it, a unit may contain more than one lesson when a topic is complex requiring additional reflection. A unit may take a day, a week, or a month depending on the amount of time and number of objectives. A lesson should comprise key concepts or a theme. Organizing the curriculum around macro '*themes*' allows the teacher to contextualize instruction, combine or integrate disciplines (e.g., reading and content knowledge). A lesson may cover one or more objective. Lessons help students reach individual objectives by providing content and activities to assist students in learning.

Planning and designing coherent instruction requires effort. Often times, teachers ask themselves: How will I remember everything I need to do during my lesson? What if my students think my class is boring? How will I know if my students have learned anything? These questions are legitimate because they serve to adjust a course of action.

Before crafting a lesson plan, instructional designers carefully consider the audience. Who are the learners? What are their previous experiences and knowledge? What skills do they possess? What is their level of language proficiency? What are their learning styles? Instructional designers are not so much concerned about a teaching method in particular, but what knowledge and experiences adult learners bring to the classroom. Adult English language learners represent a wide array of educational backgrounds ranging from no formal education to holding advanced degrees. They may be goal-oriented and highly motivated. Goal setting is critical to their success because it fosters student ownership of the learning process. As adult learners possess varied degrees of skills, interests, and life experiences, it is important to tap into their prior knowledge so as to enhance the learning experience in the classroom. Thus, tasks must be practical and directly related to their own lives.

Furthermore, adult learners process information differently. To learn effectively, some adult learners may need to hear a lecture or look at a visual representation; whereas others may learn by doing or by reading. Some adults may have had interrupted or negative schooling experiences. In creating effective lessons, teachers should do everything to foster self-esteem and resilience. This can be done by 1) downplaying challenges and helping adults to recognize their own strengths and weaknesses; 2) maximizing opportunities to learn by breaking tasks into manageable chunks so as to provide opportunities for every learner to succeed; 3) teaching students to identify challenges, frame alternative courses of action, and evaluate relevance. The main feature of high self-esteem and resilience is students' belief that they have control over many areas of their own lives as immigrants which they can accurately define.

An important aspect of designing lessons is understanding that learning can be easy, hard, fun or boring. When students are presented with unrelated pieces and parts of information or when exercises are irrelevant, adults lose interest in learning. Other important aspects in designing lessons are 1) Knowing the adults' readiness or background knowledge required to perform a task. If the task presented is too difficult and no direction or support (*scaffolding*) is given, adults experience frustration and withdrawal. 2) Understanding that adult learners may need to move from concrete to more

abstract thinking. Concrete activities may include using manipulatives, hands-on tasks, or visual representations. It could involve going on a field trip. Abstract experiences may include examining a diagram or reading academic content. Research shows that presenting knowledge in both concrete and abstract terms is far more powerful than doing either one in isolation (Pashler et al., 2007).

In order to design effective and motivating lessons, teachers need to consider the *relevance* of the lessons. Finding what is relevant to certain students may be challenging considering that individual differences play a role in learning. Each individual is unique and information about each student should be gathered using one-to-one interviews and interest inventories. This input is essential in managing multicultural classes where tolerance and respect create a safe and risk-free environment. Additionally, adults need to be given a purpose. Adults respond better when there is a sense of direction and when they are able to see the '*big picture*'. Learning needs to be the combination of exploration and empowerment; just seeing or listening is not enough. Direct and purposeful

experiences are needed to retain and transfer knowledge to new learning situations. Adults retain knowledge when there are plenty of opportunities for practicing.

The field of instructional design proposes *instructional design models (see box)* of how to deliver effective instruction. These prescriptive models provide guidelines or frameworks to organize and structure the process of creating instructional activities. Gagne (1985) classified the types of learning outcomes by asking how learning might be demonstrated. Gagne and Driscoll (1988) defined domains and outcomes of learning that correspond to standard verbs. Gagne's taxonomy consists of five categories of learning outcomes: verbal information, intellectual skills, cognitive strategies, attitudes, and motor skills. Gagne, Briggs, and Wager (1992) explain that each of the categories leads to a different class of performance.

According to Gagne, Wager, Golas, and Keller (2004) learning occurs in a series of learning events. Each of *the nine learning events* is a condition for learning that must be accomplished before the next in order for learning to take place.

■ INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN MODELS

✻ **VERBAL INFORMATION** can be defined as the ability to state, recite, tell or declare facts, concepts, and procedures previously learned.

✻ **INTELLECTUAL SKILLS** include the ability to problem solve by generating a solution or procedure. This skill includes the following sub-skills:
  a) discriminate, distinguish or differentiate; identify, name, specify, and label (*concrete concept*);
  b) classify, categorize, type and sort, (*defined concept*);
  c) demonstrate, show and solve, (*rule application*);
  d) generate, develop, and solve (using a higher order rule, this encompasses understanding and applying two or more rules).

✻ **COGNITIVE STRATEGIES** are the skills learners use to regulate their own internal processes of attending, learning, remembering, and thinking, (e.g., adopt, create, originate).

✻ **ATTITUDES** are defined as an acquired internal state that influences the choice of personal action; for example, an attitude toward the environment influences whether or not people choose to recycle.

✻ **MOTOR SKILLS** enable physical performance, (e.g., execute, perform, and carry out).

■ Nine Learning Events

① **Gaining attention:** To ensure learners are fully receptive to the instruction, the teacher uses 'icebreakers,' 'warm-ups,' and 'attention getters,' at the beginning of each lesson.

② **Informing learners of objectives:** The teacher tells the learners what they will be able to do as a result of the instruction. The teacher communicates the desired outcome to the group.

③ **Stimulating recall of prior learning:** The teacher activates students' prior knowledge and asks students to recall relevant information. To activate and build background knowledge, teachers can use visuals, graphs, concept maps, semantic webs, graphic organizers, (e.g., K-W-L), and realia.

④ **Presenting the stimulus:** The teacher gives tasks and procedures to be performed by the students.

⑤ **Providing learning guidance:** The teacher helps the students in understanding (e.g., semantic encoding) by providing organization and relevance.

⑥ **Eliciting performance:** The teacher asks the learners to demonstrate learning by responding to the stimulus.

⑦ **Providing feedback:** The teacher provides feedback about the learners' performance.

⑧ **Assessing performance:** The teacher provides clear assessment criteria (e.g., rubrics) and encourages peer-evaluation and self-assessment for future learning.

⑨ **Enhancing retention and transfer:** The teacher provides a variety of opportunities to transfer skills and generalize applicability to different scenarios or situations.

Implications for Classroom Practice

By following Gagne's taxonomy, teachers can determine the instructional objectives clearly and precisely. These objectives must fall into one of the five domains of learning outcomes. Each objective must be expressed in performance terms using one of the standard verbs (e.g., "states", "contrasts," "classifies," etc.) associated with the particular domain. The teacher then describes the conditions of learning for the particular learning outcome to determine the conditions in which learning takes place (e.g., with or without a calculator, dictionary, etc.). Finally, a sequence of tasks needs to be performed to facilitate learning. In other words, objectives, activities, tasks, and materials need to be incorporated into the lesson plan. The events, in essence, become the framework for the lesson plan or steps of instruction.

Objectives and assessment of performance must be clear, precise, measurable and observable. To write instructional objectives effectively, teachers can use the popular ABCD format. A=Audience, B=Behavior, C=Conditions, D=Degree. The audience refers to the target of instruction. An example can be: "Adult ELLs will...". Behavior refers to what the students will be able to do. The words '*appreciate*,' '*understand*,' or '*know*' should be avoided as they are vague and difficult to measure. Conditions usually refer to objects or tools the students may use to perform (e.g., map, calculator, and a set of rocks). Instructional groupings could form part of the conditions (e.g., working individually, in pairs, or small groups). The degree refers to what is required in the performance to deem it 'satisfactory'. This may include accuracy, (e.g., eight out of ten correct responses) or allotted time (e.g., within five minutes). An acceptable objective could be: Given a set of different types of maps (conditions), adult ELLs (audience) will identify (behavior) and label (behavior) eight out of ten geographical features (degree).

■ STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION

✻ Providing instruction in comprehension strategies, such as using headings and graphics to predict meaning, summarizing verbally, skimming, and scanning the text.

✻ Assessing students' use of cognitive and/or metacognitive strategies by asking them which comprehension strategies they have used.

✻ Assessing learners' reading comprehension by having them read passages and write comprehension questions about the text in multiple-choice or short answers.

✻ Have students retell stories and summarize readings.

✻ Find out what students know, need to know, and want to know and then build on ideas and concepts from learners' cultures and experiences whenever possible. Select *culturally relevant texts* on topics they may be most familiar with.

Teaching Reading to Adult English Language Learners

READING IS A CONSTRUCTIVE PROCESS. As readers attempt to decode a text they use their background knowledge, prior experiences, and funds of knowledge to make sense of the text. This prior knowledge can be *domain-specific*, knowledge of a particular topic, and also *knowledge of* the *text structure;* for example, recognizing the main idea and details or comparing and contrasting arguments. This knowledge allows students to make connections to what they already know, interact with the text, and predict what is next. In addition to background knowledge, readers use multiple cueing systems as they read. One system is called '*the grapho-phonemic system*'. This includes the knowledge of breaking words down into letters, sounds, syllables, prefixes, chunks, etc. Readers use visual cues to identify letter-sound relationships and what letters and words look like and how they are formed. A second

"Once you learn to read, you will be forever free."

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

system is the '*syntactic system*', which includes structural cues and knowledge of the way in which language is put together into sentences, phrases, paragraphs, etc. A third system is the '*semantic system*,' which involves making sense of the text and relying on meaningful connections, guessing, and using context clues found in the text and/or their own background knowledge to derive meaning.

One factor that impacts reading comprehension is oral language. Oral language is the foundation of reading. Adult ELLs have limited vocabulary. Limited vocabulary impairs the ability to make sense of the text.

As non-native speakers, these adults are not familiar with the phonological, morphological, semantic, syntactic, or pragmatic structure of the English language. Normally, the linguistic systems aid learners in constructing meaning, forming and testing hypotheses, and predicting what the text is about.

In order to become effective readers, adult ELLs need to develop five skills. These five components of reading were defined by the National Reading Panel (2000).

■ Five Skills for Becoming an Effective Reader

1 Phonemic Awareness: this is the ability to hear, discriminate, and manipulate the phonemes of the English language; this ability is spoken. The English language has forty-four (44) distinct '*phonemes*' or units of sound. Some English phonemes may not be present in the learners' native language and therefore, it may be difficult for a student to pronounce and distinguish those phonemes as they hear them. Adult ELLs need to recognize, blend, categorize, isolate, and manipulate sounds in order to decode words. To teach standard pronunciation, the teacher may use contrastive analysis using '*minimal pairs*'. Minimal pairs are words that differ in a single sound or phoneme, (e.g. *mat-man*). Awareness of contrasts between vowels and consonant clusters typical of English helps learners retain vocabulary.

2 Phonics: this is the ability to identify letter-sound correspondence and the ability to understand spelling patterns. Adult ELLs may have difficulty applying letter-sound knowledge to figure out new words while reading. Teachers need to incorporate explicit word analysis strategies to help students recognize words. These methods include: understanding letter-sound correspondences, recognizing sight words, using context to determine meaning and knowing prefixes, suffixes, and root words. When assessing knowledge of letter-sound relationships, a teacher may use actual English words that follow patterns, such as *bat/pat/sat*. Teachers can also highlight morphophonemic relationships in the English writing system. For example, teachers can point out that while the regular past tense has different pronunciations depending on the phonological structure of the verb, past tense morphology for regular English verbs have only one written form (e.g., -ed); however, pronunciation varies (e.g., laughed /t/, climbed /d/, wanted /Ðd/).

3 Fluency: this is the ability to decode texts accurately at a rate that resembles speech, with little effort and with appropriate rhythm, intonation, and expression. Adult ELLs must first have speaking fluency before they can have reading fluency. One strategy that teachers can use is the *Language Experience Approach (LEA)*. In this approach, students dictate a story or observation. The teacher writes down the work in the student's exact words. The teacher then reads the work aloud, and afterward gives it to the student to practice reading aloud. The LEA allows teachers to tap into students' backgrounds and interests while providing modeling of how to read with appropriate enunciation and intonation. Other ways of fostering fluency are repeated readings. *Repeated readings* are the most effective instructional technique for increasing reading fluency in adults. In repeated readings, a student reads a passage many times while a teacher provides feedback about rate and accuracy levels. This approach helps learners with difficult words, and models fluent reading. Another technique is *narrow reading*. It is an effective way for students to improve their vocabulary by allowing them to see new vocabulary repeatedly in a variety of contexts. Students must read regularly in order to be exposed to large amounts of authentic English and to build their vocabulary. In narrow reading, students read numerous articles on one specific topic like *technology*, for example. By continually reading on the same topic, students constantly see the same vocabulary being used again and again. Over time, they learn this new vocabulary through this repetition in context.

4 Vocabulary: this is the ability to derive meaning from words, using semantic relationships and contextual clues. Vocabulary development is one of the greatest challenges to reading instruction for adult ELLs because in order to read fluently and comprehend what is written, students need to use not just phonics, but context. It is possible for students to read completely phonetically and not comprehend what they have read because they do not have the vocabulary needed to make sense of the text. Therefore, vocabulary needs to be taught explicitly and be a part of the daily curriculum in addition to learning to read. Some strategies to teach vocabulary include: pre-teaching the vocabulary and previewing unfamiliar ideas, actions, vocabulary, and settings as well as titles, pictures, graphics, text structure, and discourse markers (e.g., transition words such as first, next, finally) prior to reading a passage; teaching high-frequency words first, and providing learners with multiple exposures to specific words in multiple contexts.

Some considerations in teaching direct, explicit vocabulary instruction are:

1 **Teaching the alphabet is not enough:** Different English letters may represent different sounds. For example, the /t/ may sound differently in '*train*' or '*feature*'. In addition, the same sound may be represented by different letters like 'husband' and 'zoo'. Students are not able to pick up these phonological rules naturally; therefore, explicit instruction is needed.

2 **Modeling and practicing consonant clusters is essential:** A consonant cluster or consonant sequence is a group of consonants which have no intervening vowel. In English, for example, the groups /spl/ and /ts/ are consonant clusters. Consonant clusters can present special challenges for learners because, even if their first language has the same two or three consonant sounds as English, those sounds might not occur directly next to each other in words. It might not have those sounds next to each other at the beginning or the end of a word.

3 **Teaching vowels:** Modeling the distinction between long and short vowels is crucial. Adult ELLs may have difficulty hearing the phonemic difference between '*cut*' and '*cat*". A vowel chart, a color-coded resource, aids students in understanding vowel differences.

4 **Teach word-formation processes:** Most words in English are formed by affixation or derivation. Teaching roots and affixes (e.g., prefixes and suffixes) can help student boost vocabulary and the understanding that suffixes may carry meaning or aid in grammatical function (e.g., careless, careful)

5 **Teach multiple meaning words:** Determining or clarifying the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words is critical for reading comprehension. Teachers should provide plenty of opportunities to evaluate words using contextual clues to derive meaning. Teaching idioms, using cartoons, or bringing humor into the classroom allows students to be exposed to linguistic functions.

6 **Teach syntactic patterns:** Syntactic patterns are not transferable across languages. Students need to become familiar with the order of words in a sentence. (e.g., Subject + Verb+ Object) or question and (e.g., wh-questions). Knowledge of syntactic patterns and parts of speech and their place in a sentence help adult learners make educated guesses when they read.

7 **English allows shifting words from one grammatical category to another:** English is a very productive language. Due to its versatile nature, it can undergo many different word formation processes to create new lexicon. Conversion, a word formation process, is particularly common in English because the basic form of nouns and verbs is identical in many cases (e.g., judge as a verb, and judge as a noun).

8 **Teaching pragmatics is important:** Teaching students how to evaluate a context and choosing appropriately what to say is critical. For example, how to address a supervisor or a friend, how to employ politeness, how to make a formal request, and how to respond to an email using standard language are as important as developing communicative competence.

9 **Reading comprehension:** This is the ability to discern meaning from the written text. Skilled readers are purposeful and active in applying comprehension strategies to the text. These strategies include *cognitive strategies* which help students organize the information that they will learn through the process of self-regulated learning (Echeverria, Vogt, & Short, 2013). Some cognitive learning strategies are: previewing a story or chapter before reading, establishing a purpose for reading, making connections between personal experiences and what is learned, taking notes or outlining, and reading aloud for clarification. *Metacognitive strategies* help students evaluate and monitor their own thinking and deploy resources or strategies when comprehension is impaired. These strategies include: monitoring and clarifying, summarizing, synthesizing, and predicting and inferring.

Effective Instruction for Adult English Language Learners

A CLASSROOM IS PROBABLY ONE OF THE MOST complex environments we could observe. There is a myriad of factors that make classrooms unique, yet challenging. Most classrooms are diverse, heterogeneous places. Adult ELLs may come from distant, remote places, yet they are unique, talented, and self-directed individuals. The ultimate goal of designing, delivering, and assessing instruction is improving the lives of the students served. In doing so, teachers have to develop awareness of key instructional elements and practices that make effective instruction possible.

When thinking about teaching in an adult education classroom, many new or novice teachers seem to be concerned about what they will do or how they will do it. In planning and designing effective instruction, teachers should be more concerned about what the students will be doing to learn new skills. An effective classroom is not '*teacher-centered*,' it is '*student-centered*'.

"Effective teaching may be the hardest job there is."

WILLIAM GLASSER

In a student-centered classroom, the focus is on learning, not on a teaching method. Learning may happen as a result of teaching a lesson or it may happen as the result of the students bringing their own knowledge and experiences into the classroom along with the opportunity to '*construct meaning,*' and refine their *schemata* or organized pattern of thought.

This construction of meaning occurs when students are given opportunities to connect new information and concepts to what they already know (*background knowledge*). Teachers can tap into students' background knowledge by brainstorming, previewing

key information or vocabulary, providing essential questions, using visuals or realia, a concept map, a sequential chart, or a graphic organizer. Adult ELLs retain concepts best when these concepts are encountered in a variety of learning contexts and expressed in a variety of ways. For instance, when teachers provide a visual aid, a listening activity, and an opportunity to demonstrate an understanding of the language by using body gestures or commands, (*Total Physical Response, TPR.*), they may be addressing different *learning styles*. Awareness of learning styles offers insights into learning modalities. For example, *visual learners* tend to learn by looking, seeing, viewing, and watching. *Auditory learners* tend to learn by listening, hearing, and speaking. *Kinesthetic learners* learn best through a hands-on approach and actively exploring the physical world around them. By offering multiple *representations of concepts* (visual, auditory, kinesthetic.), teachers ensure that the new knowledge and ideas become embedded in the student's knowledge system.

Relevance Aids the Learner

A key aspect of an effective classroom is fostering learning that is relevant and meaningful. Adult ELLs need to participate in classrooms that tie the language skills and content learned to real life experiences. If adults cannot see the relevance of an activity, its advantage in real life, or how a particular skill is going to apply to real world situations, then they will not be excited about the learning process. One example to make lessons more meaningful for adult ELLs is to develop communicative competence and critical thinking skills using students' own concerns and everyday problems as a subject for discussion. Another way of relating vocabulary to students' lives is to provide practice in extracting information that will assist the students in performing crucial tasks in the workplace or in daily life (e.g., giving and following instructions, working on a team, asking questions to obtain information).

Adult ELLs need to establish goals and set priorities. Effective instruction involves learners in setting learning objectives at the beginning of each lesson and determining to what degree the objectives have been met at the end of it. Teachers can assist students in identifying short term and long term goals. In addition, a teacher can explain how a particular class, such as ESL, can fit into their overall career goals. Also, in second language classrooms, students need to develop self-esteem, self-concept, and persistence. They need to be held accountable for their own learning. Adult ELLs have affective filters created by a variety of factors such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety that can support or disrupt

acquisition of language. Additionally, the learning trajectory is not linear and errors are a natural part of language learning. Effective instruction observes learners' performance on a regular basis to understand how each learner responds best, using the knowledge gained to inform teaching and to maintain a classroom environment that is safe where adults feel comfortable taking risks, asking questions, and responding to challenges (Knowles, 1973; Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

Adult learners need to develop metacognitive awareness. This awareness implies an understanding of the nature and structure of the English language. Effective instruction responds to this need by providing direct, explicit instruction in vocabulary, grammar, and syntax as these relate to specific topic areas and task types (Schaetzel, Peyton & Burt 2007; Kruidenier, 2002; Larsen-Freeman, 2003). Rather than teaching grammar rules or words in isolation, teachers need to explicitly model predictable patterns in English and use them as a foundation in the teaching of reading. Effective language teachers teach vocabulary and idiomatic expressions in context. They help adult ELLs understand how the English language works in different contexts (e.g., salutation, small talk, formal and informal uses, etc.).

Second language instruction needs to integrate all communication modalities. Authentic communication tasks include listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Effective instruction incorporates activities that promote the use of all four language skills and encourage learners to use the ones in which they are stronger to support the development of the others (Burt, Peyton, & Van Duzer, 2005; Center for Applied Linguistics, 2010; Vinogradov & Bigelow, 2010).

Adult ELLs learn best when teachers use modeling, examples, illustrations, and explanations to enable them to comprehend the material being taught (Krashen, 1985; McLeod, 2010). Second language acquisition is fostered through meaningful interactions, natural communication, and when the input teachers supply is '*optimal.*' To be optimal, the input has to be: a) comprehensible and just above the level the learner can comprehend without assistance; b) interesting and relevant; c) not grammatically sequenced, that means learners have to be exposed to all language forms at all times and not be taught using a determined order or sequence of language forms. For example, teaching the present, past, or future verb tenses in a particular order; d) sufficient in quantity so that students can progress to later stages of language acquisition (Krashen, 1982).

Effective instruction involves meaningful interactions. Students learn best when they are engaged and

when they are given genuine opportunities to collaborate and practice extensively. Students cannot learn to think critically, analyze information, communicate ideas, make logical arguments, work as part of a team, and acquire other skills unless they are permitted and encouraged to do those things over and over in many contexts. In an adult English language classroom, students have to have ample opportunities for practice.

One way of promoting learning in the adult second language classroom is by developing a '*community of learners.*' A community of learners can be defined as a group of people who share values and beliefs where learning occurs between learners and teachers, teachers and learners, and learners and learners. In this community, teachers create a learning-centered environment in which students and educators are actively and intentionally constructing knowledge together. In a '*constructivist*' classroom, students work together on tasks that are authentic, challenging, and meaningful. To support students in constructing meaning, teachers plan for students to work in small groups to help one another learn. *Cooperative learning* offers a wide variety of approaches, but the most effective are those in which students work in mixed-ability groups of four and have regular opportunities to teach each other after the teacher has introduced a lesson (Calderon, Slavin, & Sanchez, 2011). Examples of cooperative learning activities are think-pair-share, jigsaw, round robin, fish bowl, etc.

Scaffolding Support

As learning is viewed as a social activity and students have to collaborate with one another to learn, the role of the teacher is as a facilitator and a co-creator of knowledge. To effectively teach adult ELLs, teachers need to scaffold instruction. Scaffolding means that the teacher provides substantial amounts of support and assistance in the earliest stages of teaching a new concept or strategy. A scaffold is a temporary structure that is provided to help someone complete a task that otherwise would be difficult to do alone. Examples of scaffolding are: 1) breaking a complex task into easier more "doable" steps to facilitate student achievement; 2) showing students an example of the desired outcome before they complete the task; 3) modeling the thought process for students through "think aloud" talk, offering hints or partial solutions to problems; 4) using verbal cues to prompt student answers, teaching students chants or mnemonic devices to ease memorization of key facts, and procedures facilitating student engagement and participation.

There are three types of scaffolding: verbal scaffolding, procedural scaffolding, and instructional

scaffolding. When using *verbal scaffolding*, teachers prompt, question, and elaborate to facilitate students' movement to a higher level of language proficiency. During *procedural scaffolding*, teachers incorporate an instructional framework that includes explicit, direct instruction, and modeling tasks through '*think alouds*,' during think alouds teachers verbalize *aloud* while reading a selection orally. Their verbalizations include describing things they do as they read to monitor their comprehension. Procedural scaffolding also includes guided and independent practice, one-to-one coaching, modeling, and small group instruction. *Instructional scaffolding* includes graphic organizers, read alouds, visuals and realia, use of the first language for clarification purposes, sentence starters and structures, and connections to background knowledge.

The idea of providing scaffolding is to support the students initially and then gradually decreasing the amount of support as learners acquire experience through multiple practice opportunities with peers. This process is called '*gradual release of responsibility*' (GRR). GRR moves the students from reliance on the teacher to student independence in applying key concepts and using vocabulary. Typically, the model of teaching has four phases. Phase One: I do—the teacher models the lesson objective in a focused lesson; Phase Two: we do—guided instruction is provided with both input from the teacher and the students; Phase Three: you do together—collaborative learning occurs in small groups or with partners; and Phase Four: you do alone—students engage in independent practice (Fisher 2008). The GRR model of instruction requires that the teacher shifts from assuming "all the responsibility for performing a task to a situation in which the students assume all of the responsibility" (Duke & Pearson, 2002, p. 211).

The GRR model may be applied using four distinct components: 1) *Focus Lessons*. This component allows the teacher to '*think aloud,*' establish the purpose or intended learning outcome, and provide students with an opportunity to build and activate background knowledge; 2) *Guided Instruction*. During guided instruction, teachers prompt, question, facilitate, or lead students through tasks that increase their understanding of the content; 3) *Collaborative Learning*. To consolidate their understanding of the language that students are learning, they need opportunities to problem solve, discuss, negotiate, and think with their peers; 4) *Independent Work*. Independent learning provides students practice with applying information in new ways. In doing so, students may synthesize information, transform ideas, and solidify their understanding.

Instructional Strategies

IN ORDER TO PLAN AN EFFECTIVE LESSON, TEACHERS need to incorporate principles of adult learning and adult second language acquisition concepts, and to deliver instruction employing a number of different approaches or techniques to provide successful learning opportunities to adults with different learning styles, preferences, diverse needs, various motivations, and goals.

Research on adult learning provides insights into the characteristics of adults as learners. According to Malcolm Knowles (1980, 1984), adults are self-directed and goal oriented. Adults bring experiences and background knowledge to the classroom. Effective instruction for adults focuses on genuine opportunities to interact and collaborate with peers on relevant themes that can be related to their individual lives.

"Good teaching is one-quarter preparation and three-quarters theater."

GAIL GODWIN

Research on second language acquisition makes an important distinction between social and academic language. Conversational fluency or *Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS),* is described as the ability to use social language for oral communication. On the other hand, *Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)* refers to the academic, content-specific language, mainly found in academic texts. In order to be proficient in English, adult English language learners need to be able to carry on everyday conversations and

learn content knowledge. Optimal instruction is possible when comprehensible input is provided and when this input is challenging; that means it is slightly above the learner's level so that students, with the guidance of the teacher, can achieve higher levels of understanding. When teachers design effective lessons, they model the task. For example, in using '*think alouds*' they verbalize aloud what they are doing as students observe and watch. During modeling and guided practice, teachers scaffold the lesson. This refers to temporary supports that are used to assist the learner while they are attempting to perform a difficult task. Gradually, scaffolds are withdrawn as learners become more competent. Scaffolds may include modeling the steps by the teacher, thinking aloud as the teacher performs a task or solves a problem, and it may also refer to tools (e.g., cue cards, checklists, etc) (Rosenshine, 2012).

Research on adult second language learning has identified and evaluated a number of instructional strategies that teachers can employ to foster learning.

Strategies To...

Help Adult ELLs Adjust to the Classroom

✴ State and display language, content, and metacognitive objectives.
✴ List instructions or process steps and review them orally.
✴ Present information in varied ways (oral, written, demonstrations, with tangible objects)
✴ Frequently summarize key points.
✴ Repeat and paraphrase important terms.
✴ Have students maintain a notebook/binder.
✴ Have students maintain learning log for metacognitive strategies.
✴ Allow sufficient response time (wait-time).

Help Adult ELLs Adjust to a Teaching Style

✴ Develop a student-centered approach.
✴ Speak a little more slowly (not louder), use shorter sentences, and avoid idioms.
✴ Increase the percentage of inferential and higher order thinking questions.
✴ Provide correction for language errors by modeling, not overt correction.

Teach a Multi-Level Class

✴ Use cooperative learning.
✴ Incorporate peer tutoring.
✴ Use the writing process.
✴ Explicitly connect learning to students' knowledge and experience.
✴ Take time to preview and explain new concepts and vocabulary before starting instruction.
✴ Use questionnaires and interviews.

Motivate Studentsand Provide Background Knowledge

✴ Use semantic webbing and graphic organizers.
✴ Use anticipation reaction guides.
✴ Have students brainstorm, then record responses before starting lessons.
✴ Use KWL charts.
✴ Use realia, maps, photos, and manipulatives.
✴ Do activities where students can interact and move around.

Check Students' Comprehension of the Content

✴ Use sentence strips.
✴ Set up dialogue journals between teacher and student.
✴ Plan activities using role play and drama.
✴ Use student reading logs.
✴ Use cloze exercises.
✴ Write summaries.
✴ Have students present information with illustrations, comic strips, or other visual representations.
✴ Allow students to provide answers and explain processes instead of the teacher telling them.

Address Different Learning Styles

✴ Use visual aids such as pictures, word/picture cards, graphic organizers, and drawings.
✴ Have students do hands-on activities with real objects.
✴ Do demonstrations.
✴ Use CDs, videos, listening activities, and songs.
✴ Use a variety of groupings so that adult ELLs can interact with different classmates.

■ Tea Party

This student-centered strategy enables the instructor to introduce primary sources or challenging texts. Each participant receives an index card with one quote. Participants circulate, reading their quotes and listening to others read theirs. Because the work is presented orally and divided into small parts, it is more comprehensible to adult ELLs. The teacher may ask students to draw conclusions and discuss points of view based on what they heard and recording their responses. The teacher then has the class examine the complete work.

▶ **WHEN TO USE:** As a pre-reading strategy to activate prior knowledge for intermediate and advanced levels.

■ Anticipation—Reaction Guide

This activity is a means to assess students' prior knowledge of the topic and introduce key vocabulary contained in the ESL lesson. It provides a general context for the information to be presented. Students are given a series of statements that relate to a theme, concept, or key idea from a selected reading passage. The statements are usually inferential, asking students to share their opinions on each statement. Individually students decide whether they agree or disagree with the statement (Mora-Flores, 2011).

▶ **WHEN TO USE:** As a warm-up activity, to activate prior knowledge for intermediate and advanced levels.

■ Cognates

Cognates are words that have similar spelling, meaning, and pronunciation from one language to another. Training second language students to use cognates is a valuable strategy for reading comprehension. The teacher can provide vocabulary words and students can highlight or underline words that look like words they know in their language.

▶ **WHEN TO USE:** When teaching vocabulary explicitly, modeling word structure for beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels.

■ Vocabulary Dice Game

When using this strategy, the teacher writes six vocabulary words on the board or overhead and numbers them 1–6. Give each pair or group of students a dice. One student rolls the dice and reads the word, and then the other student defines it and uses it in a sentence with the context. This is a great sponge or warm up activity that can be done in ten minutes or may be extended by having students write their sentences and definitions.

▶ **WHEN TO USE:** When pre-teaching vocabulary words for beginning, intermediate and advanced levels.

■ Word Sorts

Give pairs or small groups of students a collection of 12–15 words that are related to a topic. Have students work together to categorize the words identifying similarities and differences and relationships. Have groups share with others. Each group may have different categories. The object is to have students review vocabulary and concepts and make meaning based on their prior knowledge and experience.

▶ **WHEN TO USE:** The strategy of using concept association, mapping concepts is useful for beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels.

■ Cloze Passage

This is a strategy to use with students at the beginning or low intermediate level of proficiency. The students receive a summary of several paragraphs in which key words have been removed. The missing words may or may not be provided, depending on the student's ability to comprehend. The student must refer to his or her textbook or notes to select the correct answers.

▶ **WHEN TO USE:** As a reading strategy to help students determine parts of speech, sentence structures and contextual clues for beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels.

■ Sentence Strips

Students receive sentences that must be put in logical order to show the sequence of events, or cause and effect relationships. It serves to help students learn to differentiate between main ideas and details, to recognize transition words, and demonstrate comprehension. Like the cloze passage, it provides structure for students who are not yet proficient enough in English to produce more language independently.

▶ **WHEN TO USE:** This strategy can be used when scaffolding vocabulary instruction for beginning and intermediate levels.

■ GO-GO-MO (Give One, Get One, Move On)

Students are given a sheet of paper with a 3 x 3 grid. The student writes down 3 things they have learned. They walk around the room together and get at least 3 new ideas from 3 different people. They continue this until the grid is full.

▶ **WHEN TO USE:** This strategy can be used to get all students thinking about what they have recently learned. It gives students the opportunity to move around and share with their peers what they have learned. This strategy is useful for intermediate and advanced levels.

■ Think, Pair, Share

1. **Think.** The teacher begins by provoking students' thinking with a question. The students take a few moments to think about the question.

2. **Pair.** Students pair up with pre-arranged partners to talk about the answer that they each came up with. Students can compare their mental or written answers and identify the answers they think are the best.

3. **Share.** After students talk in pairs for a few moments, the teacher calls for pairs to share their thinking with the rest of the class.

▶ **WHEN TO USE:** This strategy can be used for discussing questions, reviewing concepts and brainstorming. Useful when teaching beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels.

■ Numbered-Heads-Together

1. The class is divided into groups of 3 or 4 students.

2. Members of each group will assign themselves numbers from 1 to 4 within their group.

3. The teacher poses a question.

4. The students will be given time to come up with an answer and share with their group. (time varies depending on the complexity of the question.

5. The teacher calls a number. The students with that number will stand and share their answers.

▶ **WHEN TO USE:** This strategy can be used during cooperative learning, teachers can use this strategy to organize interactions between students for intermediate and advanced levels.

■ Exit Slips

Exit slips are learner reflection forms that teachers hand out to students toward the end of class. Students submit their responses before leaving for the day.

▶ **WHEN TO USE:** This strategy can be used when closing and evaluating lessons and reinforcing concepts for beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels.

■ Graphic Organizers

Graphic organizers include a knowledge map, concept map, story map, cognitive organizer, advanced organizer, or concept diagram. They are communication tools that use visual symbols to express knowledge, concepts, thoughts, or ideas, and the relationships between them, (e.g., K-W-L, Venn diagram).

▶ **WHEN TO USE:** This strategy can be used during pre-reading, during-reading, and after-reading activities for beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels.

■ Jigsaw

This strategy is a reading strategy that helps students reach deeper levels of comprehension with a small segment of the text. It develops interdependence since students are responsible for a larger group, and it develops confidence for struggling readers who only need to process a smaller portion of text at a time.

▶ **WHEN TO USE:** This strategy can be used when learners need to learn content material quickly, share information with other groups, minimize listening time, and be individually accountable for their own learning. It is useful when teaching intermediate and advanced levels.

■ Take Home Reading Packets

This strategy extends learning beyond the classroom. It consists of selections of '*Easy English News*' texts sent home for homework. The teacher provides a text, a graphic organizer, and a time log. Students read, summarize ideas, and keep track of how long they have read or worked on the activities. Tasks and readings are chosen to ensure that readability level is appropriate for the language proficiency level (Bourret, 2009).

▶ **WHEN TO USE:** This strategy can be used as an extension activity and to foster reading at home for beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels.

■ Dialogue Journals

Dialogue journals are written conversations in which the learner and teacher communicate regularly, (e.g., daily, weekly, or on a particular schedule). This strategy is used to write in English for authentic communication. The goal is to provide a space for the learners to write freely. It provides the learners with an opportunity for incidental vocabulary acquisition. In other words, they learn vocabulary without realizing it (Larrotta, 2009).

Dialogue journals can be implemented using four steps:

1. Model the writing task such as writing a personal letter.

2. Establish guidelines such as addressing two questions each time.

3. Do guided practice such as mini-lessons on grammar and language functions.

4. Assess the dialogue journal such as making a list of things they like or dislike about the journal activity and reflecting on it.

▶ **WHEN TO USE:** This strategy can be used as a writing activity to develop learners' writing fluency for beginning, intermediate and advanced levels.

Effective Practices for Adult English Language Learners

WHEN DESIGNING INSTRUCTION FOR ADULT ELLS, teachers examine standards, set instructional goals and write lesson objectives. The lesson plan acts as a roadmap for instruction. It serves as a description of the purpose of the lesson and its outcomes. Planning helps teachers define what the students will know, what they will understand, and what they will be able to do as a result of the lesson. In addition, planning defines the tasks the students will engage in, how responsibility will be gradually released to foster students' independence, and how learning will be assessed. This process is prescriptive as teachers may use well-defined instructional design models. These

"Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn."

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

models provide a sequence of instructional events that may include activation of prior knowledge, modeling tasks, guiding practice, student collaboration, students' independent time, and closing and extension activities.

Planning is an essential part of the instructional cycle. Lessons become effective when teachers carefully envision how the lesson will be delivered. Teachers are

effectively crafting the lesson's instructional delivery only when they take into consideration how content and concepts will be presented (*learning modalities*); how they will differentiate instruction, (*responding to learners' individual needs*); how learning styles will be addressed (*acknowledging individual differences*); and how the lesson's pacing will be (*lesson's flow*). The field of adult education learning, research on second language acquisition and relevant literature on principles of teaching and learning have identified a number of '*best practices,*' practical ideas that can make the difference when delivering lessons for adult learners.

❶ Know your students
Learning a second language is affected by multiple factors. Knowing students' individual abilities, skills, strengths, interests, and backgrounds contribute to developing rapport and trust. In order to deliver effective lessons, teachers need to create a '*psychologically safe environment*' for every learner. Determining each student's level of readiness for learning is crucial as '*readiness*' itself is profoundly influenced by affective factors, (e.g., an individual's prior learning success or failure, self-esteem, sense of efficacy, cultural norms, social status within the class or group, life experiences, and dispositions). Knowledge of students helps identify multiple *access points* to the curriculum to increase engagement. *Access points* are the connections that make the content and concepts relevant to learners, whether through a similar experience, an interest, or tapping into their way of thinking. As teachers get to know each of their students better, effective access points become more apparent (Powell & Powell, 2011). Knowing students is beneficial. Once data about each student is collected and compiled, teachers can formulate individual learning profiles, from which better instructional decisions can be made.

❷ Establish Routines
Classroom organization and a structured and predictable learning environment are vital to lessen students' anxiety. Second language acquisition is greatly influenced by the affective filter. The affective filter is a psychological filter that can either facilitate or hinder language production in a second language. Krashen (1984) used the term *affective filter* to refer to the complex of negative emotional and motivational factors that may interfere with how learners receive, process, and ultimately comprehend new information. Well-established routines in the classroom contribute to set high expectations and make students accountable for their own learning.

❸ Differentiate Instruction
Classrooms are diverse, heterogeneous environments. Students' familiarity with a task or access to prior knowledge may differ greatly among individuals. The goal of differentiating instruction is responding to students' learning needs and maximizing learners' capacity. When teachers differentiate instruction, they take into consideration the *content,* the *process of learning,* and the *product. Differentiation of content* refers to what will be taught and how access to the information will be given. It does not mean teaching different contents; it means teaching the content differently. Examples of differentiating content are: varying reading level, providing a vocabulary list, supplemental materials, and organizers for note-taking, or re-teaching concepts. *Differentiation of the process* defines how students will learn (e.g., through explicit instruction, modeling, use of manipulatives or use of multi-media). *Differentiation of product* refers to ways teachers can modify how students demonstrate what they have learned (e.g., writing a letter, creating artwork, making a video, creating a performance, completing a graphic organizer, or working as a team on a project).

❹ Teach Language Learning Strategies
According to Cummins (1983), learning a second language may take five to seven years. There are many factors that may facilitate or hinder learning a second language: age, motivation, personality traits (extroverted vs. introverted), literacy skills in the first language, L1, background knowledge, knowledge of cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies, and differences in learning styles. Teachers can help adults become better learners by modeling Language Learning Strategies (LLS). LLS refers to the processes and actions that are consciously deployed by language learners to help them learn or use a language more effectively. Examples of LLS are: 1) *Cognitive strategies*. These strategies enable learners to manipulate the language material, (e.g., outlining, note-taking; 2) *Meta-cognitive strategies*. These strategies are employed for managing and evaluating the learning process, (e.g., re-reading for clarity, stop and think when comprehension fails; 3) *Memory-related strategies*. These strategies help learners associate or link a concept with another, both in the second language without necessarily involving a deep understanding (e.g., rhyming, acronyms, mental images); 4) *Compensatory strategies*. These strategies help learners with guessing from the context, using gestures, using synonyms, or '*talking around*' the missing word to aid in speaking or writing; 5) *Affective strategies*. These strategies help learners manage emotions (e.g., using deep

breathing, or having a positive talk); 6) *Social strategies.* These strategies help learners work with others (e.g., asking for help, asking for clarification on a confusing point) (Oxford, 2003). Research done by Oxford (2003) and Chamot (2004) supports the idea that language learning strategies can be modeled and taught explicitly. Learners can develop strategy awareness and use learning strategies in a way that speeds up and deepens the learning of a second language. Knowledge of the strategy (*declarative knowledge*), how to use it (*procedural knowledge*) and when to use it (*conditional knowledge*) is part of the meta-cognitive knowledge students need to approach learning more efficiently.

⑤ Contextualize Instruction

Contextualized teaching and learning (CTL) helps students gain a deeper understanding of subject matter. It anchors the teaching material to meaningful situations students encounter in real life, (Baker, Hope, & Karandjeff, 2009). CTL helps students to solve problems and make decisions in real life, (e.g., read for information and understanding, use observation skills to analyze work-related situations). Using the adult ESL curriculum, teachers can develop content-based lessons, (e.g., *health*) and identify the language and grammar demands of the unit. The integration of content and language is naturally possible when learners engage in problem-solving tasks, read domain-specific texts, and play authentic roles from real life situations.

⑥ Integrate Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing

Practicing listening, speaking, reading and writing in isolation from each other is detrimental to students. When this happens, the target language develops unnaturally in learners. Students also lack opportunities to communicate with other learners, emit and receive messages in appropriate, meaningful ways (Shaw, 2008). An example of how a lesson integrating all these aspects (with the focus on reading skills) should take place could be: *pre-reading* oral discussions on a chosen topic to activate schemata; integrating *listening* to a series of facts or statements related to the topic; focus on a *reading strategy* like scanning; and *writing* some ideas of the reading passage.

⑦ Foster Student Engagement

Student engagement occurs when students make a *psychological investment* in learning. To promote student engagement, teachers need to establish a learning environment that builds on interaction and interdependent relationships. Some elements of student engagement include: students collaborating with teachers to establish the learning agenda (e.g., students develop a voice and autonomy), a risk-free environment that allows for all students to ask questions and make mistakes, presenting students with opportunities to develop abilities in critical thinking, bridging students' past experiences with new learning, applying knowledge that is relevant to real-life (as opposed to being theoretical or text-based situations) and creating an inquiry-based, problem-solving, exploratory classroom (Taylor & Parsons, 2011).

⑧ Model Higher-Order Thinking Skills

Because adult ELLs are learning a new language, teachers tend to ask lower-level questions, (e.g., questions that ask students to provide basic information, rather than higher-level questions that require students to analyze and evaluate information). For formulating lower to higher-order questions, teachers can use Bloom's taxonomy as follows: 1) *knowledge:* teachers can formulate questions using prompts (what, why, when...?); 2) *comprehension:* teachers can use (how would you classify the type of..?); 3) *application:* teachers can ask (how would you use..?). 4) *analysis:* teachers can ask (what inference can you make...?); 5) *synthesis:* teachers can ask students to share their thinking (why do you think...?); and 6) *evaluation:* teachers can assess a topic (decide whether..). In short, teachers can use *tiered* questions to foster the development of higher-order thinking skills.

Teaching Culture and Pragmatics in the Adult ESL Classroom

THE TERM 'CULTURE' IS BROAD AND ITS DEFINITION encompasses many aspects. According to Brown (2007), it is defined as "the ideas, customs, skills, arts, and tools that characterize a given group in a given period of time." Seelye (1993, 1994) broadly defines culture as "everything people learn to do." Furthermore, Hinkel (2014) makes a distinction between the 'visible' and 'invisible' aspects of culture. *Visible culture* refers to the tangible aspects (e.g., traditions, customs) and *invisible* culture refers to socio-cultural beliefs and value systems. It includes what is acceptable and expected behaviors. The socio-cultural principles that determine the norms of what it means to use a language appropriately and how to behave, for the most part, remain invisible unless they are taught and learned in conjunction with language skills.

"Language and culture are the frameworks through which humans experience, communicate, and understand reality."

LEV VYGOTSKY

The term 'culture' is also inextricably linked to the notion of '*cultural orientation*'. One element of difference among cultures is an orientation toward individualism vs. collectivism. Students from individualistic cultures believe they are responsible for their own learning, while students from collectivistic cultures place more responsibility for their learning on the teacher. Many students may come from less individualistic societies. A student-centered approach with expectations of learners'

autonomy and self-direction may create discomfort among students. Other cultural differences may include not criticizing or challenging the teacher or authority figure in any manner.

Should ELL instructors teach 'culture' alongside the target language? The answers to this crucial question differ greatly. Byram and Flemming (1998) argue that the 'target language culture' should be taught along with English to acculturate learners into the cultures of English-speaking countries. An opposite view is held by Kachru and Nelson (1996) and Canagarajah (1999), who state that there should not be any teaching of the target language culture together with English. One aspect that researchers seem to agree on is the inextricable connection between language and socio-cultural norms (Hinkel, 2014). Hinkel (2014) argues that to be linguistically competent, particularly in an English as Second Language (ESL) setting, it is essential for learners to attain language proficiency; however, language proficiency alone is not sufficient. Knowledge of cultural patterns is crucial to attaining what is called *communicative competence*.

Communicative Competence

When adult ELLs acquire communicative competence, they develop not only awareness of the grammar rules, vocabulary, and syntax, they also acquire sociolinguistic competence. This competence involves knowing how to respond appropriately to a language situation, given the setting, the topic, and the relationships between the people communicating. For instance, knowing how to say *thank you* does not automatically mean that the speaker knows when or how often to say it. This pragmatic aspect of language is crucial in second language learning. Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000)

define *pragmatics* as an area of language that deals with people's intentions, assumptions, beliefs, and the kind of actions individuals perform while using the language.

Pragmatics also includes the context, situations, and settings associated with language use. It studies the context of communication as well as the interaction and intent of the language users. For instance, the questions "H*ow are you?*" or "*How is it going?*" are not intended to be real questions or conversation openers; instead they are used as a signal for listeners that they have been recognized or acknowledged by the speakers (Hinkel, 2014). If in many instances, adult ELLs are not familiar with cultural concepts and ways to interact with native speakers, they risk missing many of the social, educational, or career opportunities open to those who are. It has been observed that many students, with high academic performance of English, have found it sometimes difficult to find common ground with native speakers in real life situations. This might be the result of learning English without proper awareness of its culture (Choudhury, 2014).

Cultural Instruction

Teaching socio-cultural aspects of the L2 culture with the target language will, therefore, help adult ELLs in many ways. According to Tomalin and Stempleski (1993), the goals of cultural instruction may include: 1) developing an understanding of the fact that all people exhibit culturally-conditioned behaviors; 2) understanding that social variables (e.g., age, sex, social class, and place of residence influence the way people behave); 3) increasing awareness of cultural connotations of words and phrases in the target language; 4) becoming aware of conventional behaviors in common situations in the target language among others.

Historically speaking, approaches to teach culture in the ESL classroom fall under two broad categories: 1) approaches that focus mostly on the target culture; and 2) approaches that compare and differentiate learners' own culture and the target culture (Saluveer, 2004). Risager (1998) identifies other distinct approaches: 1) the '*intercultural*' approach, based on the belief that a culture is best learned when compared to the learners' own; 2) the '*multicultural*' approach, based on the idea that a nation encompasses a number of subcultures coexisting within a culture; 3) the '*transcultural*' approach, insisting on the fact that, in our era of globalization, English has become a lingua franca, a bridge between speakers of different languages, and therefore not linked to a particular Anglo-Saxon heritage; 4) the '*foreign-cultural*' approach, focused solely on the target culture with no reference to a learner's own culture.

Regardless of the approach taken into consideration, there are techniques that teachers can use productively to instill awareness of socio-cultural norms to adult ELLs, (Stern, 1992; Dema & Moller, 2012).

Strategies to Teach Culture in the Adult ESL Classroom

Cultural capsules: A cultural capsule is a brief description of some aspect of the target language culture. Bittenbender (2013) suggests that a cultural capsule can include three components: a reading passage, a discussion, and extension activities. Cultural capsules are usually done orally with the teacher providing an explanation of a particular cultural point (e.g., pet care in America). Students then read a passage about how Americans take care of pets, discuss various points of interest, and compare the topic with the learners' own culture. Extension activities may include going to the pet store or visiting the American Kennel Club's website. Cultural clusters involve a group of two or more cultural capsules. The teacher can incorporate one or more aspects related to the same topic (e.g., how to adopt a pet, taking care of a pet, etc).

Culture assimilators: They consist of short, written, descriptions of an incident or situation where interaction takes place between at least one person from the target culture and persons from other cultures (usually the native culture of the students being taught). The description is followed by four possible choices about the meaning of the behavior, action, or words of the participants in the interaction with emphasis on the behavior, actions, or words of the individual(s) target language. Students read the description in the assimilator and then choose which of the four options they feel the

correct interpretation of the interaction is. Once all students have made their individual choices, the teacher leads a discussion about why particular options are correct or incorrect in interpretation (e.g., using street language during a job interview).

Critical incidents: These are descriptions of incidents or situations that demand that a participant in the interaction make some kind of decision (e.g., deciding when to offer or refuse help, accepting or refusing invitations politely).

Mini-dramas: They consist of two to three mini-plays in which misunderstandings or cultural clashes are portrayed. They are generally written to foster sympathy for the non-native of the culture for the "wrong" that is done to him or her by a member of the target culture. At the end of the mini-drama, some "knowing" figure explains what is really happening and why the target culture member was really not doing anything wrong (e.g., understanding time management and avoiding lateness).

Audio-motor units: They consist of verbal instructions for actions by students which the students then carry out. They work very well for any cultural routine which requires physical actions (e.g., eating with a knife and fork, shaking hands, listening actively, standing in line to buy a ticket, etc).

Cultoons: Students are given a series of (usually) four pictures depicting points of surprise or possible misunderstanding for persons coming into the target culture. The situations are also described verbally by the teacher or by the students who read the accompanying written descriptions. Students may be asked if they think the reactions of the characters in the *cultoons* seem appropriate or not.

Media and visuals: Magazine pictures, slide presentations, and/or videos are among the kinds of media/visual presentations which can be used to teach culture. With this method, the teacher usually presents a series of pictures or slides or a video with an explanation of what is going on and what it means in terms of the target culture.

Creative Ways to Teach Culture in the Adult ESL Classroom

Use of authentic materials: Authentic materials may include listening activities such as: TV shows, radio, commercials, news, movies, videos, and phone messages; visuals such as photographs, artwork, signs with symbols, and postcards, as well as printed materials such as restaurant menus, newspaper articles, coupons,

sale catalogues, food labels, posters, and travel brochure. For a selection of authentic videos, visit FluentU (fluentu.com), an online platform that takes real-world videos which can be browsed by the level of difficulty from beginning to native language ability).

Weather report: Familiarize students with the U.S. climate by exposing them to weather reports by visiting www.weather.com. At this site, students can take advantage of short weather write ups and mini-clips that can be used to sharpen listening skills.

Online menus: View and download menus of local restaurants to familiarize students with common dishes, behavior in a restaurant, or calculation of tips.

Conducting job searches: By visiting *indeed.com* or *career-Builder.com* and online job search platforms, students can learn aspects of job searches such as keywords, job duties, how to select positions, job openings in their area, and completing a job application.

eLearning for Adult English Language Learners

TODAY, TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES ARE CHANGING the way students communicate and learn a second language. Researchers argue that new technologies promote new learning skills and English language methodology (Ramamuruthy & Rao, 2015). Dinçay (2010) claims that novel technologies are currently replacing the 'traditional' teaching approaches of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (e.g., grammar-translation method, the direct method, communicative language teaching, total physical response, etc). These changes are impacting instructional tools and teaching methods to a point that the traditional methods are now considered outdated (Prasad, 2013).

With the rapid development of high technology, adult ELLs have access to tablets, smartphones, interactive Internet, social networks, and the opportunity to find information at their fingertips. Specialists define *mobile learning* as the use of mobile technologies to facilitate and promote learning anytime and anywhere (Chuang, Hwang, & Shih, 2010). Others expand the definition of *mobile learning* to include "any activity that allows individuals to be more productive when consuming, interacting with, or creating information mediated through a compact digital portable device"

"Let's go invent tomorrow instead of worrying about what happened yesterday."

STEVE JOBS

(Wexler et al., 2007). For instance, the use of smartphones is widely used in ESL classrooms to look up specific nouns on Google images, translate words into the students' native language, access educational apps, aid with pronunciation, or keep a journal.

In order to promote lifelong learning and also to prepare students for the multiple demands of the workplace, teachers need to foster the acquisition of *digital literacy*. Although the term '*literacy*' refers to the ability to read and write, it could be broadened to include "*digital literacy*", the ability to use digital technology, communication tools or networks to locate, evaluate, use, and create information.

There are a number of websites that students can use to further their opportunities to learn a second language outside the classroom. The list also includes web sites for teachers seeking opportunities for professional development.

ESL Websites for Students and Teachers

■ **Discovery Education**
http://www.discoveryeducation.com
Resources, lesson plans, and virtual field trips.

■ **Mango Languages**
http://www.mangolanguages.com
Language learning tools that emphasize real-world situations and cultural insights.

■ **Dave's ESL café**
http://www.eslcafe.com/
Resources and web links.

■ **ESL blues**
http://eslbluesapps.com/
Survival resources for adult ELLs by proficiency level.

■ **Graphic Organizers**
http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/
Sample graphic organizers ready to be printed.

■ **Free Test Makers**
https://www.easytestmaker.com/
To create, print, and publish tests online.

■ **Free Crossword Puzzle Maker**
http://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com/CrissCrossSetupForm.asp.
To create crossword puzzles.

■ **Graphic Maps**
http://www.worldatlas.com/
Maps, facts, links.

■ **Randall's Cyber Listening Café**
http://www.esl-lab.com/
Listening activities, short and long conversations.

■ **Adult Learning Activities**
http://www.cdlponline.org/
Free site for reading, life skills.

■ **Encyclopedia Britannica**
https://www.britannica.com/
Stories, quizzes, trending topics.

■ **Oxford Art Online**
http://www.oxfordartonline.com/
Art-related research website.

■ **Library of Congress**
https://www.loc.gov/
Over 13 million digitized primary sources.

■ **Read Write and Think**
http://www.readwritethink.org/
Focus on learning the language, learning through language and learning about language.

■ **Moodle**
https://moodle.org/
Free course management tool to create Internet-based courses and web sites.

■ **Diigo**
https://www.diigo.com/
A social bookmarking site that allows users to save and tag websites.

■ **Polleverywhere**
https://www.polleverywhere.com/
A voting platform that can be used in a classroom to gather answers to any question.

■ **Spicy Nodes**
http://www.spicynodes.org/
A concept mapping presentation tool to embed pictures, videos and website.

Free Online Videos for Professional Development and Student Learning (Rosen, 2009, 2010)

■ **Annenberg Media's Learner.org**
https://www.learner.org/
Free classroom videos are available in the arts, foreign language, literature, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies and history. The site requires a simple login.

■ **Media Library of Teaching Skills (MLots)**
https://www.mlots.org/
The Media Library of Teaching Skills is a free online digital library containing short videos of adult education. Included are MLots-made videos on ESOL/ESL.

■ **PBS**
https://www.pbs.org/
Videos of best-known television programs like American Experience, American Masters, FRONTLINE, Nature, the News Hour and NOVA.

■ **Teacher Tube**
https://www.teachertube.com/
Teacher tube is like YouTube with a focus on teaching and learning. ESOL teachers can find the following videos: Citizenship Interview Clarification Strategies and Citizenship Students Practice for the N400 interview.

■ **Maryland's Official Online Adult Education Site**
https://www.mdadultedonline.org/
free, a teacher-supported online learning program for GED® test preparation offered to Maryland residents.

■ **CAELA — Center for Adult English Language Acquisition**
https://www.cal.org/caela/
CAELA offers easy to use resources (e.g., research studies, instructional curricula, and information on language acquisition) to build teacher capacity in promoting English language learning.

■ **Internet TESL Journal**
https://iteslj.org/
The Internet TESL Journal is a free online journal for teachers of ESL that includes lesson plans, classroom handouts, and links of interest.

■ **Ted Talks**
http://www.ted.com/
A well-known website that shares ideas from the world most innovative thinkers.

■ **Zooburst**
https//www.zooburst.com
Enables users to create 3-D digital storybooks. Students can manipulate free images and build three-dimensional digital stories. It is a unique platform for students to collaborate, share narratives, and create anecdotes (Israel and Moorefield-Lang, 2012).

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APPENDIX A

Sample Needs Assessment Forms

Beginning Level Questionnaire

Beginning Level Questionnaire

STUDENT NAME _____   DATE _____

What do you want to study? Check three topics.

STUDENT NAME _____   DATE _____

INSTRUCTOR NAME _____

PROGRAM _____

General Goals
My goals are (check all that apply)

☐ get a job   ☐ get a high school diploma

☐ get a better job   ☐ get a GED

☐ reading   ☐ speaking

☐ writing   ☐ other _____

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

☐ finding a job   ☐ community (bank, post office, library)

☐ on the job   ☐ 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_____

ESOL Learner Needs Assessment

Greater Homewood Community Corporation
Adult Literacy & ESOL

NAME _____

DATE _____ LEVEL _____ TERM _____

This side should be filled out at registration

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

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

Where did you hear about our program?

_____

_____

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

☐ Work ☐ Study ☐ Family ☐ Tourism

Are you currently employed? ☐ Yes ☐ No

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

_____

_____

_____

I am a

☐ Faculty member ☐ Graduate student
☐ Researcher ☐ Staff member with (college or university).

Did you work in your home country? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If YES, what was your job?

_____

_____

_____

Where have you studied English before?

_____

_____

_____

For how long did you study English?

_____

_____

_____

How do you need to use English?

_____

_____

_____

What do like to do in your free time?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Your goals are to...

☐ get a job
☐ get more education
☐ improve your speaking
☐ improve your pronunciation
☐ learn more about American culture

☐ get a better job
☐ improve your reading
☐ improve your writing
☐ improve your grammar
☐ other:

_____

_____

Which activities are most helpful to your English learning?

☐ conversation
☐ games
☐ idiom practice
☐ pair/group work
☐ reading
☐ writing

☐ field trips
☐ grammar practice
☐ listening to tapes
☐ pronunciation drills
☐ songs
☐ other:

_____

_____

_____

Where do you want to speak better English?

☐ at work
☐ with friends
☐ at the doctors
☐ in stores
☐ other:

☐ on the bus/train
☐ with neighbors
☐ on the telephone
☐ at your children's school

_____

_____

_____

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

☐ checks
☐ ads in newspapers
☐ work notices
☐ forms
☐ your children's report cards/school notes

☐ bills
☐ catalogs
☐ maps/directions
☐ job applications
☐ other:

_____

_____

_____

What other things do you want your teacher to know?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX B

Sample Needs Lesson Planning Forms

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, metacognitive skills, and technology standards; found in CS document and each area has a tab.)	
Possible Materials: (Texts, authentic materials, video etc.)	

Lesson Planning Format

CLASS _____ DATE _____ TIME _____

- -

Lesson Objective

LANGUAGE SKILLS _____

_____

LIFE SKILLS _____

_____

_____

- -

Class Supplies

MATERIALS _____

_____

EQUIPMENT _____

_____

_____

- -

Stages of the Lesson

WARM UP/REVIEW _____

_____

_____

_____

INTRODUCTION _____

_____

_____

PRESENTATION _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

PRACTICE _____

_____

_____

_____

EVALUATION _____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX C

A Sample Lesson Plan Using Authentic Material

Lesson Planning Format

CLASS *Intermediate*   DATE   TIME *appr. 2 hours*

Lesson Objective

LANGUAGE SKILLS *Reading, evaluation of employment skills*

LIFE SKILLS *Finding a job*

Class Supplies

MATERIALS *Classified Job listings from a newspaper, transparency of one example.*

EQUIPMENT *Chart paper, overhead projector*

Stages of the Lesson

WARM UP/REVIEW

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.

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.

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

Description	
Requirements	
Pay	
Hours	
Contact information	
Other	

MCAEL

Montgomery Coalition for

Adult English Literacy
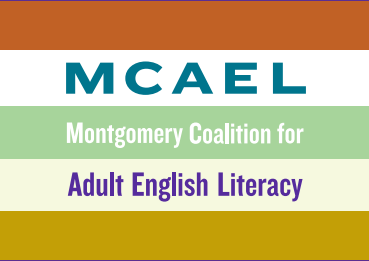
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